

SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON COUNCIL
CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WRITTEN ANSWERS TRACKER 2022/23

Date of Cttee	Scrutiny Cttee Request for information	Decision Maker /Directorate Responsible	Response to request for information	Date of response	Scrutiny Officer Comments/Update
01/06/2022	Decision taken under the Emergency Rule – <i>Further information requested regarding costings etc</i>	Cllr Benet Allen / Chris Hall	Questions relating to the Coal Orchard Development. Due to commercial sensitivity these will be made available to Councillors confidentially after the public meeting.	06/06/2022	Answers provided by Joe Wharton and uploaded to MOD.GOV.
01/06/2022	Committee asked for further updates on the phosphate situation. <i>Would like a special Scrutiny meeting to highlight these issues.</i>	Mike Rigby / Chris Hall	A members briefing has been set up to take place on 28 July to look at Phosphates and the current five-year housing land supply. The slides from the briefing will be made available afterwards for those who are unable to attend. Chris Hall has also highlighted that the <u>Phosphates on the Somerset levels and moors (somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk)</u> webpage does address most of the concerns. The correct platform for debating phosphate issues is the SWT Phosphates Planning Sub-Committee.	08/06/2022	Answers provided by Chris Hall and Sam Murrell.

06/07/2022	<p>Corporate Performance Report: High proportion of planning refusals have been overturned by the Planning Inspectorate.</p> <p><i>(Page 266 & 272 Agenda) Flagged Red.</i></p> <p><i>Can a breakdown be provided on the proportion of decisions that have been overturned by the Planning Inspectorate following appeals from applicants?</i></p> <p><i>A) Can this be split between officer delegated decisions and those that were determined by the Planning Committee.</i></p> <p><i>B) Have any successful appeals resulted in the awarding of costs to the applicant?</i></p>	Mike Rigby / Chris Hall (Planning)	<p>The Local Planning Authority has received 20 appeal decisions from the Planning Inspectorate for the period from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022. Of these 6 were allowed (equating to 30% of appeals determined in this period). This compares with the target against which performance is measured corporately of 33% which is the national average of appeals allowed.</p> <p>Of those allowed in this period, two were appeals following decisions by the Planning Committee, one of which resulted in a costs award to the applicant. The quantum is yet to be determined – the process is that the applicant must submit their costs and for the Council to determine whether they are reasonable. In the event of a disagreement, it then goes for independent taxation.</p>	25/07/2022	Answers provided by Julie Harcombe / Rebecca Miller and Alison Blom-Cooper
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<p>06/07/2022</p>	<p>Corporate Performance Summary: Our Environment and Economy <i>(Page 264, Item 1)</i></p> <p>“A low-carbon, clean, green and prosperous district that attracts high quality employment opportunities and encourages healthy lifestyles”</p> <p><i>Is it possible to provide examples of high-quality companies being attracted to SWT in the last year?</i></p>	<p>Mike Rigby / Chris Hall (Econ Regen)</p>	<p>SWT do not currently measure the number of high-quality employment new businesses moving into the district. However, in January 2022 SWT purchased a licence to a business data platform, which will enable reporting of various statistics relating to business health and growth in the district. The Economic Development Team are exploring the reporting capabilities of the software. Currently, we are unable to provide a figure in response to the question. The Economic Development team with partner organisations, continue to market SWT to inward investors and account manage inward investment enquiries.</p> <p><i>“This period has seen the completion of a new promotional inward investment-focused website for the district and production of an investment video as part of a ‘SWITCH’ campaign, inviting potential investors to switch to Somerset West and Taunton. The campaign highlights the area’s locational, strengths as well as current growth -industries such as healthcare and med-tech, the circular economy, digital and creative, global marine and current construction opportunities in the energy sector.</i></p> <p><i>12 business ambassadors from varying sectors of the economy have also been recruited to act as business ambassadors for the area.</i></p> <p><i>A launch event with a key business audience of commercial agents and developers took place in May 2022. This has formed a key part of the delivery of the Marketing and Communications plan for Inward Investment.”</i></p> <p>(Excerpt from Cllr Rigby’s latest PFH report)</p>	<p>25/07/22</p>	<p>Lisa Tuck</p>
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06/07/2022	Can an explanation / update be provided on the Economic Development Initiatives Ear Marked Reserve?	Mike Rigby / Chris Hall (Econ Regen)	<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Economic Initiatives EMR (BE019)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">2022/23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Opening Balance</td> <td>(642,538.36)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emergency Town Centre Fund</td> <td>50,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Budget 22/23 Contribution</td> <td>372,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Provision for Grant</td> <td>80,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Innovation Districts</td> <td>50,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Taunton Town Centre</td> <td>50,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Taunton Together</td> <td>25,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Closing Balance</td> <td>(15,538.36)</td> </tr> </table>	Economic Initiatives EMR (BE019)		2022/23		Opening Balance	(642,538.36)	Emergency Town Centre Fund	50,000.00	Budget 22/23 Contribution	372,000.00	Provision for Grant	80,000.00	Innovation Districts	50,000.00	Taunton Town Centre	50,000.00	Taunton Together	25,000.00	Closing Balance	(15,538.36)	22/07/22	Kerry Prisco
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06/07/2022	Can further information be provided on what the Employment Land Schemes and Williton Shooting Club capital programmes will be spent on?	Mike Rigby / Chris Hall (Econ Regen)	The Employment Land Schemes capital programme is currently looking at potential employment sites in Minehead, but SMT have deferred any capital expenditure requests until Unitary. The Williton Shooting Club was a Hinkley funded project which was completed historically, and the unused budget was returned last year.	22/07/22	Kerry Prisco																				

06/07/2022	General Fund Outturn Report: Capital Programme (<i>Page 322</i>). Economic Regeneration Initiatives <i>Can a list be provided of how much has been spent on consultancy and to whom?</i>	Cllr Benet Allen / Paul Fitzgerald	A comprehensive breakdown of consultancy fees has been emailed to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.	02/08/22	Paul Fitzgerald
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03/08/2022	<p>Taunton Garden Town Update: Query from Cllr Hassall regarding possible conflict between introducing a bus lane into East Street Taunton whilst making it a pedestrianised area.</p> <p><i>Is there any update on the current position?</i></p>	Cllr Mike Rigby / Sarah Ellwood (Project Manager – Active Travel and Regeneration).	<p>In 2020, during the closure of East St to general traffic to allow social distancing, SWT embarked on a project to explore possible concept designs for a longer term pedestrianisation of East St. Following highly successful stakeholder workshops in summer 2021, concepts for restricting general traffic on East St to allow safer, more accessible active travel and public realm improvements were created and shared with SWT Executive in October 2021. Further work has been carried out to assess impact on people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.</p> <p>Although there are still strong aspirations to offer some form of pedestrianisation on East St, no budget for capital delivery has been assigned. SCC has, however, in recent months been successful in receiving funding for a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which is highly likely to impact East St and the surrounding area. SCC colleagues responsible for BSIP have assured SWT officers that the East St proposals will be considered when exploring the potential for bus service improvements for the town centre and we will remain involved in the feasibility work.</p>	08/08/22	Jenny Clifford / Sarah Ellwood
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<p>01/09/2022</p>	<p>General Fund: Financial Performance Report Qtr1</p> <p>Cllr Lisgo queried how the virements within the External Operations had been arrived at.</p> <p>Can there be a clearer representation of the variances within that Directorate which clearly show the movement of the budgets? Ref Page 32 of the report. Can a table please be provided?</p> <p>Can this be circulated to the Committee.</p>	<p>Cllr Benet Allen / Internal Operations</p> <p>Chris Hall External Operations</p>	<p>The table identifies that the £302k virement is made up of some reductions in parking enforcement activity, savings identified in Street Scene, some savings and increased income from Parks and Open Spaces, and some savings and additional income from Bereavement Services. The largest single movement is created by increased income in bereavement services, this is a demand led service and in year changes in income are not uncommon. As a reminder these efficiencies against the budget are being used to support a reduction in income from off street car parking.</p> <p>Commercial Services 22-23 Budget Review</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="896 874 1691 1244"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Parking & Enforcement</th> <th>Street Scene</th> <th>Parks and Open Spaces</th> <th>Bereavement Services</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Expenditure Budgets</td> <td>-£20,040</td> <td>£60,000</td> <td>£42,000</td> <td>-£20,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Income Budgets</td> <td>£302,040</td> <td>£0</td> <td>£10,000</td> <td>-£150,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Net</td> <td>£282,000</td> <td>£60,000</td> <td>£52,000</td> <td>-£170,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This table has been added to the Executive report and Scrutiny's comments have been referenced.</p>		Parking & Enforcement	Street Scene	Parks and Open Spaces	Bereavement Services	Expenditure Budgets	-£20,040	£60,000	£42,000	-£20,000	Income Budgets	£302,040	£0	£10,000	-£150,000	Net	£282,000	£60,000	£52,000	-£170,000	<p>14/09/22</p>	<p>Chris Hall / Kerry Prisco</p>
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01/09/2022	Cllr Lisgo/Lloyd: Corporate Performance Report Qtr1 – Can a breakdown be provided of the different Directorate complaints? This is to enable a clearer view on where there may be pressures in the business and tweak out common themes.	Cllr Benet Allen / Internal Operations	<p>Examples of the types of complaints for each directorate are:</p> <p>Internal Operations: Council Tax recovery, handling of calls, website issues, claim decisions for discounts/exemptions/benefits and processing times.</p> <p>External Operations: Response time to reports, communication on ongoing cases, standard of service and parking machine faults.</p> <p>Housing & Communities: Timescales for repairs/upgrades, standard of work, communication issues and perceived lack of action regarding ASB.</p> <p>Development & Place: Planning; timescales for decisions, handling of applications and perceived lack of action regarding breaches.</p>	14/09/22	Alison North / Malcolm Riches and Jess Thomas
05/10/2022	Cllr Farbahi: Catapult Report – Which of the 6 recommendations outlined in this report have been taken forward?	Cllr Mike Rigby / Economic Development	<u>Please see the supplementary sheet for a full written answer.</u>	18/10/22	Chris Hall /Lisa Tuck / Mark Wathen

05/10/2022	Cllr Farbahi: Is the £50K "Innovation Districts" money identified in the Economic Initiatives EMR (BE019) table the money set aside for the Innovation Exchange?	Cllr Mike Rigby / Economic Development	Yes. It cost £35k in total to stage the Somerset Innovation Exchange event. £20k was secured from the Somerset £4m Business Rates Pool pot and so only £15k of SWT funds was utilised to stage the event. Income generated from ticket sales amounted to £1.5k, which further off-set the cost, resulting in a final cost to SWT of only £13.5k.	18/10/22	Chris Hall /Lisa Tuck / Mark Wathen
05/10/2022	Cllr Farbahi: What are the outcomes of the Innovation Exchange? What options are there to expand on this for the new council?	Cllr Mike Rigby / Economic Development	Chris Hall to arrange for a member of the Economic Development team to attend Corporate Scrutiny in December, to provide an update to Members on the outcomes. <u>Please see the supplementary sheet for a full written answer.</u>	06/10/22	Chris Hall /Lisa Tuck / Mark Wathen
05/10/2022	Cllr Farbahi / Habgood How are legacy assets performing that sit outside the commercial investment portfolio? It is important that these are carried across to the new Authority with clear and transparent performance management.	Cllr Mike Rigby / Economic Development/ Cllr Benet Allen / Internal Resources	The Commercial Investment Report will come to Corporate Scrutiny in January on its route to Full Council in February. An appendix will be added to the report to cover the legacy assets that produce an income. (It will be a table with the name and income per annum).	05/10/22	Chris Hall / Joe Wharton / Harvey Gardner

05/10/2022	Cllr Gwil Wren – could a written update please be provided of the current flood management schemes currently taking place in the Milverton area.	Cllr Dixie Darch / Climate Change	Reply from the SRA can be accessed here .	07/11/22	Chris Hall / Jonathan Stevens
05/10/2022	Cllr Janet Lloyd - can a written update be provided on the current flood management schemes that are going on in the Pinksmoor Area.	Cllr Dixie Darch / Climate Change	Reply from the SRA can be accessed here .	07/11/22	Chris Hall / Jonathan Stevens
05/10/2022	Cllr Dave Mansell - can a written update be provided on the current flood management schemes that are going on in the Wiveliscombe Area.	Cllr Dixie Darch / Climate Change	Reply from the SRA can be accessed here .	07/11/22	Chris Hall / Jonathan Stevens
07/12/2022	Cllr Farbahi – What steps are being taken by SWT to tackle the Water Companies actions which are contributing to the slowing of planning applications. (Phosphates issues).	Cllr Rigby / Planning	Chris Hall will provide a full expanded update when the planning performance report is discussed in the January Corporate Scrutiny Committee. Captured in Planning Performance update on 04/01/23	08/12/22	Chris Hall / Alison Blom Cooper

07/12/2022	Cllr Lisgo – What is the call abandonment rate for customer services? How long do callers wait before they ring off? Are these callers followed up?	Cllr Benet Allen / Internal Resources	<i>Richard Sealey and Malcolm Riches are looking at the statistics. A full written response will be provided in January, when the outcome is known.</i> <i>Still awaiting a response.</i>		Alison North / Malcolm Riches