

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Executive – 27 April 2021

Climate Change Delivery Partnership

This matter is the responsibility of: Cllr Peter Pilkington Lead Member for Climate Change.

Report Author: Chris Hall – Assistant Director Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council has the opportunity to create a climate change delivery partnership with Sedgemoor District Council for the benefit of both organisations.
- 1.2 The Partnership if approved will be established with Somerset West and Taunton leading on its delivery. The employees from Sedgemoor District Council will be seconded to SWT with SDC continuing to pay the associated costs of these employees and their proportion of the projects delivered.
- 1.3 A Member Consultation Panel would be created to represent the needs of both councils.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Executive support to Full Council:
- 2.2 That Somerset West and Taunton lead the creation and operation of a Joint Climate Change Delivery Partnership.
- 2.3 That impacted employees of Sedgemoor District Council will be seconded from Sedgemoor District Council to Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 2.4 That a legal agreement is created for the partnership setting out cost and resource allocations, with delegated authority to the Director of External Operations and Climate Change, the Assistant Director for Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management, in consultation with the Climate Change portfolio holder to negotiate the final detail.
- 2.5 The creation of the Joint Consultation Panel with delegated authority to the Director of External Operations and Climate Change, the Assistant Director for Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management, in consultation with the Climate Change portfolio holder to create the Terms of Reference.

3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 If this Partnership is not supported, the opportunity to combine resources and share knowledge will be lost.
- 3.2 Consideration was given to offering this same service to other Districts, however, negotiating on wider working would likely delay the delivery options and we are very much focused on this being a climate emergency. The connectivity with Sedgemoor District Council also supports the Stronger Somerset model of two Unitary Authorities. Once up and running we will share our experience with the other Districts and the option for them to join will be considered on a case by case basis.
- 3.3 There is a risk that the Partnership may have its resources at Assistant Director and Programme Manager level spread too thinly in establishing this Partnership, and the ongoing running of it. It is considered that the benefits of a successful delivery partnership will outweigh any initial resourcing pressure.

4. Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) have been in discussion at an officer level as to the potential benefits of joining up their Climate Change delivery activity.
- 4.2 Both Councils have approved the Somerset wide Climate Emergency Strategy and have an adopted localised action plan.
- 4.3 Many of the delivery ambitions are the same for both Councils and by sharing the project delivery resource creates an environment to centralise knowledge and experience, minimise duplication, and potentially deliver ambitions more quickly with the benefits of economies of scale.
- 4.4 The joined up service would acknowledge the sovereignty and prioritisation of both Councils as well as their independent finances. The attached governance diagram and section 5 of the report provides more detail on this.
- 4.5 The proposal has considered the ways of achieving financial transparency. Through this process officers have excluded the option of the seconded resourced from Sedgemoor District Council only working on SDC project delivery. This option has only limited benefits to both organisations as there would remain a segregation of the works rather than combination and removal of duplication.
- 4.6 The proposal is for the team to work as a whole on the delivery of the agreed actions. This enables a crossover of knowledge and skills and prevents duplication. The proposed funding mechanism would see the contribution from SDC considered as a proportion of the new total and the work across the agreed priorities is delivered with that proportion back to SDC. The proposed contribution from SDC would be for two Project Delivery employees, this combined with SWT's three would produce an allocation of 60% to SWT and

40% to SDC. This allows all resources to be shared and the benefit of the activities increase.

- 4.7 The proportional option is also considered to have greater benefits and clearer lines of responsibility for actions being delivered.
- 4.8 Under this option Somerset West and Taunton take on line management responsibilities. There would be no change to the employees' terms and conditions of employment for secondments.
- 4.9 This would require an increase to the Somerset West and Taunton establishment number to accommodate the secondments and other roles identified.
- 4.10 The SWT Climate Change Programme Manger would work with the appropriate SDC Strategic Manager to agree on the areas of focus, whilst we anticipate these will broadly be the same we see benefit in the approach as being able to flex to suit a particular authority need or interest. We further consider that this joined up service would review the two authorities exiting plans and bring them together as a central list for monitoring and review. This could be a quick win for the delivery partnership and prevent duplication of works for both authorities whilst retaining transparency.
- 4.11 On 29th September 2020 Somerset West and Taunton Council declared an Ecological Emergency, as part of this declaration we have committed to recruit an Ecological Strategist to enable the council to create an Ecological strategy and action plan, the post holder will also review our Carbon Neutrality Climate Resilience plan to ensure that carbon reduction or off setting measures do not inadvertently cause ecological harm. SDC as potential partners were offered the opportunity to jointly fund and receive the benefits of the new Ecological Strategist role, they see this as a further opportunity to them and have agreed to fund this SWT post on a 50/50 basis, with a 50/50 split of the work once the partnership is in place.
- 4.12 The work of the new joint team would be focused on the delivery of activities under their direct control as well as collation of data from delivery activities across the wider organisation. It is recognised that the action plans of both councils have activity that is best delivered by the wider corporate team. A good example of this might be the work to council housing stock. Whilst this delivery work sits outside of the Climate Team structure the delivered actions against the CNCR plan are within the Climate teams' remit, this ensures the Council can lay claim to the positive benefits in a centralised way, but without the team taking undue credit for the delivery of works by others. The team will not interfere with the approval or governance of projects that sit elsewhere in the organisation.
- 4.13 Funding opportunities come up with increasing regularity, many of these are speculative and can divert attention and slow delivery of agreed priorities due to the level of information required and the uncertainty of success. The joint

team will actively engage with funding opportunities or grants where there is a direct link to an agreed priority project allocated “current” status, beyond that the team will not submit speculative bids unless additional resources are specifically provided.

- 4.14 Somerset West and Taunton are proposing a funding Bid Writer to focus on climate change activity as set described above, this is proposed as a pilot funded from the CNCR budget for 12 months with the aim of it becoming self-financing through successful bid activity in the longer term, if this cannot be achieved within the 12 month period then the role will not continue.

5. The Delivery Partnership and Governance

- 5.1 The proposal would see Sedgemoor District Council resources seconded to SWT and fit within our existing organisational structure for Climate Change shown at Appendix A1. This allows the benefits of working together to be established early, and bring forward the connectivity of our priorities preventing duplication.
- 5.2 Officers from both councils recognise the importance of Member engagement within this delivery partnership. The proposal being put forward is that the Somerset West and Taunton establish a joint Member Consultation Panel with appropriate cross party representation from each Authority.
- 5.3 The Panel is proposed to provide a means of engaging with each authority on a more detailed level, Appendix A2 shows a diagram of the proposed governance structure both for officers and Members.
- 5.4 The proposed make-up of the cross party Consultation Panel would consist of the Climate Change and relevant portfolio holder from SDC and SWT and two other Member nominations as approved by Full Council of each authority.

6. Resourcing / Employee consultation

- 6.1 The proposed structure is identified as Appendix A1 It combines the existing Climate Change Team for Somerset West and Taunton Council with new vacant roles that have been approved by SLT for an Ecological Specialist, a Funding Bid Writer, and a Multi District role to support the delivery of the Somerset Wide Implementation Board, in addition to the roles that would be seconded from Sedgemoor District Council.
- 6.2 The current Somerset West and Taunton Posts are funded.
- 6.3 The Ecological Specialist role is to be funded 100% by SWT until the partnership is in place at which point it will shift to 50% from Somerset West and Taunton’s CNCR budget, and 50% from Sedgemoor District Council.

6.4 The Multi District Project Management role is to be funded equally by the four Districts and represent our combined needs within the Somerset wide Implementation Board and Senior Management Group.

7. Links to Corporate Strategy

7.1 Environment and Economy:

7.2 Shape and protect our built and natural environment, supported by a refreshed Local Plan and develop our heritage, cultural and leisure offer including a clear vision and delivery plan for the Taunton Garden Town

7.3 Encourage wealth creation and economic growth throughout the District by attracting inward investment, enabling research and innovation, improving the skills of the local workforce and seeking to ensure the provision of adequate and affordable employment land to meet different business needs

7. Finance / Resource Implications

7.1 A budget increase would be required to create this Partnership these new costs will be offset by the Partnership contributions received from SDC and the contributions to the Multi District Project Manager role as set out in Table 1. All costs for SWT will be met by the CNCR money as already planned.

7.2 For the period of secondments SDC will continue to pay their employees and the associated employment costs.

7.3 Our Council's existing posts are already funded.

7.4 Our Council's share of the new posts (Ecological Strategist, Multi District Project Manager, Funding Bid Writer) will be funded from our CNCR budget in accordance with the existing approval process.

7.5 Each council will continue to be responsible for funding actions within the approved list based on their location, e.g. Tree planting within SWT will be funded by SWT etc. There may be economies of scale that can be achieved and these too will be applied on the volume and geography of the work.

Table 1

Role	SWT Salary inc. oncosts budget Increase	Funding
Climate Change Project Manager	No change	100% SWT
Climate Change Project Manager	No change	100% SWT
Climate Change Project Manager	No change	100% SWT
Climate Delivery Officer	£38,790	100% SDC
Climate Change Project Manager	£48,710	100% SDC
Project Support	No change	100% SWT
Ecological Strategist	£49,752	50% SWT 50% SDC
Multi District Project Manager	£49,752	25% SWT

		25% SDC 25% MDC 25% SSDC
Funding Bid Writer	£37,523	100% SWT

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Legal advice will be sought for the creating of the agreement, this will need to set out a range of matters that include funding, governance, liabilities, exit arrangements etc.

9. Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 9.1 The report proposed to create a Partnership to enhance the delivery of each Authorities Climate Emergency declarations.

10. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 There are no negative implications identified of this report.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 11.1 There are no identified implications of this report.

12. Social Value Implications

- 12.1 There are no identified implication of this report.

13. Partnership Implications

- 13.1 Approval of this report would give authority for officers to enter into a new Partnership with Sedgemoor District Council as set out in the body of the report.

14. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 14.1 There are no identified implications of this report.

15. Asset Management Implications

- 15.1 There are no identified asset management implications from the creation of this Partnership.

16. Data Protection Implications

- 16.1 There are no identified implications from the creation of this partnership.

17. Consultation Implications

- 17.1 Consultation with impacted employees will be necessary for those being seconded to Somerset West and Taunton.

18. Scrutiny Comments

- 18.1 Scrutiny committee heard this report on 7th April. At this meeting there was considerable debate on the content of the report and the opportunity that was

being presented. There were some concerns raised regarding the future of local government within Somerset and how any new partnership might be impacted by anticipated decision. It was clarified that this partnership, if approved, would not prejudice any decision from central government and might be consider as a head start into joining up services.

Democratic Path:

- **Executive Committee - April 21st 2021**

Reporting Frequency: One off

Contact Officers

Name	Chris Hall
Direct Dial	01823 217578
Email	c.hall@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk