

SWT Executive - 27 April 2021

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)

Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: James Hassett, Dawn Adey, Chris Hall, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Paul Fitzgerald, Amy Tregellas and Clare Rendell

Also Present: Councillors Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis, John Hassall, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Derek Perry, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

120. Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor M Rigby.

121. 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 C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke

122. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

123. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

Resolved that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

124. **Climate Change Delivery Partnership**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to see the report coming through the democratic path and were glad to see it involved partnership working.
- Councillors were glad to see the report included a bid writer post to assist in the work, as there was not always enough resource to support that type of work.
- Councillors agreed that it was a positive move forward as Climate Change impacted on everyone's lives and had no boundaries.
- Councillors stated that the report included some pioneering work and they were proud to lead the way.
- Councillors thanked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change for their hard work.

Resolved that the Executive support:-

- 2.1 That Somerset West and Taunton lead the creation and operation of a Joint Climate Change Delivery Partnership.
- 2.2 That impacted employees of Sedgemoor District Council would be seconded from Sedgemoor District Council to Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 2.3 That a legal agreement was 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.

2.4 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.

125. **Member Training and Development Policy**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors agreed that training was an important area to cover and were pleased to see the report coming forward.
- Councillors queried whether there was a timetable for the training being proposed.
The Monitoring Officer advised that the Working Group would look at a timetable based on the feedback from the councillors 1-2-1 sessions.
- Councillors suggested that some training was required on unconscious bias, personal safety and further detailed training for certain subjects.
- Councillors agreed that a training schedule was a good idea for new councillors as there was a lot of information given when they start their term and that a lot was learnt on the job.
- Concern was raised on the equality and diversity section of the report and that it stated that there were no implications. Councillors requested that it was added to the report that the individual needs of each Councillor were taken into account when arranging training.
The Monitoring Officer noted all the comments on equality and diversity and would ensure that this was included in the work covered by the Working Group.
- Concern was raised that the report was not going to Full Council for debate.
The Monitoring Officer advised what the democratic path was for the report and that all councillors have had a chance to feed into the report via their 1-2-1 sessions.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- a) Approved the Member Training and Development Policy
- b) Agreed to set up a cross party Members Working Group to focus on Member Training and Development (following the Member Working Group Protocol being approved by Council on 30 March)

126. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public (agenda item 8 - appendix 5 only)**

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (appendix 5 only) on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely

information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

127. **Anti-Fraud Framework**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors agreed that it was a clear policy and covered many situations and the responsibilities of Councillors.
- Councillors were happy to support the report.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Approved the Anti-Fraud Framework and associated documents (listed as Annex 1-4 above).
- 2.2 Noted the confidential report on the Counter Fraud and Error Services (Confidential Annex 5).

128. **Re-admittance of the Press and Public**

129. **Council Governance Arrangements Working Group Update**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources advised the Executive of the updated recommendations approved at the meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on 12 April 2021.
- Councillors understood the concerns on all councillor involvement in the decision making process raised by the newer members of the council.
- Councillors were not sure that a committee system would be achievable if a Shadow Authority was formed in 2022.
- Councillors who had experienced both types of committee models explained the merits of both systems.
The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources explained he was not against the Executive model but he thought more could be achieved using a committee system.
- Concern was raised on the cost of moving across to a committee system.
The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources explained the costs involved.
- Concern was raised on voting for a committee system when the councillors did not yet know which system would be implemented.
The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources advised that the vote would be an 'in principle' decision and then work would be carried out on the implementation phase which would be reported back to Full Council for approval.
- Councillors wanted to include everyone in the decision making process.
- Councillors highlighted how cross party involvement had proved positive for Working Groups.
- Councillors believed that the Shadow Unitary Authority should choose which system they used.

- Councillors from the Governance Arrangements Working Group advised that they had worked well together and their ideas were not based on politics but what was best for the Council.
- Concern was raised that the working relationships had fallen between councillors and this was due lockdown and the use of virtual meetings and that a committee system would not improve that.
- Councillors believed that the choice of system was immaterial, it was about ensuring all councillors were involved in the decision making process.
- Councillors agreed that the two Scrutiny Committees should have been set up from the start of Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- Councillors from the Governance Arrangements Working Group advised that they had consulted with all councillors throughout their work on which options to include within the recommendations.
- Councillors were not sure this was the right time for a committee system and that it would not be fair to impose on officers in the last couple of years of Somerset West and Taunton Council being in existence.
- Councillors queried the costs and believed that the money could be better spent on other projects.
- Councillors were happy to support, as the decision was part of the Liberal Democrat manifesto.
- The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources thanked all councillors for their comments.

Resolved that the Council Governance Arrangements Working Group recommended to Full Council that:

Relating to the 2022 Municipal Year

- 2.1 The Council moved to a Committee system of governance from the Council AGM on 10 May 2022.
- 2.2 The Council proposed to the Unitary Shadow Authority that a committee system of governance was adopted, if set up as the principal council for the area.
- 2.3 The Council wrote to the Chief Executives and Leaders of the County and Districts to request that they consider that the Shadow Authority governance arrangements were set up as a Committee system.

Relating to the 2021 Municipal Year

- 2.4 That a second Scrutiny Committee was introduced from the AGM in 2021, with the focus being Corporate Scrutiny Committee and Community Scrutiny Committee. The split of workload for the two Scrutiny Committees (see Annex A at the end of this report) was approved.
- 2.5 That the number of seats on both Scrutiny Committees was 15 from the start of the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.
- 2.6 The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee was split into two separate Committees from the AGM in 2021, for the 2021/22 Municipal Year and became Audit and Governance Committee and Standards Committee. The Terms of Reference for both Committees (see Annex B and Annex C at the end of this report) was approved.
- 2.7 That the number of seats on the Audit and Governance Committee was 11 from the start of the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

- 2.8 That the number of seats on the Standards Committee was 9 from the start of the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.
- 2.9 The role of Shadow Portfolio Holders was included within the Constitution as per the wording in Annex D to this report.
- 2.10 Officers and Portfolio Holders were reminded of requirements to provide information and notifications to Ward Councillors as per the Member Officer Protocol.
- 2.11 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee were asked to work with officers to consider a system for communicating reports to Members from representatives from outside bodies.

(The Meeting ended at 8.25 pm)

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