

SWT Executive - 26 May 2021

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Derek Perry, Chris Booth, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis,
Ross Henley and Francesca Smith

Officers: Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Emily
Collacott, Malcolm Riches and Dan Webb

Also Present: Councillors Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors M Kravis, M Rigby and A Sully.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 17 March 2021 and 27 April 2021 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 17 March 2021 and 27 April 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

3. 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 C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	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 L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

4. Public Participation

Mr Roger House asked the following questions:-

Regards the Taunton Debenhams Store.

There was a gravel path on the Goodland's Garden side. It had a ramp and two flights of steps up to the current ground floor building escape doors. The planning application red boundary line excluded this land which continued on behind the café.

Could the Council advise the owners that they would be willing to sell the freehold of the informal foot path along the Northwest elevation onto Goodland Gardens. This would allow a new flood prevention wall and raised pathway to provide level access to doors of the ground floor.

It would aid reuses of the current structure as demanded by groups including the Twentieth Century Society, South West Heritage Trust and Arts Taunton. To borrow a phrase from the Sheffield John Lewis Store campaign "the greenest building was one that already exists".

The Leader responded:-

We were not currently proactively seeking the sale of this strip of land that you refer to in your question. If we were approached – as we sometimes were for the sale of public land – we would consider the offer in the same way as we did for any Council Assets, with each approach being taken on its merits taking into account public realm use and any restrictions such as covenants that may prevent the sale or use of such land.

5. **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.

6. **Corporate Risk Management Update**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried whether the area was still in a state of emergency with regards Covid 19.
The Director for External Operations advised that the Leader and Senior Management Team were regularly updated on the current status of the Covid Pandemic by Public Health and Somerset County Council. The district appeared to be coping well and had low recorded number of cases and high vaccine take up, which was encouraging.
- Councillors advised that the report had a good airing by the Scrutiny Committee and that all officers and councillors should be made aware of the Strategy.
- Councillors queried CR20 and whether the poor data mentioned was historic data transferred over from the predecessor councils.

The Business Intelligence and Performance Manager advised that yes it was legacy data brought over from the previous councils. Some of the data had been duplicated in multiple locations but officers were in the process of cleaning the data to improve storage.

- Councillors supported the Strategy and agreed that it was good that risks were checked and reported on every quarter.

Resolved that the Executive noted the risks and issues held on the Councils register.

7. **SWT Cultural Strategy**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors agreed that it was important to highlight that there were many creative ways to support the culture sector within the district.
- Councillors were really enthused to hear how passionate the Portfolio Holder for Culture was in presenting her report to the Committee.
- Councillors agreed that it was the right time to start to showcase the arts within the district. Due to lockdown easing, residents needed to start focusing on culture rather than survival.
- Concern was raised on the communication aspect of the Strategy, as councillors struggled to find out what events were taking place across the wider area.
The Portfolio Holder for Culture advised she would look into ways of engagement and communication.
- Concern was raised that the Strategy was too Taunton centric and that the wider district area needed to be included.
The Portfolio Holder for Culture understood their concern. However, other areas of the district were mentioned, including the National Parks, Harbour Towns and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Councillors suggested an audit was periodically carried out to monitor the work done through the Strategy.
- Councillors agreed that a budget needed to be found to support culture activities within the area, as it had a positive impact on resident's wellbeing especially after lockdown.
- Councillors highlighted that the Brewhouse Theatre was not the only venue within the district. The Regal Theatre in Minehead survived without any funding from the Council and was the venue for many varied events.
The Portfolio Holder for Culture thanked all for their comments.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- Recommended that Full Council approved the vision and objectives within the attached appendix.
- Authorised the Strategy Specialist and Communications team (in consultation with the Culture Portfolio holder) to agree the final written content, design and publication style for the Strategy.

8. **Scrutiny Recommendations**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors agreed it was a good idea to start talks about where the Post Office could be sited within the town centre of Taunton.
- Councillors were happy to support the recommendations.

At the Special Scrutiny Committee held on 29 April 2021, the Committee made the following recommendation when discussing Post Office Provision in the district with Richard Hall, External Affairs Manager South England and Wales – Post Office Ltd.

Resolved that the Executive agreed:-

A request was made of the relevant Portfolio Holders on SWT's Executive to commence a line of communication with the Post Office Ltd, in order to consider a mutually agreeable solution to the re-siting of the Main Post Office in Taunton.

(The Meeting ended at 7.20 pm)