

SWT Special Full Council - 26 October 2020

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Simon Coles, Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Paul Bolton, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Ed Firmin, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Marcus Kravis, Andy Milne, Richard Lees, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Chris Morgan, Craig Palmer, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Peter Pilkington, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Phil Stone, Nick Thwaites, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Terry Venner, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: James Barrah, Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, Barry Hawkins, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Sue Tomlinson and Amy Tregellas

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

50. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors H Farbahi, A Govier, S Nicholls and A Sully.

51. 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 L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Barr	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Blaker	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Bolton	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Davies	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC & Bishop's Hull	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	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 J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Milne	All Items	Porlock	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Morgan	All Items	Stogursey	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Palmer	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Peters	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	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 and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Venner	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Wedderkopp	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

The following councillors further declared an interest:-

Councillor J Hassall as the Chair of Rail Future; Councillor A Trollope-Bellew as the owner of three sets of solar panels and land that was used for growing crops for bio-digester. Also as a member of Quantock Eco and Friends of the Quantocks; Councillor R Habgood as a member of Taunton Area Cycling Campaign, Somerset Wildlife Trust and Friends of the Quantocks; Councillor L Whetlor as a member of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group; Councillor C Ellis as a member of the Vegan Society, Animal Aid, Running 2020 for Somerset and Zero Carbon Social Housing Development; Councillor D Darch as a member of the Somerset Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Quantocks and the Climate Change Task and Finish Group; Councillor D Mansell as a member of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Action on Climate and Brendan Energy; Councillor S Buller as a member of the Somerset Wildlife Trust; Councillor S Wakefield as a member of the Somerset Wildlife Trust; and Councillor B Weston as a member of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group.

52. **Public Participation - To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions, statements or petitions from the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 14,15 and 16**

Bryony Chetwode spoke on agenda item 7, Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan:-

Q1. Could the Council explain how it could both support the Climate Emergency Strategy at the same time as planning to develop the bus station into parking?

Q2. On behalf of our members we asked that the Council integrated their thinking and took a positive, meaningful, collaborative approach to connectivity for the people of the town and surrounding area.

Q3. Could those with responsibility for action addressing the Climate Emergency tell us how they planned to ensure other portfolio holders actively engaged with them to prevent counter-productive projects?

Q4. Could the Councillors involved promise to actively engage the community before deciding whether/how to implement schemes?

There wasn't a vision of a sustainable, working transport system for connecting us with work, place, and play within the Strategy which had left the door open for schemes which encouraged congestion, pollution and carbon. An urgent strong additional element of instruction needed in the strategy document. This would provide a prevailing vision which other teams would have to look to instead of planning for further carbonisation.

Bryony Chetwode, TravelWatch SouthWest CIC

Nigel Behan spoke on agenda item 7, Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan:-

In paragraph 3.4 it stated that:

“Despite the production of the CNCR Action Plan and Somerset-wide Strategy, Climate Change itself remained a major risk, and likely would do even if every identified action was delivered here because the issue was a global one. For this reason the Somerset-wide Strategy contained goals aiming at decarbonisation of the Councils themselves (mitigation); decarbonisation of Somerset as a whole (mitigation); and creating a resilient Somerset ready for projected impacts

(adaptation), and the CNCR Action Plan was entitled Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience and included actions aiming to ensure the Council and district were resilient to the projected impacts climate change.”

Q1. How could SWT ensure that cross boundary (other areas/councils etc.) actions didn't have an adverse impact and ensured there would be integrated working with other public bodies etc?

And Public Finance recently reported:

<https://www.publicfinancefocus.org/2020/10/covid-19-no-excuse-forget-about-climate-change>

“Many local authorities and governments had declared climate emergencies, but although responding to the coronavirus had taken up most of their attention for the past eight months or so, Bedford stressed that environmental issues had not gone away.

“This wasn't a new risk, but it's striking harder than many expected,” she said. Natural disasters such as heat waves, wildfires and droughts, which threatened lives as well as assets and supplies of necessities such as food, were becoming more frequent and more intense.

In recent years, threats from climate change had been steadily climbing insurers' risk lists, and Bedford said that Covid-19 must not allow them to fall back down compared to the more short-term (in relation to climate change) economic risks. Bedford said organisations should identify the risks climate change posed to them specifically, and ensured plans were not only fit for the situation now but future proof for the years to come.

She said proactive investment in climate resilience could be five times cheaper than reactive measures taken in the future. (our emphasis)

Climate change strategies should also consider procurement, in terms of whether the partner organisations were able to help the public body meet its climate goals, Bedford said, adding that it could also be important to consider whether procurement was necessary in the first place. (again, our emphasis)

“It's not always about doing things differently, but it could be about doing different things,” she said.

Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment Chief Executive Sarah Mukherjee said she had been “quite encouraged” by how seriously the public sector was taking climate, on a local and national level in the UK and internationally.

“In terms of action to take, the best thing to do was to plan, to make sure they had the understanding to process some of this very complex stuff, and incorporate it into their work,” she said.”

Q2. Would SWT (and other councils) consider whether Procurement (and commissioning/contracting etc...) “was necessary in the first place” when applying the proposed strategy?

Best Wishes, Nigel Behan, (Unite)

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change thanked the speakers for their questions and advised that he would respond with a full written response which would be sent onto them after the meeting.

53. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

The Chair of the Council did not have any announcements to make.

54. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council highlighted the campaign to reinstate free meals for children during the school holidays and that she would keep the councillors updated of any progress made with the local councils in the Somerset area.

55. **To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

No questions were received in relation to Procedure Rule 13.

56. **Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor P Pilkington, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, proposed the recommendations and Councillor D Darch seconded.
- Councillors stated that the Climate Strategy was a well-researched document with broader input from all councils within the County, which they urged Full Council to approve.
- Councillors stated that the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan (CNCR) was a further detailed plan for the Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) area. The CNCR would be a working document that could be regularly reviewed and updated.
- Councillor D Mansell proposed the following two amendments during the debate:-

2.1) The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy was adopted and a cross-party steering group be set-up to oversee delivery and development of the strategy, with quantified sector pathways to be established that worked towards a carbon neutral Somerset by 2030.

Proposed by Councillor Mansell and seconded by Councillor Lloyd.

2.5) A report on allocations for the £500k "Climate Change Fund" budget be taken at an early stage to Scrutiny Committee for comment.

Proposed by Councillor Mansell and seconded by Councillor Stone.

Councillors debated the amendments:-

- Concern was raised that the Working Group had been delayed several times due to the General Election in December 2019 and due to the Covid Pandemic.
- Further concern was raised that the Strategy did not highlight the urgency of the action required and that more work was required.
- Concern was raised that the section on public transport was lacking in-depth information.

- Concern was raised on the finances included in the report and further councillor involvement was requested, which was the reason recommendation 2.5 had been added.
- Councillors debated the role of the Scrutiny Committee and whether the additional recommendation 2.5 was required.
Clarification was given that there had been cross party involvement in both the Climate Strategy and the CNCR.
- The amendment was taken to the vote and recommendation 2.1 was lost and recommendation 2.5 was carried and became part of the substantive motion.
- Councillors debated the wording for recommendation 2.3.
The Assistant Director for Climate Change gave clarification that the Climate Strategy covered the county actions and the CNCR covered local actions for SWT. Amended wording was given, which the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and seconder of the motion accepted.
- Councillors agreed that lots of good work had been achieved on both documents and they thanked officers for their hard work.

Resolved that Full Council approved that:-

- 1) The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy was adopted;
- 2) The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan was approved;
- 3) A local multi agency climate emergency task force was established to aid delivery and implementation of the Somerset wide Strategy;
- 4) A supplementary “Climate Change Fund” budget of £500,000 was approved within the General Fund 2020/21 Revenue Budget, funded from General Reserves, for the delivery of Somerset West and Taunton priority actions with delegated authority to the Director External Operations and Climate Change/Assistant Director Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management to agree those priority actions in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change. Council also be asked to approve the principle that any unspent balance of this Fund at the end of 2020/21 be carried forward to 2021/22 financial year; and
- 5) A report on allocations for the £500k “Climate Change Fund” budget be taken at an early stage to Scrutiny Committee for comment.

(The Meeting ended at 8.55 pm)