

SWT Special Full Council - 3 December 2020

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

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

Officers: Dawn Adey, James Barraah, Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, James Hassett, Alison North, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas, Bob Brown, Chris Brown, Nick Bryant, Ian Candlish, Olivia Clydesdale, Kim Curry, Liz Dawson, Michelle Hall, Robert Hillier, Annie Hudson, Luke Muir, Kerry Prisco, Claire Tew, Max Wide and Jane Windebank

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

80. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors P Bolton, S Coles, A Trollope-Bellew, T Venner and K Wheatley.

81. 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 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 H Davies	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC & Wellington	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 S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	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 N Thwaites	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	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

82. **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**

A letter had been received from Mel Lock and Trudi Grant on agenda item 7, Stronger Somerset.

We are writing to you following our meeting with Kim Curry and Annie Hudson concerning your proposal for Stronger Somerset.

During our meeting you articulated that you were keen to adopt a similar model of Public Health to Dorset; with one public health function to cover the whole of Somerset. This is a sensible approach and would help to ensure health improvement and that any response to threats are not hampered by a lack of capacity or specialist skills.

The model put forward by Stronger Somerset proposed the establishment of five organisations that would require specialist public health input. As the DPH role has a statutory duty to act as an independent advocate for the public's health and wellbeing, we rely heavily on being able to articulate need and influence across the system at the most senior level. In order to be effective in this across this many organisations, as discussed there would need to be investment in senior public health capacity.

We are now at a point in time where the system as a whole, and particularly Somerset County Council, has placed considerable emphasis on an increased focus on prevention. The organisation has embarked on a transformation programme focussed on Improving Lives with prevention at its heart. Significant investment has been allocated to it through initiatives such as the Prevention Fund and Health and Wellbeing Funds. After such significant, joined up progress, it would be a retrograde step should this focus be lost, or we were not able to shape this transformation to improve the public's health.

The Public Health team in Somerset is considered a national example of excellence, in particular for our work around Public Mental Health for which we were awarded the prestigious Sarah Stewart Brown Award by the Faculty of Public Health. Similarly, the team has a very strong emphasis on training and development of new public health talent and has again been awarded 'Excellent' as a Public Health Centre for speciality training by the Severn Deanery. Specialist Registrars request for a training placement in Somerset due to the reputation of the team and the standard of the work. To continue to attract excellent staff and improve the health of the Somerset population, it is imperative that this expertise is able, and supported to flourish even further under any new arrangements that may occur.

Moving on to Adult social care, during our meeting, you described local community-based support around primary care networks as though it is a new way of working. In Somerset we have been nationally recognised for our approach to neighbourhood working. Our excellent and creative strengths-based practise is an example of this, as is our development of alternative community solutions from preventative and early intervention services (such as village and community agents) to micro-providers. This has strengthened further during the last year by excellent partnership working with our community health colleagues, our Primary Care Networks, our Voluntary and Third sector. The development of person centred multi-agency teams has enabled us to promote people's

independence, link people back into their local communities and to begin to develop Social Prescribing.

The development of the Integrated Intermediate Care Service, with one ringfenced budget across our health and social care system has received national recognition as can be seen in many national publications.

Under the Care Act 2014 the director of ASC has many Statutory responsibilities. One is to ensure that people and their families have a range of high-quality appropriate services. Somerset County Council prides itself on having robust and supportive oversight arrangements in place with our care provider market. The proportion of Good and Outstanding rated care provision in the County exceeds national and regional averages. We work closely in partnership with the Registered Care Providers Association (RCPA), Care Quality Commission (CQC) and NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (Somerset CCG) as part of our routine commissioning activity.

Sadly, we have been made aware of a public meeting that took place earlier this week which included a presentation that was misleading and inaccurate. This presentation used a slide that highlighted the following point “continued poor review of (care) services and no plan to improve.” As the Statutory post holder for Adult Social Care in Somerset, I was disappointed and perplexed by these comments. This is not about the model being proposed, but about the statements that are inaccurate and derogatory; not only to the services that are delivered in Somerset, but also to our social care workforce who are working so hard to provide excellent, integrated support to the most vulnerable people in our society. Somerset’s Public Health and Adult Social Care services are recognised nationally as trailblazers. It would be appreciated if the hard work and excellence of local staff teams was recognised accurately in any further public consultation and that this statement is publicly corrected. We would also request that this letter is submitted to each of your full Councils next week and read out for member’s information.

If you require any further supporting evidence, please don’t hesitate to come back to us. Yours sincerely, Mel Lock, Director of Adults Social Care and Lead Commissioner for Adults and Health and Trudi Grant, Director of Public Health.

The Leader of the Council responded to the letter.

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

The Chair Marked a minutes silence for former Taunton Deane Councillor Chris Robinson.

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

There were no announcements from the Leader.

85. **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**

The Chair advised that no questions had been received under Procedure Rule 13.

86. Stronger Somerset Final Proposal

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried the proposed consultation taking place in 2021 and how it would be carried out.
The Leader advised that no details had been given on the consultation process but as soon as they were received, she would distribute them to all Councillors. She mentioned that it would most likely take place in Spring 2021.
- Concern was raised that Government may not accept either proposal (One Somerset or Stronger Somerset) for a unitary authority.
The Leader advised that the Councillors and Officers had worked to the set criteria for the proposal so hoped it would be accepted but that the decision fell with Government.
- Concern was raised that Somerset County Council (SCC) were keen to postpone their elections and Councillors further queried how the elections would run for SCC, Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and the new Shadow Council.
The Leader advised that the decisions on the elections were down to Government to make. Further clarification would be given on the election process.
- Concern was raised on the Parish Councils taking on extra work as part of the proposal. Councillors requested that SWT encouraged the community to assist their local Parish Councils.
- Concern was raised on services being pushed back to Parish Councils and that the residents would be 'double taxed' and subject to a postcode lottery for which services would be provided in their area.
The Leader wanted to work closely with the Parish Councils to ensure they took on the services that best suited their community.
- Councillors highlighted that SWT had a responsibility to submit a proposal, which gave Government other options than the One Somerset proposal.
- Councillors agreed that the recommendations were clear but that there was still more work to be done. They highlighted that the District Councils might not know much about the work carried out by SCC, but that SCC did not know much about the work carried out by the District Councils either.
- Many Councillors supported the unitary ways of working but advised that it needed to be implemented in the correct way.
- Councillors agreed that the timing was appalling due to the Covid Pandemic and that SWT had only been established in April 2019.
The Leader agreed that the timing was bad, but that SWT had shown what could be achieved in such a short space of time.
- Many Councillors agreed that the Stronger Somerset was the better proposal for the community of SWT.
- Councillors were keen to support the positive work achieved by Adult Social Care and Public Health at SCC.

The Leader agreed and wanted public involvement in shaping those services.

- Concern was raised that neither proposals took heed of developing Taunton as the County Town. Further concern was raised that the community network seemed to cut Taunton into two.
The Leader disagreed and highlighted that the proposal would aid vulnerable residents and include Taunton and the wider community which would benefit the County Town.
- Councillors urged the Shadow Council to include a democratic form of governance in a committee structure which would involve all Councillors.
The Leader advised that it would be for the Shadow Council to decide what structure was used for their governance.
- Councillors highlighted the importance of Child Services and that it was vital that they were under democratic control.
The Leader advised that Child Services would fall under the unitary authority as it was a statutory role to deliver those services and she wanted to ensure that those services were robust.
- Councillors suggested that a two tier system would be better for customers as they would know who to contact for services.
- Councillors were pleased that politics had not been included in the Business Case and that it was about what was best for the community.
The Leader agreed and advised that the proposal had been formed by councils that were led by different political groups, so had worked together to do what was best for the community.
- Councillors queried whether SWT would lobby Government for funds to support the establishment of a unitary authority.
The Leader advised that the District Councils would consider that option.
- Councillors thanked the officers for their hard work on the Business Case.

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 1) Endorsed the Stronger Somerset proposal for the reform of local government including the creation of two unitary Councils within Somerset;
- 2) Noted that the decision to submit the final proposal to MHCLG was a “Key Decision” pursuant to the relevant legislation and therefore required an executive decision to be made before final submission. It was proposed that following Full Council’s endorsement of the proposal, the Leader of the Council would make the executive decision to submit the Stronger Somerset Proposal to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government and would make any required minor amendments to the Proposal as necessary before submission in consultation with the Chief Executive and other Somerset District Leaders and Chief Executives;
- 3) Supported the continuing consultation with key partners, neighbouring authorities, business, staff, unions and local stakeholders, above and beyond any programme of consultation that might be required by the Government in due course;
- 4) Agreed to this Council, with the other Somerset councils, advancing the delivery of aspects of the proposals for reform ahead of the Secretary of State’s approval where so doing would support the Stronger Somerset

Proposal and lead to early delivery of efficiencies, community outcomes and greater collaboration & integration;

- 5) Paid due regard to the Equalities Impact Assessment, attached as Appendix B, in considering the proposal for a Stronger Somerset; and
- 6) Noted that, in the best interests of the communities and residents of Somerset West and Taunton, the Council would continue to work with colleagues across all tiers of local government and public service in Somerset.

(The Meeting ended at 7.50 pm)

87. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public (finance appendix only)**

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business 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).

88. **North Taunton Woolaway Project (adjourned from Special Council held on 01.12.2020)**

Adjourned Special Full Council meeting from 1 December 2020 restarted at 8.00 pm.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor Fran Smith proposed amended wording for the additional recommendation 2.8 which had been proposed by Councillor Gwil Wren, as follows:-
To set up a cross party working group of councillors to work constructively with officers to look at an options appraisal for Housing to be delivered by the Housing Revenue Account. The group must consider the North Taunton Woolaway project first, as a matter of urgency. Any recommendations or observations from the working group about this project would be sent to Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council for consideration and endorsement.
- The wording was accepted by Councillor Gwil Wren and by the seconder Councillor Janet Lloyd.
- Councillors wanted the project to be delivered on time and on budget for the community.
- Councillor Martin Hill withdrew his proposed deferment of the project.
- Councillors requested clarification on the amended wording.
Clarification was given.
- Councillor Benet Allen proposed that they moved straight to vote on the recommendations, which was seconded by Councillor Mark Lithgow and was carried.

- Councillor Roger Habgood requested a recorded vote be used, which was seconded by Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts and was carried.

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 1) Allocated a total scheme budget and borrowing requirement for Phases B-E and the conclusion of all phases of the regeneration scheme as set out in confidential Appendix A;
- 2) Delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer to determine the final funding profile for each future phase once the finalised designs had been received for Phases B-E and any relevant planning approval and contract costs had been received;
- 3) The decant of tenants within Phases B which would allow Gold band status in the Homefinder Somerset allocations system for tenants in this Phase and allow those who wished to move outside the regeneration area sufficient priority to move home;
- 4) Delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing authority to approve future decanting and demolition for future phases;
- 5) That all new build properties (Phase A-D) would be set at affordable rents in line with the 2020 Rent Setting Policy. The affordable rents would be set to ensure scheme viability at between 60% and 80% of market rates. However, all NTWP SWT secure tenants who lived within the NTWP (Phases A-D) at February 2019, when the Council made its decision to regenerate the neighbourhood, would have their rents capped at the equivalent social rent if being rehoused in the new NTWP development. These rents would remain with the tenant as long as they retained their tenancy. No current NTWP SWT tenant would be required to pay above the equivalent social rent and service charge for their home in line with the Council Shadow Full Council approval to allow existing SWT tenants to remain on a social rent level; and
- 6) That a formal annual review of the project is undertaken to ensure that the project continues to deliver its objectives, positive outcomes for the community, our promises to tenants and value for money. That the report will be presented annually to Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee.
- 7) To set up a cross party working group of councillors to work constructively with officers to look at an options appraisal for Housing to be delivered by the Housing Revenue Account. The group must consider the North Taunton Woolaway project first, as a matter of urgency. Any recommendations or observations from the working group about this project would be sent to Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council for consideration and endorsement.

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors I Aldridge, B Allen, L Baker, M Blaker, C Booth, D Darch, C Ellis, H Farbahi, E Firmin, R Habgood, J Hassall, R Henley, Mrs M Hill, Mr M Hill, M Kravis, R Lees, S Lees, M Lithgow, J Lloyd, D Mansell, A Milne, D Perry, P Pilkington, H Prior-Sankey, A Pritchard, S Pugsley, M Rigby, F Smith, F Smith-Roberts, V Stock-Williams, P Stone, A Sully, R Tully, S Wakefield, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp, B Weston and G Wren.

Those voting **AGAINST** the **MOTION**: Councillors H Davies and L Lisgo.

Those **ASTAINING** from voting: Councillors S Buller, N Cavill, A Hadley and L Whetlor.

(The Meeting ended at 8.20 pm)

Draft

