

SWT Full Council - 7 December 2021

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Tom Deakin, Dave Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Andy Milne, Simon Nicholls, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Andrew Pritchard (Chief Executive), Jo Comer, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Mark Antonelli, Alison Blom-Cooper, Chris Brown, Richard Sealy, Fiona Webb, Scott Weetch and Jane Windebank

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

61. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors M Barr, S Buller, B Hall, M Kravis, S Lees, C Morgan, C Palmer, A Pritchard, F Smith-Roberts, N Thwaites and T Venner.

62. Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council

(Minutes of the meetings of Full Council held on 5 October 2021, 19 October 2021 and 16 November 2021 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of Full Council held on 5 October 2021, 19 October 2021, with amendments, and 16 November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

63. 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 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 S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Davies	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	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 D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R 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	Comeytrowe	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 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 V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	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

Councillor B Weston further declared a prejudicial interest as a trustee of the North Taunton Partnership.

Councillor I Aldridge further declared a prejudicial interest as a trustee of the Citizens Advice West Somerset.

Councillor M Blaker further declared a personal interest as a member of the Wiveliscombe Partnership.

64. **Public Participation**

Mr Barnes spoke about the cleanliness of Taunton town and the work he carried out to clear the streets of rubbish.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services responded and thanked Mr Barnes for his comments and would provide a written response to the concerns raised.

Mr Redgewell submitted a statement on the bus station provisions in Taunton:-
With Bus Back Better, the National Bus Strategy and Somerset County Council bus service improvements plan, Somerset Catch the Bus Campaign, Railfuture Severnside South West Transport Network and Dorset Catch the Bus Campaign. Passengers would like to know in view of the poor waiting facilities in Taunton the county town of Somerset and a principal Town in the South West Region, what progress is being made with Somerset West and Taunton Council, First Group Plc, South West Buses, National Express Coaches and other bus operators on plans to reopen and regenerate Taunton bus and coach station.

With waiting room, information point, public toilets and café.

When will public consultation be carried out with passengers and stakeholders.

Taunton is losing bus passengers to the private car journeys because of poor waiting facilities when we need to encourage people to use public transport services into Taunton and remove through traffic for the town centre.

None of the present waiting shelters are designed for long distance coaches or regional bus services.

We also need intercity coach facilities in Gateway Park and Ride for Megabus and Falcon Express Coaches services to Bristol, Exeter and Plymouth.

Is the County Council looking at all bidding opportunities for a new bus and coach station in Taunton.

The passengers and voters see this issue as just as important as Wellington Railway Station reopening.

David Redgewell South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation replied:-

Thank you for your note regarding the future of Taunton Bus Station.

SWT are working with our colleagues at SCC to coordinate the output of their Bus Service Improvement Plan and the results of their survey into the need for a Taunton town centre bus station. As the outcome of the BSIP bid is not likely to be known for some months, nor the funding guaranteed, SWT are continuing with design and planning work to bring the operational buildings back into useful service. This work will support and augment any future use of the site as a bus

station. We share the vision of the County council to provide a more integrated transport and travel hub.

SWT continue to explore temporary uses of the bus station to generate income whilst the longer term plans for the bus station emerge in partnership with SCC and FBG.

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

The Chair of the Council sent her best wishes to the Leader, who had been poorly and had sent her apologies for the meeting.

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

No announcements were made by the Deputy Leader.

67. **To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

No questions were received in regard to Procedure Rule 13.

68. **Meeting Dates for the 2022-23 Municipal Year**

Resolved that Full Council noted the Meeting Dates for the 2022-23 Municipal Year.

69. **Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23**

Resolved that Full Council formally agreed that the current Council Tax Support scheme for working age customers be retained for 2022/23.

70. **Review of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked the Portfolio Holder for Community for his pragmatic approach to the work.
- Councillors queried whether it was possible to ensure that the funding was secured for the first year of the New Council.
The Community Resilience Manager advised that they were looking at ongoing agreements to transfer across to the New Council and that the funding for community groups was on their radar for transfer.
- Councillors requested regular updates on the funding, so that they could feedback to the community groups located in their wards.
The Portfolio Holder for Community agreed and would ensure regular updates were given.
- Concern was raised that money was being taken away from the community groups.

The Portfolio Holder for Community advised that the reallocation of funds was explained in sections 4.16 and 4.17 of the report.

- Councillors thanked the Working Group and Officers for their hard work.

Resolved that Full Council agreed the schedule of grants set out within the table 'Proposed Voluntary and Community Sector Grants 2022/23' in section 6.2 of the report.

71. **Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide – Review of Public Consultation and Adoption as Supplementary Planning Document**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Agenda items 10 and 11 were debated together.
- Councillors highlighted public art within the planning guidance and the significance of public art to the community and that it inspired those who lived in and visited the town.
- Councillors welcomed the documents to help guide the developments in the town.
- Councillors were pleased to see that workshops had been held with Somerset County Council.
- Councillors commended the work carried out on the documents, which would be very useful for those councillors on the Planning Committee.
- Concern was raised on what weight the documents would carry with the developers.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that the documents would hold considerable weight, which meant that they could challenge the developers if the guidance was not used.

- Councillors wanted to ensure that affordable homes did not either become unaffordable or fewer in numbers.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation did not want to lose any affordable housing and that it would be monitored. He agreed that a good design should not equal a more expensive house.

- Councillors thanked officers for their hard work.
- Councillors were interested to see what feedback was received from the developers.
- Councillors were pleased to support the documents as they wanted to ensure that good quality houses were built in the area.

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 1) Approved the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document and for endorsement as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the District.
- 2) Noted the outcomes of the public consultations on the draft Somerset West and Taunton Design Guide, undertaken 3 February to 30 March 2020, 11 December to 5 February 2021 and 5 July to Monday 16 August 2021 as set out in the consultation statement in Appendix 1 of this report.

- 3) Agreed that the Director of Development and Place, in consultation with the Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder be authorised to approve and make minor amendments, prior to the final publication of the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide.
- 4) Agreed the creation and launch of a Districtwide 'Quality of Place' award scheme. This would be linked to the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, the Taunton Garden Town Vision, and the Taunton Garden Town Design Charter and Checklist.

72. **Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Review of Public Consultation and Adoption as Supplementary Planning Document**

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 1) Approved the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document and a material planning consideration in the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within Taunton Garden Town.
- 2) Having considered the consultation responses, noted the outcomes of the consultations on the draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town, undertaken 3 February to 30 March 2020, 11 December to 5 February 2021 and 5 July to Monday 16 August 2021 as set out in the consultation statement in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 3) Agreed that the Director of Development and Place in consultation with the Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder be authorised to approve and make minor amendments to the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town Supplementary Planning Document prior to the final publication.

73. **Local Government Reorganisation: Joint Scrutiny Committee**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried what would happen to the district council responsibilities after the elections in May 2022, as the district councils were still sovereign councils until April 2023.
The Legal Adviser told councillors that counsel advice had been sought and once it had been received, the information and guidance would be distributed out to all councillors.
- Some concern was raised on the calculations used for political balance, as not all parties had representation.
- Other councillors highlighted that the political allocations were calculated in the same manner as all our other committees.
- Councillor Mansell proposed the following amendment, which was duly seconded by Councillor Wren:-
2.3 Full Council further resolves to propose an amendment to the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee in the following form:
 - The membership of the committee be amended to provide for three members from each District Council.

- The membership of the Committee to remain the same in terms of the County Council representation.

2.4 Full Council further resolves that this proposed amendment be sent to each of the four Councils with a view to their Full Councils at the first available meeting considering the proposed amendment and resolving whether to support it or not.

2.5 In the event of the approval by each Council to the amended Terms of Reference as proposed, the Terms of Reference are so amended and fresh nominations for three members are made by each District Council from the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee on to the Joint Scrutiny Committee. Such nominations to be in compliance with the political proportionality rules unless these rules are set aside by each Full Council complying with the procedural requirements of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. On this basis the Joint Committee is reconstituted with three members per District Council but the same membership for the County Council.

- Concern was raised on the county and district allocation on the committee and councillors wanted to ensure that there was appropriate district representation.
- Councillors wanted to ensure that the transition to a Unitary Authority was properly considered for the staff and residents.
- Concern was raised that the amendment would take too much time to go through the democratic pathway.

The Deputy Leader advised councillors on the process that would need to be followed if the amendment was carried and the delay it would cause based on another four Full Council meetings being held because Somerset County Council (SCC) had already approved the recommendations.

- Councillors agreed that scrutiny was an important role.
- Concern was raised that if the district representatives were increased, that so would the county representatives, which would make the committee numbers too high.

The Deputy Leader agreed with the concern raised and was not sure that SCC would accept the changes and would be likely to counter-argue and propose an increase in the county representatives.

- A vote was taken for the amendment, which was lost: eight for, thirty-seven against and one abstention.
- Councillors wanted to ensure that the district representatives were not 'twin hatters'.
- Councillors wanted to ensure that there was plenty of opportunity for district input into the New Council.
- Councillors queried whether substitutes could be used on the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

The Legal Advisor gave the answer that yes, substitutes could be used.

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 2.1 Approved the establishment of a Joint Scrutiny Committee together with the County Council and three other District Councils in Somerset constituted in accordance with and having the roles and responsibilities set

out in the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1 (“Terms of Reference”).

2.2 Nominated two (Districts) Members of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee onto the Joint Scrutiny Committee such nominations to be politically proportionate and based upon the political makeup of this council (this would mean at Somerset West and Taunton - 1 Liberal Democrat and 1 Independent Group nominee, as set out in section 4 of the report)

74. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public - appendices 3 and 6 only**

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (agenda item 15, appendices 3 and 6 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).

75. **North Taunton Woolaway Project - Authorisation to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in relation to the North Taunton Woolaway Project**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked the officers for all their hard work on the project.
- Councillors supported the Compulsory Purchase Order to be used as a contingency.

Resolved that Full Council:-

2.1 Resolved, subject to consideration of the matters set out in this Report, to make a Compulsory Purchase Order pursuant to powers under section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 and section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and all other enabling powers as deemed necessary for the acquisition of the private properties in Phases B – D and any new rights for the purposes of securing both a quantitative and qualitative gain in housing by the delivery of the comprehensive redevelopment of the Woolaway properties on the land.

2.2 Delegated authority of all matter relating to this CPO activity to the Director of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Section 151 Officer. Matters included:

2.2.1 To take all steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Compulsory Purchase Order (“Order”) including the publication and service of all notices and the promotion of the council’s case at any written representations procedure, public hearing or public inquiry.

2.2.2 To approve the draft Statement of Reasons for making the Compulsory Purchase Order as set out in Appendix 3 in consultation with the Solicitors acting for the Council.

- 2.2.3 To amend the Statement of Reasons referred to in paragraph 2.3.2 above as required in consultation with the Solicitors acting for the Council.
 - 2.2.4 To make any amendments, deletions or additions to the land identified in this Report to be subject to the Order (“Order Land”) as to include and describe all interests in land and rights required to facilitate the carrying out of the redevelopment and regeneration of the Project and surrounding area;
 - 2.2.5 To identify and acquire interests and new rights required to facilitate delivery of the redevelopment and regeneration of the Project and surrounding area either by agreement or compulsorily pursuant to the Order (including pursuant to any blight notices as appropriate) including conduct of negotiations and making provision for the payment of compensation;
 - 2.2.6 To negotiate, agree terms and enter into agreements with interested parties including agreements for the withdrawal of blight notices and/or the withdrawal of objections to the Order and/or undertakings not to enforce the Order on specified terms, including where appropriate removing land or rights from the Order, making provision for the payment of compensation and/or relocation;
 - 2.2.7 If the Order was confirmed by the Secretary of State, to advertise and give notice of confirmation and thereafter to take all steps to implement the Order including, executing General Vesting Declarations and/or to serve Notices to Treat and Notices of Entry in respect of the acquisition of interests in and rights over the Order Land;
 - 2.2.8 To take all steps in relation to any legal proceedings relating to the Order including defending or settling claims referred to the Lands Tribunal and/or applications to the courts and any appeals; and
 - 2.2.9 To retain and/or appoint external professional advisers and consultants to assist in facilitating the promotion, confirmation and implementation of the Order, the settlement of compensation and any other claims or disputes.
- 2.3 Approved the service of a Final Demolition Notice and the demolition of the buildings and structures in Phase B and C(i) as shown in Appendix 2.

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

77. **To consider reports from Executive Councillors**

The following points were raised on the Portfolio Holder Reports:-

- Councillors queried how many defibrillators were located in the district and where they were stored.
- Councillors requested an update from the Climate Change Implementation Board.
- Councillors highlighted the success of the knitted sprout located in Wiveliscombe.
- Concern was raised on the implementation of The Boulevard in Taunton and that it would impact on the businesses located along Station Road.

- Councillors requested information on parking income.
- Councillors requested an update on the Sandhill Estate.
- Councillors requested an update on what was happening with the Phosphate Funding.
- Concern was raised on the town centres and councillors suggested health checks were carried out.
- Concern was raised on the five-year housing land supply and the risk that the targets for the Taunton area would not be met.
- Councillors highlighted that electric buses could be introduced into Taunton area.

(The Meeting ended at 8.35 pm)