

## SWT Full Council - 5 July 2022

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Tom Deakin, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, Barrie Hall, John Hassall, Nicole Hawkins, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Simon Nicholls, Derek Perry, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston and Loretta Whetlor

Officers: Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, Alison North, Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas, Jo Comer, Katherine Church, Jonathan Stevens, Sue Tomlinson and Joe Wharton

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 18. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors L Baker, S Buller, D Durdan, K Durdan, R Henley, D Johnson, M Kravis, A Milne, C Morgan, C Palmer, M Peters, A Pritchard, A Sully, N Thwaites, T Venner, K Wheatley and G Wren.

### 19. Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council

(Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 24 May 2022 circulated with the agenda)

**Resolved** that the minutes of Full Council held on 24 May 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

### 20. 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 I Aldridge	All Items	Williton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Barr	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr N Cavill	All Items	SCC & West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Darch	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Davies	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Farbahi	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Hadley	All Items	SCC	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 D Mansell	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Pugsley	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Trollope-Bellew	All Items	Crowcombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Wakefield	All Items	SCC	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

21. **Public Participation**

Mr Robert Barnes addressed the Council on issues that related to street cleanliness, fly tipping and other concerns on local democracy.

Mr Pakes spoke on agenda item 9:-

Mr Pakes asked why had the Council turned to the use of a Commercial Investment Strategy to make money and fund local services. He mentioned how the High Street Funds would be lost and he made comment on the debate raised at a recent Scrutiny Committee meeting and that information had been kept confidential, which concerned him, as councillors took a vote on unknown information.

The Portfolio Holder for Communications and Corporate Services and the Portfolio Holder for Phosphates, Planning and Transportation both thanked Mr Pakes for his comments and gave some background information as to why the Commercial Investment Strategy had been used and what had happened with the Coal Orchard site.

Mr Ginger spoke on the petition he had submitted to Council regarding Taunton Area Cycling Campaign.

Mr Ginger thanked the Council for the work that had been carried out but acknowledged there was still more to achieve. He raised concerns on the routes that were currently being used in the area and what work needed to be carried out to improve the infrastructure.

The Portfolio Holder for Phosphates, Planning and Transportation thanked Mr Ginger for his comments and advised him that officers were working actively on implementing many of what was being requested as part of the petition. He urged Mr Ginger to re-present his petition to Somerset County Council, as there had been a change of administration since he last raised the matter at their Council meeting.

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

The Chair of the Council made the following announcements:-

- The Chair had attended some lovely events within the District, including the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations and Armed Forces Day. She thanked all those who were involved for their hard work.

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

The Leader of the Council advised Full Council that she had been appointed as the representative on the Local Government Reorganisation Implementation Board at the Special Executive meeting that took place prior to the Full Council meeting on 5 July 2022.

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

No questions had been received in relation to Procedure Rule 13.

25. **Petition - Taunton Area Cycling Campaign (TACC)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors agreed it was a cross-council piece of work which they supported.
- Councillors stated that they would like to see the connections into the main towns improved.
- Councillors supported the work being carried out in Taunton but would like to see similar work being carried out across the District.
- Councillors highlighted that the petition had already been handed in to Somerset County Council but that it might be worth taking it again since there had been a change in administration.
- Councillors thanked Mr Ginger for all his work on the petition.
- The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Planning and Transportation thanked all the councillors for their comments and support.

**Resolved** that Full Council noted the following:-

1. To support the implementation of a high-quality cycle network by direct implementation where SWT had control, and by influencing others (developers, SCC, National Highways) where it didn't have control
2. To encourage cycling to school
3. To promote with SCC cycle friendly road design
4. To work collaboratively with SCC and TACC

26. **Use of Urgency Powers and Supplementary Capital Budget for Coal Orchard Regeneration Project**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Concern was raised on the Brewhouse and the impact on their trade due to the works taking longer than expected.
- Councillors thanked officers for all their work to ensure the project was completed, especially when Midas had withdrawn from the contract.
- Councillors requested assurance that if the recommendations were approved that the project would be completed.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Communications and Corporate Resources advised that nothing was risk free, but he hoped that the space would be in use by August 2022.*
- The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Planning and Transportation supported the project and gave some background

information on why the costs had changed and gave an update on the works.

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

- 2.1 Noted the use of urgency powers by the Chief Executive who approved the increased capital budget allocation of £675,000 towards the completion of the Coal Orchard regeneration scheme.
- 2.2 Noted the allocation of a refundable £45,000 bond to National House Building Council, approved by the S151 Officer and managed through cash flow.
- 2.3 Approved the transfer of £185,000 from General Reserves to a new Coal Orchard Warranty Earmarked Reserve to manage any potential financial liabilities under warranty claims.
- 2.4 Delegated authority to allocate funds from this reserve and approve related uplifts in relevant budgets to the Director of Development and Place, the Assistant Director Major and Special Projects, and the S151 Officer.
- 2.5 Approved a further supplementary capital budget increase of £100,000 for the Coal Orchard scheme additional £100,000 to be funded by capital receipts.

27. **Blue Anchor - Request for Capital Supplementary Budget Increase**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were very pleased to see the project going ahead.
- Councillors were very happy to support the project.

**Resolved** that Full Council supported the supplementary capital budget allocation of £262,280 to reflect the additional funding provided by Somerset County Council to deliver the Blue Anchor Coastal Protection Scheme.

Councillor D Mansell abstained from the vote.

28. **Ecological Emergency Vision and Action Plan**

During the discussion, the following points were made:-

- Councillors supported the recommendations; however, they raised some concern on destroying habitats and how to move them and create new ones without disruption.
- Councillors supported the Vision and Action Plan and the cross-party work carried out on the project.
- Councillors were pleased to see that the report included both local and global factors.
- Concern was raised on the use of the word 'accessible' and that it needed to be meaningful and include all disabilities.
- Councillors wanted to see the Action Plan linked to work being carried out on local transport and hoped there would be a stronger push towards eco-friendly public transport once the New Unitary Council was formed.

- Concern was raised on the number of complaints that councillors had received regarding grass cutting and that more communications were needed to inform residents why certain areas were cut and others were left. A balance needed to be struck on keeping areas tidy for public use and cultivating eco-friendly habitats.
- Councillor F Smith left the room.

**Resolved** that Full Council approved the following:-

- 2.1 The ecological vision and action plan.
- 2.2 Existing governance arrangements identified in the Somerset West and Taunton /Sedgemoor District Council Joint Climate Change Delivery Partnership were maintained and used as a framework for delivery and monitoring of the action plan.
- 2.3 Somerset West and Taunton with Sedgemoor District Council led the creation and delivery of ecological recovery.
- 2.4 Annual reporting would be undertaken in conjunction with CNCR reporting.

29. **Scheme of Delegation to Officers**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Concern was raised on the Equality Act and work not being carried out on the Equality Working Group or Impact Assessments.  
*The Leader of the Council would check the details outside of the meeting.*

**Resolved** that Full Council noted the Scheme of Delegation to Officers (Appendix A).

30. **Local Government Reorganisation: Re-establishment of the Joint Scrutiny Committee**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Councillors were advised that Councillor M Lithgow would be the Liberal Democrat representative and the Independent Group would advise the Monitoring Officer of who their representative would be.

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

1. Approved the re-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. Nominated two Members from the Somerset West and Taunton Council Scrutiny Committees onto the Joint Scrutiny Committee. Such nominations to be politically proportionate and based upon the political makeup of this council, unless otherwise agreed by Full Council, but only where no member of the authority votes against such a proposal.

31. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public (Appendices Only)**

**Resolved** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next items of business (Agenda Item 15 – Appendix 1 only, Agenda Item 16 – Appendix 1 and 4 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).

### 32. **Six Monthly Commercial Property Investment Update**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors supported the work being carried out within the Strategy as it meant that services could still be provided in the local area.
- Councillors understood that the Strategy needed to be used due to lack of funding from Central Government.
- Councillors queried the length of time quoted for the payback period.  
*The Section 151 Officer gave clarification on the payback period.*
- Councillors highlighted that the Strategy was approved by Full Council back in 2019 and advised that the work had been thoroughly checked, and that assets were debated at the Working Group.
- Councillors highlighted that other District Councils had done similar work on commercial investment.
- Councillors thanked the officers for all their work.
- Councillor H Davies requested that the meeting went into closed session.
- Closed session at 8.05pm
- Open session at 8.15pm
- Councillors queried what impact the Unitary Council would have on the work carried out under the Strategy.
- Councillors queried why there was no local investment carried out under the Strategy.
- Councillor B Hall left the meeting.
- The Deputy Leader of the Council gave further information on the different terminology used for local investment which could lead to confusion that there was no local investment when there was.
- The Leader of the Council gave further information on the work to carry the Strategy forward into the Unitary Council.

**Resolved** that Full Council noted the Commercial Property Investment activity and performance for 2021/22 financial year.

Councillors H Davies and D Mansell abstained from the vote.

### 33. **Green Space Acquisition**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor S Wakefield declared a prejudicial interest as a Director of Wellington Mills and left the room for the debate.

- Councillors who represented the Wellington Wards supported the recommendations and were pleased that Somerset West and Taunton Council were purchasing the land and were working with Wellington Town Council (WTC) on their use of the land to provide local services.
- Councillors agreed that they were glad that the land was being acquired and that it was important for WTC and the residents of Wellington.
- Councillors thanked officers for all their work.

**Resolved** that Full Council approved the recommendations set out the Confidential Appendix 1.

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

35. **Motion regarding the Cost of Living**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor S Wakefield returned to the room.
- Councillors S Pugsley and A Trollope-Bellew left the meeting.
- Councillor C Booth introduced the Motion and highlighted the importance of the work to be done.
- Councillors were happy to support the Motion.
- Councillors agreed that the crisis was real and impacted everyone. They further agreed that the Government needed to take action now to assist those who were on Universal Credit.
- Councillors stated that residents were doubled taxed on their electricity bills because they were linked to their gas bills.
- Councillors requested that an update report was taken back through Scrutiny to show the progress with the work requested within the Motion.
- Councillor L Lisgo proposed an amendment to the wording of the recommendation to change the wording to minimum of £50,000, which was duly accepted by the Proposer and Seconder.
- Concern was raised that the Government were not investing in low-cost energy.
- Further concern was raised on the lack of insulation which impacted on cost of energy bills.
- Councillors had all been approached by many of their residents in regard to the increasing costs of energy bills and fuel.
- Councillors agreed it was a national crisis.
- Councillors requested improved signposting to better assist the customers to get the help they needed.

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

1. Declared a “Cost of Living Emergency”
2. Instructed the leader of this council to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to express the Council’s demands for VAT to be cut to 17.5% for 12 months, for the re-introduction of the pension triple-lock and for the £20 Universal Credit supplement to be restored.
3. Instructed the leader of this council to write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to express Council’s view that



the Government committed to further fuel duty reductions in rural areas (Somerset was currently not eligible). The leader was to also urge the Government to move faster on cross-party desires to uncouple power prices from gas prices in an effort to cut household bills with prices to increase further in October.

4. Endorsed a local Cost of Living Emergency Summit to be led by the leader of this council, with stakeholders including Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Local Trades Unions, Somerset Community Foundation, Spark Somerset, MIND, Chambers of Commerce and invite both local MPs to attend this hybrid meeting
5. Somerset West and Taunton Council would continue working on a minimum of £50,000 support fund for residents suffering from energy and food price increases in conjunction with Citizens Advice to be ready by the end of the summer. This would be funded from an underspend in the previous financial year.

Councillors N Cavill, R Habgood, A Hadley and V Stock-Williams abstained from the vote.

(The Meeting ended at 9.10 pm)