

## SWT Full Council

Tuesday, 6th December, 2022,  
6.15 pm



Somerset West  
and Taunton

The John Meikle Room - The Deane  
House

[SWT MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

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**Members:** Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair), Richard Lees (Vice-Chair), Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Tom Deakin, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, Barrie Hall, John Hassall, Nicole Hawkins, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Marcus Kravis, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Andy Milne, Chris Morgan, Simon Nicholls, Craig Palmer, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Nick Thwaites, Ray Tully, Terry Venner, Sarah Wakefield, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

### Agenda

**1. Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial or personal interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The personal interests of Councillors and Clerks of Somerset County Council, Town or Parish Councils and

(Pages 7 - 28)

other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes.)

#### **4. Public Participation**

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

We are now live webcasting most of our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting website](#).

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

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

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

#### **8. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

This matter is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts.

Due to the recent Community Governance Review of the unparished area of Taunton and adjoining Parishes, we are statutorily required to undertake a review of polling districts and polling places.

#### **9. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021/22**

This matter is the responsibility of the Executive Councillor for Communications and Corporate Resources, Councillor Benet Allen.

To provide Members with an update on the Treasury Management activity of Somerset West and Taunton Council and performance against the Prudential Indicators for 2021/22.

#### **10. Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy and Delivery Plan**

(Pages 29 - 42)

(Pages 43 - 64)

(Pages 65 - 138)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor for Housing, Councillor Francesca Smith.

Somerset West and Taunton Council declared a climate change emergency in 2019 committing the local authority to achieving carbon neutrality ahead of the Government's 2050 requirement.

As a social landlord the Council must comply with a requirement for its c5700 homes to achieve EPC C or better by 2030 and zero carbon by 2050.

#### **11. To consider reports from Executive Councillors**

(Pages 139 - 198)

Part I – To deal with written questions to the Executive.

Part II – To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-

- a) Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts – Leader of the Council
- b) Councillor Derek Perry – Deputy Leader & Sports, Parks, Leisure and Phosphates
- c) Councillor Benet Allen – Corporate Resources
- d) Councillor Christopher Booth – Community
- e) Councillor Caroline Ellis – Culture
- f) Councillor Dixie Darch – Climate Change
- g) Councillor Mike Rigby – Economic Development, Planning and Transportation
- h) Councillor Francesca Smith - Housing
- i) Councillor Andy Sully – Environmental Services
- j) Councillor Wakefield – Local Government Reorganisation

An Executive Councillor shall submit a report to an Ordinary Meeting of the Council as to current and future business of their portfolio for the information of and comment from the Council. Such reports are for discussion and comment only and no motion shall be put to the meeting as to any such item other than those closure motions described in Standing Order 5.



**ANDREW PRITCHARD**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded and webcast. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected during the recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's policy. Therefore unless you are advised otherwise, by entering the Council Chamber and speaking during Public Participation you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of the sound recording for access via the website or for training purposes. If you have any queries regarding this please contact the officer as detailed above.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions. There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions. Speaking under "Public Question Time" is limited to 3 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes and you can only speak to the Committee once. If there are a group of people attending to speak about a particular item then a representative should be chosen to speak on behalf of the group. These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

If you would like to ask a question or speak at a meeting, you will need to submit your request to a member of the Governance Team in advance of the meeting. You can request to speak at a Council meeting by emailing your full name, the agenda item and your question to the Governance Team using [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

Any requests need to be received by 4pm on the day that provides 1 clear working day before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting itself). For example, if the meeting is due to take place on a Tuesday, requests need to be received by 4pm on the Friday prior to the meeting.

We are now live webcasting most of our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting website](#).

The meeting rooms, including the Council Chamber at The Deane House, are on the first floor and are fully accessible. Lift access to The John Meikle Room (Council Chamber), is available from the main ground floor entrance at The Deane House. The Council Chamber at West Somerset House is on the ground floor and is fully accessible via a public entrance door. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are available across both locations. An induction loop operates at both The Deane House and West Somerset House to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

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For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please email: [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

**SWT Full Council - 6 September 2022**

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Tom Deakin, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Nicole Hawkins, Ross Henley, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Andy Milne, Chris Morgan, Simon Nicholls, Derek Perry, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Nick Thwaites, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Danny Wedderkopp and Loretta Whetlor

Officers: Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas, Chris Brown, Jo O'Hara and Joe Wharton

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

36. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors I Aldridge, S Buller, D Darch, H Davies, D Durden, A Govier, B Hall, M Hill, M Kravis, C Palmer, M Peters, F Smith, A Trollope-Bellew, T Venner, B Weston, K Wheatley and G Wren.

37. **Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council**

(Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 5 July 2022 circulated with the agenda)

**Resolved** that the minutes of Full Council held on 5 July 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

38. **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	SCC, Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Barr	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and	Personal	Spoke and Voted

		Taunton Charter Trustee		
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 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 Hadley	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Henley	All Items	SCC & Wellington	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 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 C Morgan	All Items	Stogursey	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-Roberts	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Sully	All Items	SCC	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 S Wakefield	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted

The following Councillors further declared a personal interest on agenda item 15, as Trustees of the Albemarle Centre: Councillors Caroline Ellis, Richard Lees and Sue Lees.

The following Councillors further declared a personal interest on agenda item 12: Councillors Andrew Hadley, Andy Sully and Loretta Whetlor.

Councillor Sarah Wakefield further declared a personal interest on agenda item 13.

39. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

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

The Chair of the Council advised Councillors that nominations for the Civic Awards were due soon and advised that an email would be sent with further information detailed within.

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

The Leader of the Council highlighted to Councillors that there were several consultations open for feedback, they included the following topics:-

- Council Tax Support Scheme for the New Council
- Local Community Networks
- Somerset Panel for Members.

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

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

43. **Constitution Update - Somerset wide Member Code of Conduct**

**Resolved** that Full Council agreed:-

- 1) To adopt the LGA Model Code of Conduct with local amendments (Appendix A)
- 2) That the revised Code of Conduct be incorporated into the Council's Constitution and would replace the existing Code;
- 3) That the Monitoring Officer developed and promoted Member update training to support the implementation of the revised Code of Conduct; and
- 4) That the adoption of the revised Code of Conduct continued to be promoted with Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) for adoption by Town and Parish Councils.

44. **Constitution Update - Procedure for dealing with Standards Allegations**

**Resolved** that Full Council agreed:-

- 1) To adopt the Procedure for dealing with Standards Allegations (Appendix A)
- 2) To adopt the revised Code of Conduct for Councillors complaint form (Appendix B)
- 3) That Appendix A and Appendix B be incorporated into the Council's Constitution and would replace the existing documents
- 4) That delegated authority was given to the Monitoring Officer to work with colleagues in the LGR governance workstream to determine when this would be introduced

45. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next items of business (Agenda Item 11, Appendix C only and Agenda Items 12 and 13) 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).

46. **Oake Woolaway Housing Refurbishments**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased with the report and welcomed the work.
- Councillors were pleased to see good engagement had taken place with the tenants.
- Councillors praised the figures quoted in section 4.4 of the report.
- Councillors agreed the work was heading in the right direction for carbon neutrality.
- Councillors queried what the timings would be for the two properties due to be demolished.  
*The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that the two properties to be demolished would be carried out at the end of the process, as they would be used as part of the decant stage.*
- Councillors highlighted that social housing was needed in the rural areas of the district and hoped that the planning process would not cause any delays to the project.
- Councillors queried how many of the properties were empty.  
*The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that five properties were empty and seven were occupied.*
- Councillors queried whether the local Parish Council had been involved.  
*The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that the Parish Council had been consulted on several times throughout the project stages.*
- Councillors requested clarification on the decant process.



*The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that officers had learnt a lot from the North Taunton Woolaway Project and gave clarification.*

- Councillors were happy to support the report.

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

- 1) Approved the refurbishment and associated works for ten Woolaway homes at Oake which were currently classified as defective non-traditional dwellings.
- 2) Approved a Supplementary Budget as noted in Confidential Appendix C within the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme, which was planned to be funded primarily through capital borrowing plus available capital grants.
- 3) Approved the delegation of authority to the S151 Officer in consultation with the Director for Housing and Communities to determine the final optimum financing arrangements for expenditure incurred.

47. **Asset Management Lease**

**Resolved** that Full Council approved the recommendations within the Confidential Report.

48. **Heritage at Risk**

**Resolved** that Full Council approved the recommendations within the Confidential Report.

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

50. **Motion to declare a Learning Disability Emergency**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor M Barr left the meeting.
- Councillor M Blaker introduced the Motion as the proposer and Councillor L Whetlor highlighted the rights of communications on page 113 of the agenda, as the seconder.
- Councillors congratulated Councillor Blaker for bringing forward the Motion.
- Councillors were happy to support the Motion.
- Councillors agreed that there were too many barriers in place for those with learning difficulties.
- Councillors highlighted the work being carried out on trying to implement 'changing places' toilets within the district.
- Councillors suggested that the Motion should be taken to Somerset County Council.
- Councillors highlighted the impact that Covid had on those groups and that they had been at a massive disadvantage.

- Councillors requested assurance that the sentiments of the Motion would be carried forward into the New Council.
- Councillors agreed that the Motion had included some very stark information which they hoped would jolt the necessary action to be taken.
- Councillor Blaker thanked all for their comments and support.

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

- 1) Agreed that reduced life outcomes for any section of the population were unacceptable and every member of our community had the right to a fulfilling, safe life.
- 2) Adopted the Communication Bill of Rights (Appendix 1) , with a written briefing to all staff and members, and copied to senior managers of all contractors providing public-facing services on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 3) Publicised this resolution via a press release from Somerset West and Taunton Council which would highlight key figures from the 2021 LeDeR report (<https://leder.nhs.uk/resources/annual-reports>) and promoted the value of the Communication Bill of Rights.
- 4) Committed to delivering a completed, functioning Changing Place Toilet in Taunton by the end of March 2023, with bi-monthly progress updates to members throughout development until then.
- 5) Agreed that the Leader of the Council would write to both Somerset West and Taunton area MPs, along with the Leaders of the other three District Councils and the Leader of Somerset County Council asking them to note the concerning data highlighted by the LeDeR 2021 Report and to raise awareness of the Communication Bill of Rights.

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

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors K Durdan and C Morgan left the meeting.
- Councillors requested further information on Blenheim Gardens Café and the developments.
- Councillors reminded Portfolio Holders to consult with Ward Members on any activities taking place.
- Councillors requested an update from the Phosphate Sub-Committee.
- Councillors congratulated the work carried out to install electric charging points across the district.
- Councillors requested an update on the vacancies within the Planning Department.
- Concern was raised on the limited resource within the Enforcement Team.
- Councillors requested a member briefing on Single Homelessness.
- Councillors highlighted the disparity in locations included in the culture events update.
- Councillors R Henley, D Johnson, D Wedderkopp and S Nicholls left the meeting.
- Concern was raised on the findings from the litter enforcement trials.
- Councillors were happy to support and publicise the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Plan.

(The Meeting ended at 8.20 pm)



## SWT Special Full Council - 29 September 2022

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

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

Officers: Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, Andrew Pritchard, Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas, Kevin Williams, Paul McClean, Jo Comer, Tracey Meadows, Sam Murrell and Meg Stokes

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 52. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors S Buller, A Govier, A Hadley, R Lees, C Morgan, C Palmer, A Pritchard and G Wren.

### 53. 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 L Baker	All Items	SCC, Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	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 R Henley	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 M Kravis	All Items	SCC & Minehead	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 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 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 Sully	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr N Thwaites	All Items	Dulverton	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 T Venner	All Items	Minehead	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 K Wheatley	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted

The following Councillors further declared a personal interest on agenda item 9, as members of relevant Parish Councils: Councillors L Baker and N Cavill.

54. **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**

The following members of the public spoke on agenda item 9, Community Governance Review for the Unparished Area of Taunton:-

Brian Larcombe, who raised the following points:-

- Concern was raised on lack of information on what the parish wanted.
- He had only heard information on Taunton Town Council and 'moving forward'.
- Cheddon Fitzpaine had felt that it had been singled out as part of the Review.
- He understood why the Town Council was important with the New Unitary Council on the way.
- Concern was raised on the timing of the Review.
- He believed that the New Unitary Council and Local Community Networks should be set up first and then Taunton Town Council.

Jo Pearson, who raised the following points:-

- She objected the proposed area of Cheddon Fitzpaine and that it would be taken over by the Taunton Town Council.
- She had attended many meetings and also completed the consultation.
- Concern was raised that nobody seemed to be listening to the residents of Cheddon Fitzpaine.
- She believed that the Working Group had twisted the results of the consultation.
- She assumed that the councillors would not have read all the documentation within the agenda pack.
- Concern was raised on the cost of council tax.

Jason Woollacott, who raised the following points:-

- Cheddon Fitzpaine had strongly opposed the proposal.
- He advised that majority of Cheddon Fitzpaine did not want to be absorbed into the Taunton Town Council.
- He believed that Somerset West and Taunton Council did not know the area of the parish very well at all.

- Cheddon Fitzpaine had felt that they needed to seek legal counsel.
- He wanted to protect the parish.

Tessa Dean, who raised the following points:-

- She represented Trull Parish Council.
- Concern was raised that the postcards detailing the consultation had not been distributed properly.
- She believed that there had been no proper consultation with the parishes or public.
- Trull did not want to be included in the Taunton Town Council area.
- Concern was raised that the comments made by Trull Parish Council had not been included within the report.
- Concern was raised on what would happen to the funds received as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- She believed the Review had been a disaster for all surrounding parishes.

Michael Batsch, who raised the following points:-

- He believed that abolition should be the last resort and that the Working Group had ignored that.
- He believed that the Working Group had misinterpreted the legislation.
- Cheddon Fitzpaine had now sadly been led to seek legal counsel.

Brian Heath, who raised the following point:-

- He had been running a community garden in Taunton and wished to carry out a re-launch of the project.

Ian Talbot, who raised the following points:-

- Highlighted that Bishops Hull had not been included in the Review.
- He mentioned that Longrun and Roughmoor had been included, but that technically they were part of Bishops Hull.
- He was confused by the proposals.
- Concern was raised that a boundary review could not be carried out without proper consultation.

Paul Canham, who raised the following points:-

- Concern was raised on the major opposition to the proposed changes for Cheddon Fitzpaine.
- He highlighted that the views of the residents were very important and should be listened to.
- Concern was raised on lack of funding.
- He urged councillors to reject the proposal.

Pat Whitworth, who raised the following points:-

- Cheddon Fitzpaine had always been a lovely caring community.
- Councillors were urged not to support the division of the area.
- She believed in local democracy which had not been followed in this case.
- She was a volunteer in the area and cared about the outcome of the Review.



Giuseppe Frascini, who raised the following points:-

- Highlighted the consultation responses and that the majority of Cheddon Fitzpaine were opposed to the proposals.
- The residents of Cheddon Fitzpaine did not want to be part of Taunton Town Council.
- He urged Full Council to listen to what the residents wanted.

Dave Mitton (SALC), who raised the following points:-

- He supported a Taunton Town Council for the unparished area and had urged the council to take action years ago.
- He did not support the wider project as it impacted on the surrounding parishes as it was an unknown entity.

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

The Chair of the Council made the following announcements:-

- The Chair of the Council reminded Councillors that nominations for the Civic Awards were now due.
- The Chair also reminded Councillors of the six-monthly attendance rule and that after 1 October 2022, no by-elections would be held.

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

The Leader of the Council thanked teams for the events that had taken place during the week, which included an Innovation Project and Culture Forum.

57. **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 had been received in relation to Procedure Rule 13.

58. **Somerset West and Taunton Council amended Political Allocation**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Leader of the Council advised that Councillor D Johnson was to come off of the Licensing Committee.
- The Leader of the Conservative Party advised that Councillor M Barr was to go on the Licensing Committee.

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

- a) Political allocation as attached (Appendix A)
- b) Councillor appointments to Committees (Appendix B)

59. **Audit and Governance Committee Terms of Reference update**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee advised he was happy to second the report as part of the audit baseline report.

**Resolved** that Full Council approved the updated Terms of Reference for the Audit and Governance Committee.

60. **Community Governance Review of the unparished area of Taunton and eight neighbouring parishes – report on second stage consultation and final recommendations**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Chair of the Working Group introduced the report and gave information that had been included in a presentation to Full Council, which included why certain areas had and had not been included in the Review. He also reassured Full Council that the democratic process had been followed correctly and that he was proud of the result achieved. He finished by thanking all the public speakers for their comments.
- Councillor I Aldridge arrived part way through the debate, so would not be able to take part in the vote.
- Councillor R Habgood proposed a recorded vote. The vote was taken and carried.
- Councillors commended the officers and thanked the members of the Working Group for all their hard work.
- Councillors highlighted that the Community Governance Review (CGR) had been part of the One Somerset Business Case.
- Councillors agreed that Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) had not taken the easy route of simply parishing the unparished area.
- Councillors highlighted that the addendum had included some minor changes to the maps.
- Councillors highlighted that the CGR had consulted with the parishes but had not carried out a referendum.
- Most councillors agreed that the CGR had been carried out with due diligence and care.
- Some councillors believed that the area represented the 2022 version of Taunton and should include more than just the unparished areas.
- Councillors N Thwaites, J Lloyd and T Venner left the meeting.
- Councillors were pleased to see progress being made with the project, as Taunton had waited for 15 years for a Town Council to be created and they hoped that it would be a fully functional council that would service the town and surrounding parishes.
- Councillors who had been part of the Working Group agreed that the cross-party composition had worked well together. They also assured Full Council that there had been no assumptions made on the maps and that they had listened to the public consultation responses.
- Some councillors believed that the unparished area should have been parished first, which would have sped up the process. They then suggested a wider review could have taken place at a later date.

- Some concern was raised that the CGR had been carried out as a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) 'land grab' and that very little democracy could be identified within the process.  
*The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that he was confident that SWT had been compliant in the legal process of the CGR.*
- Councillors agreed that the Working Group had been given a difficult task to review as part of the CGR.
- Councillors made comments on the council tax precept and that it related to services that would be provided for the county town. Councillors also hoped that the Town Council would be able to provide services that the New Unitary Council would not.
- Councillors agreed that the CGR had been about creating a great vision for Taunton.
- Councillors queried what would happen if a Judicial Review was to take place.  
*The Deputy Monitoring Officer gave advice on the process that would be followed.*
- Councillors agreed that the work should have been carried out a lot sooner, however, they were happy it was being discussed now, as it was a very important matter for the residents of Taunton.
- Councillors highlighted that communities were important but that they were not set in stone and were based on the people and not on maps.
- Councillors agreed that the CGR should not be a party-political decision.

The recommendations, which are detailed below, were put and **CARRIED** with thirty-two for, six against and eight abstaining:

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

- 2.1 That the Council confirms that it has considered and taken into account the responses received to the second stage consultation on the community governance review of the unparished area of Taunton and eight neighbouring parishes together with the considerations and recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group as set out in this report and appendices as required by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 2.2 That the Council notes that in the context of local government reorganisation it is the responsibility of Somerset West and Taunton Council to agree the final recommendations of the community governance review and the responsibility of Somerset County Council to make any Reorganisation Order to give effect to those recommendations.
- 2.3 That Somerset West and Taunton Council seek Somerset County Council Executive's agreement in principle to use a phased approach to transfer the assets and services starting with those identified in Appendix I, where reasonable practicable on 1 April 2023.
- 2.4 That the Council adopts the Community Governance Review Working Group's proposals for the final recommendations of the community governance review as follows:
  - A. That a new parish be created to include the currently unparished area of Taunton and that in addition:

- i. Comeytrowe Parish Council be dissolved, and the entire area of Comeytrowe Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- ii. The Killams Green area, currently within Trull Parish Council area, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- iii. The part of the forthcoming development in the south-west corner of Taunton that falls within Trull Parish, including the whole of the development north of Dipford Road, should be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- iv. The boundary of Trull Parish to the north-west of Cotlake Hill be altered to follow the green wedge around the Sherford urban area, with the small area to the south of that boundary that is currently within the unparished area of Taunton becoming part of Trull Parish.
- v. The urban area within the Maidenbrook Ward of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish, including sites earmarked for housing development in the near future, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
- vi. The urban parts of Staplegrove Parish, including the entirety of the forthcoming development in the north-west corner of Taunton, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- vii. The slim part of Staplegrove Parish jutting to the west of Silk Mills Lane be included within the boundary of Norton Fitzwarren Parish;
- viii. The remaining area of the existing Staplegrove Parish be included within the boundary of Kingston St. Mary Parish; ix) Staplegrove Parish Council be dissolved.
- ix. A small southern portion of the Kingston St Mary Parish area, representing that part of the proposed Staplegrove East development that falls within the parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
- x. With the exception of Galmington Trading Estate and a small section south of the A38 near Rumwell, no part of Bishops Hull Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- xi. The small triangular residential area at the cross-section with Wellington Road, currently within the unparished area, be included within the boundary of Bishops Hull Parish;
- xii. The boundary between Norton Fitzwarren Parish and Bishops Hull Parish, just north of Mill Cottages, be amended to follow the route of the railway line;
- xiii. The Hankridge Retail Park, Creech Castle and the associated Toneyway Road, currently within West Monkton Parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish, which should run along the railway to the M5;
- xiv. With the exception of the above, no part of the existing area of West Monkton Parish be included in the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
- xv. No part of the existing area of Norton Fitzwarren Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

- xvi. the boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine parishes between Maidenbrook and Yallands Hill south of the Country Park be amended to following the A3259 and new relief road westwards to Maidenbrook Lane.
  - B. That the new parish be named 'Taunton Parish' and that a parish/town council be established to serve the new parish with effect from 1 April 2023.
  - C. That the first elections to the proposed new parish/town council for Taunton should be held on the ordinary day of elections (the first Thursday in May) in 2023.
  - D. That the proposed new Taunton Parish be divided into wards for the purposes of electing parish/town councillors.
  - E. That the total number of councillors to be elected to the proposed Taunton Parish/Town Council be 20 and the warding arrangements for the council and the number of councillors to be elected to represent each ward, be as set out at section 9.19 of this report.
  - F. That the electoral arrangements of certain other parish councils in the area under review be amended as set out at section 9.20 of this report.
  - G. That save as set out at A to F above, the existing parishes in the review area and the names, boundaries, council size and other parish governance arrangements in respect of those parishes remain unchanged.
  - H. That the budget requirement for the new Taunton Parish/Town Council for the financial year 2023/24 be set at £2.114m as set out at section 11.7 of this report.
  - I. That temporary parish/town councillors as listed at section 11.20 of this report be appointed to serve as members of the new Taunton Parish/Town Council from 1 April 2023 until the councillors elected on 4 May 2023 take up office.
  - J. That the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be requested to make changes to the boundaries of the relevant Somerset Council electoral divisions as necessary to ensure consistency between those boundaries and the revised Parish and Parish Ward boundaries made in this Community Governance Review.
- 2.5 That accordingly Somerset County Council be recommended to make the Somerset (Somerset West and Taunton) (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2022 as attached in draft form at Appendix 'A' to give effect to the above recommendations.
- 2.6 That a Shadow Taunton Town Council be established with effect from 14 October 2022 and with membership as set out at section 13.6 of this report, to lead and oversee the work to establish on 1 April 2023 the new Taunton Parish/Town Council.
- 2.7 That the Community Governance Review Working Group be wound up once the Reorganisation Order has been made, concluding the review.
- 2.8 That authority be delegated to the SWTC Chief Executive Officer and SWTC Monitoring Officer or Deputy, after consultation with the Leader of Somerset West and Taunton Council and the Chair of the Shadow Taunton Town Council (if any), to take any action necessary to conclude the community governance review in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance and

to secure the implementation of the final recommendations of the review as set out in the Reorganisation Order.

2.9 That Council agrees Somerset County Council's S151 Officer will notify the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities of the request Alternative Notional Amount for Council Tax purposes, reflecting the transfer of costs from current district council budget to the budget of the new parish/town council.

2.10 A plan illustrating the proposed changes to parish and ward boundaries that would result from implementation of the final recommendations above is set out at Appendix 'B' to this report. In addition, full details of the Working Group's considerations, the reasons for each of its recommendations and detailed maps illustrating each proposed change are at Appendix 'C' to this report.

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors B Allen, M Blaker, C Booth, S Coles, T Deakin, C Ellis, H Farbahi, S Griffiths, B Hall, J Hassall, N Hawkins, R Henley, J Hunt, D Johnson, S Lees, L Lisgo, M Lithgow, D Mansell, S Nicholls, D Perry, M Peters, H Prior-Sankey, M Rigby, F Smith, F Smith-Roberts, A Sully, R Tully, S Wakefield, D Wedderkopp, B Weston, K Wheatley and L Whetlor.

Those voting **AGAINST** the **MOTION**: Councillors M Barr, D Durdan, R Habgood, S Pugsley and V Stock-Williams A Trollope-Bellew.

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting: Councillors L Baker, N Cavill, D Darch, H Davies, K Durdan, E Firmin, M Hill and A Milne.

(The Meeting ended at 8.35 pm)

## SWT Special Full Council - 25 October 2022

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Ian Aldridge, Lee Baker, Mark Blaker, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Tom Deakin, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Steve Griffiths, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Nicole Hawkins, Marcia Hill, Dawn Johnson, Sue Lees, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Andy Milne, Derek Perry, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, 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, Chris Hall, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas, Ann Rhodes and Jo Comer

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 61. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors B Allen, M Barr, C Booth, H Davies, A Govier, R Habgood, B Hall, R Henley, J Hunt, M Kravis, L Lisgo, D Mansell, C Morgan, S Nicholls, C Palmer, M Peters, N Thwaites and T Venner.

### 62. 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 L Baker	All Items	SCC, Cheddon Fitzpaine & 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 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 Hadley	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	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 S Lees	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 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 Sully	All Items	SCC	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 K Wheatley	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	SCC & Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

63. **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**

Mr Kelvin Tutill, Chair of West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, spoke on agenda item 7 in support of the Plan's adoption.

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



## Council

The Chair of the Council made the following announcements:-

- The Chair of the Council advised Councillors of the addition of an urgent item to the agenda, which had been added under the guidance of Item 16 – Special Urgency in the Access to Information Procedure Rules within the Constitution.
- She reminded Councillors that the deadline for nominations for the Civic Awards was 30 November 2022.
- The Chair of the Council and the Mayor of the Taunton Charter Trustees accepted a book of condolences presented from the previous Mayor who had accepted it on behalf of the people of Lisieux on her recent twinning trip.

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

The Leader of the Council made no announcements.

66. **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 had been received in relation to Procedure Rule 13.

67. **West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Development Plan to be Made (formal adoption)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were very happy to support the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Councillors agreed that the work had been carried out in collaboration with the Working Group in a really good manner.
- Councillors highlighted that the Plans needed to be fit for purpose moving forward, which the proposed Neighbourhood Plan seemed to be.
- Councillors queried the 80% who had voted in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan and whether there was a minimum amount of voters required for the referendum to be valid.  
*The Senior Planning Policy Officer advised that the legislation stated that the decision would be made based on the majority vote of those who had chosen to vote.*
- Councillors thanked all the officers and those who were part of the Working Group for all their hard work.
- Councillors agreed it was a very impressive piece of work.

**Resolved** that Full Council approved that following the outcome of the referendum which was held on 22 September 2022, the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Development Plan be formally 'made'

(adopted) pursuant to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Section 38A as part of Somerset West and Taunton Council's statutory development plan.

68. **Urgent Changes to the Constitution**

During the discussion, the following points were made:-

- Councillors queried why the item had been brought at such late notice. *The Legal Officer advised that a letter had been sent by Somerset County Council (SCC) which had to be responded to within the week.*
- Councillors highlighted that the recruitment of senior management had been delayed due to the recruitment of the Chief Executive Officer at SCC and so was only just starting now.
- Councillors understood the concern raised for the short notice, however, they supported the action required.
- Councillors agreed that given the circumstances, it was a valid change to the Constitution.

**Resolved** that Full Council approved:-

- a) To authorise the above amendment (detailed in section 1.6 of the report) to the Constitution.
- b) Given the urgency of the matter, to give authority to the Chief Executive Officer to consent to the relevant notice from the County Council forthwith, and;
- c) To take any further actions that might be necessary between now and 1 April 2023 required on an urgent basis in compliance with The Somerset (Structural Changes) Order 2022 and the Duty to co-operate in the setting up of the new Somerset Council.

(The Meeting ended at 6.40 pm)

Report Number: SWT 150/22

# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Full Council – 6 December 2022**

### **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

**This matter is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts**

**Report Author: Elisa Day, Electoral Services Specialist**

#### **1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Due to the recent Community Governance Review of the unparished area of Taunton and adjoining Parishes, we are statutorily required to undertake a review of polling districts and polling places

#### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Full Council agree that due to the tight timescale, a cross party committee be established with delegated powers to consider and determine the review on behalf of the Council

#### **3 Risk Assessment**

- 3.1 If the Council does not undertake the review, or does not carry the review out in accordance with the statutory framework, it could be liable to judicial review.

#### **4 Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 Local authorities are required to divide every constituency into polling districts for the purposes of UK Parliamentary elections and to designate a polling place for each polling district. As the boundaries have changed due to the recent Community Governance Review, it is necessary to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places to ensure that electors are able to vote at the most convenient polling place at Parliamentary and local elections.
- 4.2 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts.
- 4.3 Each parish is to be a separate polling district unless there are special circumstances. This means that a parish must not be in a polling district which has a part of a different parish within it. Within a polling district, the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

- 4.4 A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
- 4.5 A polling station is a room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.
- 4.6 In conducting reviews, local authorities must follow the rules set out in Section 18C and Schedule A1, Representation of the People Act 1983 and Regulation 3. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006. The Electoral Commission also published guidance on the conduct of reviews.
- The authority must publish notice of the holding of a review
  - The authority must consult the (Acting) Returning Officer in a constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
  - The (Acting) Returning Officer must make representations to the authority which must include information as to the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within polling places (existing or proposed)
  - The local authority must public the (Acting) Returning Officer’s representations
  - Any elector in a constituency situated in whole or in part in the authority’s area may make representations
  - Representations made by any person in connection with a review of polling places may include proposals for specified alternative polling places
  - On completion of a review, the authority must give reasons for its decisions in the review and publish such other information as prescribed
- 4.7 As part of the review process, local authorities must:
- Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
  - Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled, and
  - When considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons

4.8 Timetable

The timetable which is being followed is:

Notice of Review (commencement of review)	Monday 14 November 2022
Publication of ARO comments	Monday 28 November 2022
End of consultation period	Monday 5 December 2022
Council Consideration	Tuesday 6 December 2022
Publication of review result	Monday 16 January 2023
Publication of the revised register	Wednesday 1 February 2023

4.9 The current situation is:

- The (Acting) Returning Officers have confirmed they have no comments to make on the proposals

- 6 additional representations have been received all suggesting the possibility of change
- 4.10 After considering all of the representations, the Council must decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places.
- 4.11 The Council should consider the following as part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries:
- Whether the boundaries are well defined
  - Whether there are suitable transport links within the polling district, and how they related to the areas of the district that are most highly populated
- 4.12 There are a number of factors that the Council must consider when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places, including whether:
- The location is reasonably accessible within the polling district
  - The building is able to accommodate more than one polling station if required
  - The building is readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections
  - The building may be demolished as part of a new development
  - The building is accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place
- 4.13 Once the Council has agreed on the proposals, details of the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public. These should be made available at the council offices in both Taunton and Williton and on the council's website. The reasons for choosing a particular polling district and polling place must be given. The following must also be published:
- All correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
  - All representations made by any person in connection with the review
  - The minutes of any meeting held by the authority to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
  - Details of the places where the results of the review have been published
- 4.14 Any changes will be incorporated in the revised version of the Register of Electors to be published by the Electoral Registration Officer on 1 February 2023.
- 4.15 Due to the timescales involved it is recommended that Full Council delegate responsibility for considering and determining the review to a cross-party committee. The date of publication of the revised register is of prime consideration, a Committee could have greater flexibility to meet at shorter notice than could be achieved by calling an additional meeting of the full council.
- 4.16 The Council's Electoral Services Specialist will report to the committee, but all Members will be advised of any meeting so they can have their views considered prior to any decisions being made.
- 4.17 It is considered that any committee should be constituted on a cross party basis,

especially to avoid potential accusations of partiality in the selection of polling places within a polling district.

## **5 Links to Corporate Strategy**

5.1 It is a statutory duty of the local authority to undertake reviews of polling places and polling districts after alterations to boundaries.

## **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

6.1 There are no financial implications for the Council, except potential additional costs for the hire of more buildings if any are identified for use as polling places.

## **7 Unitary Council Financial Implications and S24 Direction Implications**

7.1 It is a statutory duty of the local authority to undertake reviews of polling places and polling districts after alterations to boundaries.

## **8 Legal Implications**

8.1 There is a statutory responsibility to carry out the review. In conducting the statutory review, local authorities must follow the rules set out in Section 18C and Schedule A1, Representation of the People Act 1983 and Regulation 3, Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006.

## **9 Climate, Ecology and Sustainability Implications**

9.1 There are no specific climate change implications, except that there is a possibility that changes of polling places would reduce car usage.

## **10 Equality and Diversity Implications**

10.1 When considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, the authority must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

### **Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Audit and Governance Committee – No**
- **Executive – No**
- **Full Council – Yes (6.12.22)**

### **Reporting Frequency: Ad-hoc**

### **List of Appendices (background papers to the report)**

Appendix A	Proposed polling districts and polling places spreadsheet
Appendix B	Existing polling districts and polling places with ARO comments spreadsheet
Appendix C	Emails in response to the consultation

### **Contact Officers**

Name	Elisa Day
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**Somerset West and Taunton Council**  
**Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

Poll ID	Parish	County/Unitary Division	Proposed Polling Station	Alternative Polling Station for SCC by-election prior to boundary review		Comments	Consultation Responses
DAA	Ashbrittle	Upper Tone	Ashbrittle Village Hall				
DAB	Ash Priors (Parish Meeting)	Lydeard	Ash Priors Village Hall				
DAC	Bathealton	Upper Tone	Bathealton Village hall				
DAD	Bickenhall (Neroche)	Blackdown and Neroche	Neroche Hall, Bickenhall				
DAE	Bicknoller	Dunster	Bicknoller Village Hall				
DAF	Bishops Hull	Bishops Hull and Taunton West	Bishops Hull Hub				
DAG	Bishops Lydeard (Bishops Lydeard Ward)	Lydeard	Bishops Lydeard Village Hall				
DAH	Bishops Lydeard (Cothelstone Ward)	Lydeard	Bishops Lydeard Village Hall				
DAI	Bradford on Tone	Upper Tone	Bradford on Tone Village Hall				
DAJ	Brompton Ralph	Dulverton and Exmoor	Brompton Ralph Village Hall				
DAK	Brompton Regis	Dulverton and Exmoor	Brompton Regis Village Hall				
DAL	Brompton Regis (Bury)	Dulverton and Exmoor	Brompton Regis Village Hall				
DAM	Brushford	Dulverton and Exmoor	Brushford Parish Hall				
DAN	Burrowbridge	Monkton and North Curry	Coronation Hall, Burrowbridge				
DAO	Carhampton (Blue Anchor Ward)	Dunster	Carhampton Village Hall				
DAP	Carhampton (Carhampton Ward)	Dunster	Carhampton Village Hall				
DAQ	Cheddon Fitzpaine (Part 1)	Monkton and North Curry	Cheddon Fitzpaine Memorial Hall		No longer warded Parish		
DAR	Cheddon Fitzpaine (Part 2)	Taunton North	Cheddon Fitzpaine Memorial Hall	West Monkton Village Hall	No longer warded Parish		
DAS	Chipstable	Upper Tone	Church Hall, Waterrow				
DAT	Churchstanton	Blackdown and Neroche	Churchurchinford Village hall				
DAU	Clatworthy	Dulverton and Exmoor	Clatworthy Village Hall				
DAV	Combe Florey	Lydeard	Combe Florey Village Hall				
DAW	Corfe	Blackdown and Neroche	Corfe Village Hall				
DAX	Cotford St Luke	Lydeard	Cotford St Luke Community Hall				
DAY	Creech St Michael	Monkton and North Curry	Creech St Michael Village Hall				
DAZ	Crowcombe	Dunster	Crowcombe Church House, Crowcombe				
DBA	Curland (Neroche)	Blackdown and Neroche	Neroche Hall, Bickenhall				
DBB	Cutcombe	Dulverton and Exmoor	Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross				
DBC	Dulverton	Dulverton and Exmoor	Dulverton Town Hall				
DBD	Dulverton (Outer)	Dulverton and Exmoor	Dulverton Town Hall				
DBE	Dunster	Dunster	Dunster Tithe Barn				
DBF	Durston (Parish Meeting)	Monkton and North Curry	Durston Village Hall		possibility of hall closing, alternative station Creech St Michael Village Hall		
DBG	East Quantoxhead (Parish Meeting)	Watchet and Stogursey	East Quantoxhead Village Hall				
DBH	Elworthy (Parish Meeting)	Dunster	Stogumber Village Hall				
DBI	Exford	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exford Village Hall				
DBJ	Exmoor	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exford Village Hall		Simonsbath House does not meet disability requirements.		White Rocks Cottage - possible alternative
DBK	Exton	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exton and Bridgetown Village Hall				
DBL	Fitzhead	Upper Tone	The Tithe Barn, Fitzhead				
DBM	Halse	Upper Tone	Halse Village Hall				
DBN	Hatch Beauchamp	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall				
DNO	Holford	Watchet and Stogursey	Holford Village Hall, Holford				
DNP	Huish Champflower	Dulverton and Exmoor	Huish Champflower Village Hall				
DBQ	Kilve	Watchet and Stogursey	Kilve Village Hall				
DBR	Kingston St Mary	Rowbarton and Staplegrove	Kingston St Mary Village Hall				
DBS	Langford Budville	Upper Tone	Langford Budville Jubilee Hall				
DBT	Luccombe	Dulverton and Exmoor	Luccombe Village Hall				
DBU	Luxborough	Dulverton and Exmoor	Luxborough Village Hall				
DBV	Lydeard St Lawrence (Lydeard St Lawrence Ward)	Lydeard	Lydeard St Lawrence Village Hall				
DBW	Lydeard St Lawrence (Tolland Ward)	Lydeard	Lydeard St Lawrence Village Hall				
DBX	Milverton	Upper Tone	Victoria Rooms, Milverton				
DBY	Minehead (Alcombe North Ward)	Dunster	Alcombe Methodist Church, Lower Meadow Road				
DBZ	Minehead (Alcombe South Ward)	Dunster	St Michaels Church, Alcombe				
DCA	Minehead (Minehead Central Ward 1)	Minehead	Minehead Methodist Church Small Hall				
DCB	Minehead (Minehead Central Ward 2)	Minehead	Roman Catholic Church				
DCC	Minehead (Minehead North Ward)	Minehead	Minehead Methodist Church Main Hall				
DCD	Minehead (Periton & Woodcombe Ward)	Minehead	Sainsbury Community Hall				
DCE	Monksilver	Dunster	EMN Community Hall				
DCF	Nettlecombe	Dunster	EMN Community Hall				
DCG	North Curry	Monkton and North Curry	North Curry Village Hall				
DCH	Norton Fitzwarren	Lydeard	Norton Fitzwarren Village Hall				

DCI	Nynehead	Upper Tone	The Memorial Hall, Nynehead	
DCJ	Oake	Upper Tone	Oake and District Hall, Oake	
DCK	Oare (Parish Meeting)	Dulverton and Exmoor	Porlock Village Hall	
DCL	Old Cleeve (Old Cleeve Ward)	Dunster	Old Cleeve Community Hall	
DCM	Old Cleeve (Roadwater Ward)	Dunster	Roadwater Village Hall	
DCN	Old Cleeve (Washford Ward)	Dunster	Washford Memorial Hall	
DCO	Orchard Portman (Neroche)	Blackdown and Neroche	Neroche Hall, Bickenhall	request from school to move station from Thurlbear Primary School.
DCP	Otterford	Blackdown and Neroche	Otterford Parish Hall, Bishopswood, Chard	
DCQ	Pitminster	Blackdown and Neroche	The Old School, Pitminster	
DCR	Porlock	Dulverton and Exmoor	Porlock Village Hall	
DCS	Ruishton (Ruishton Ward)	Blackdown and Neroche	Ruishton Village Hall	
DCT	Ruishton (Thornfalcon Ward)	Blackdown and Neroche	Ruishton Village Hall	
DCU	Sampford Arundel	Upper Tone	The Parish Room, Sampford Arundel	
DCV	Sampford Brett	Watchet and Stogursey	Sampford Brett Village Hall	
DCW	Selworthy & Minehead Without (M'head W'out Ward)	Dulverton and Exmoor	Allerford and Selworthy Community Hall	
DCX	Selworthy & Minehead Without (Selworthy Ward)	Dulverton and Exmoor	Allerford and Selworthy Community Hall	
DCY	Skilgate (Parish Meeting)	Dulverton and Exmoor	Upton Village Hall	
DCZ	Staple Fitzpaine (Neroche)	Blackdown and Neroche	Neroche Hall, Bickenhall	
DDA	Stawley	Upper Tone	The Appley Pavilion (Stawley)	
DDB	Stogumber	Dunster	Stogumber Village Hall	
DDC	Stogursey	Watchet and Stogursey	Stogursey Victory Hall	
DDD	Stoke St Gregory	Monkton and North Curry	Williams Hall, Stoke St Gregory	
DDE	Stoke St Mary	Blackdown and Neroche	Stoke St Mary Village Hall	
DDF	Stringston (Part 1) (Parish Meeting)	Watchet and Stogursey	Kilve Village Hall	
DDG	Stringston (Part 2) (Parish Meeting)	Watchet and Stogursey	Stogursey Victory Hall	
DDH	Taunton (Blackbrook & Holway Ward 1)	Taunton South	Taunton Deane Bowling Club	Polling station needs to be big enough for a triple station. Checking The Holway
DDI	Taunton (Blackbrook & Holway Ward 2)	Taunton South	Taunton Deane Bowling Club	Centre for availability and size.
DDJ	Taunton (Blackbrook & Holway Ward 3)	Taunton South	Skittle Alley, The Flying Horse	
DDK	Taunton (Comeytrowe Ward 1)	Comeytrowe and Trull	Comeytrowe Community Hall	
DDL	Taunton (Comeytrowe Ward 2)	Comeytrowe and Trull	Comeytrowe Community Hall (Walker Room)	
DDM	Taunton (Comeytrowe Ward 3)	Bishops Hull & Taunton West	Comeytrowe Community Hall (Walker Room)	Bishops Hull Hub
DDN	Taunton (Halcon & Lane Ward 1)	Taunton East	All Saints Church Hall, Roman Road	
DDO	Taunton (Halcon & Lane Ward 2)	Taunton East	Community Hall, Newton Road	
DDP	Taunton (Halcon & Lane Ward 3)	Monkton & North Curry	Community Hall, Newton Road	Brittons Ash Community Hall
DDQ	Taunton (Halcon & Lane Ward 4)	Taunton East	Lisieux Way Methodist Church	
DDR	Taunton (Halcon & Lane Ward 5)	Taunton South	Lisieux Way Methodist Church	
DDS	Taunton (Lyngford Ward 1)	Rowbarton & Staplegrove	Function Room, The 68 Club	
DDT	Taunton (Lyngford Ward 2)	Taunton North	Function Room, The 68 Club	St Peters Church Hall
DDU	Taunton (Maidenbrook Ward)	Taunton North	West Monkton Village Hall	
DDV	Taunton (Manor & Tangier Ward 1)	Bishops Hull & Taunton West	The Trident, Galmington Road	
DDW	Taunton (Manor & Tangier Ward 2)	Bishops Hull & Taunton West	Parkfield School, Parkfield Road	
DDX	Taunton (North Town Ward)	Bishops Hull & Taunton West	North Town School	trying to locate a suitable alternative
DDY	Taunton (Obridge Ward)	Taunton North	Community Hall, Wellesley Street	Albemarle Centre, Taunton
DDZ	Taunton (Pyrland Ward 1)	Taunton North	Wellsprings Leisure Centre	
DEA	Taunton (Pyrland Ward 2)	Taunton North	St Peters Church Hall	
DEB	Taunton (Pyrland Ward 3)	Monkton & North Curry	Wellsprings Leisure Centre	Cheddon Fitzpaine
DEC	Taunton (Staplegrove Ward)	Rowbarton & Staplegrove	Staplegrove Village Hall	
DED	Taunton (Victoria Ward 1)	Taunton East	Holy Trinity Church Hall	
DEE	Taunton (Victoria Ward 2)	Taunton South	Holy Trinity Church Hall	
DEF	Taunton (Victoria Ward 3)	Taunton East	St James School	consider changing if suitable alternative can be found
DEG	Taunton (Victoria Ward 4)	Taunton East	Victoria Park Pavilion	
DEH	Taunton (Victoria Ward 5)	Bishops Hull & Taunton West	Meeting Room, Taunton Library	
DEI	Taunton (Vivary Ward 1)	Taunton South	Salvation Army, South Street	
DEJ	Taunton (Vivary Ward 2)	Taunton South	The Wyvern Club, Mountfields Road	
DEK	Taunton (Vivary Ward 3)	Bishops Hull & Taunton West	Taunton Catholic Centre	
DEL	Taunton (Wellsprings & Rowbarton Ward 1)	Rowbarton & Staplegrove	St Andrews Hall, Kingston Road	
DEM	Taunton (Wellsprings & Rowbarton Ward 2)	Rowbarton & Staplegrove	Community Room, Broomfield House	
DEN	Taunton (Wellsprings & Rowbarton Ward 3)	Monkton & North Curry	Community Room, Broomfield House	Cheddon Fitzpaine
DEO	Taunton (Wilton & Sherford Ward 1)	Comeytrowe and Trull	Dunning Room, St Georges Church Hall	
DEP	Taunton (Wilton & Sherford Ward 2)	Comeytrowe and Trull	Churchill Hall, Middleway	
DEQ	Timberscombe	Dulverton and Exmoor	Timberscombe Village Hall	
DER	Treborough (Parish Meeting)	Dulverton and Exmoor	Luxborough Village Hall	
DES	Trull	Comeytrowe and Trull	Trull Memorial Hall	No longer warded Parish
DET	Upton	Dulverton and Exmoor	Upton Village Hall	
DEU	Watchet	Watchet and Stogursey	Watchet Phoenix Centre	
DEV	Wellington (Wellington East Ward)	Blackdown and Neroche	Wellington Baptist Church	
DEW	Wellington (Wellington North Ward 1)	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Reminiscence Learning	



DEX	Wellington (Wellington North Ward 2)	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington Rugby Club	
DEY	Wellington (Wellington North Ward 3)	Wellington and Rockwell Green	The Northfield Centre	
DEZ	Wellington (Rockwell Green Ward)	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Rockwell Green Village Hall	
DFA	Wellington (Wellington South Ward 1)	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Bulford Community Hall	
DFB	Wellington (Wellington South Ward 2)	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington Arts Centre	
DFC	Wellington (Wellington South East Ward)	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington Baptist Church	
DFD	Wellington Without (Thorne St Margaret Ward)	Upper Tone	Sampford Arundel Beambridge Inn	
DFE	Wellington Without (Wellington Without Ward 1)	Upper Tone	Sampford Arundel Beambridge Inn	
DFF	Wellington Without (Wellington Without Ward 2)	Upper Tone	The Parish Room, Sampford Arundel	
DFG	West Bagborough	Lydeard	Popham Hall, West Bagborough	
DFH	West Buckland	Blackdown and Neroche	West Buckland Village Hall	
DFI	West Hatch	Blackdown and Neroche	West Hatch Village Hall	
DFJ	West Monkton (Part 1)	Monkton and North Curry	West Monkton Village Hall	
DFK	West Monkton (Part 2)	Monkton and North Curry	Brittons Ash Community Hall	
DFL	West Quantoxhead	Watchet and Stogursey	West Quantoxhead Village Hall	
DFM	Williton	Watchet and Stogursey	Council Chamber, West Somerset House	
DFN	Winsford	Dulverton and Exmoor	Winsford Village Hall	
DFO	Withycombe	Dunster	Withycombe Memorial Hall	
DFP	Withypool & Hawkridge (Part - Hawkridge)	Dulverton and Exmoor	Hawkridge Village Hall? Withypool Village Hall?	Consider moving to Withypool as only 40 electors
DFQ	Withypool & Hawkridge	Dulverton and Exmoor	Withypool Village Hall	
DFR	Wiveliscombe (Part 1)	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe Community Centre	
DFS	Wiveliscombe (Part 2)	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe Community Centre	
DFT	Wootton Courtenay	Dulverton and Exmoor	Wootton Courtenay Village Hall	



Existing Polling District and Polling Places with ARO comments

Multiple Station	Poll ID	Polling Station	County/Unitary Division	District Ward	Parish	Comments
	DAA - T	Ashbrittle Village Hall	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe & District	Ashbrittle	Satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DAB - T	Ash Priors Village Hall	Lydeard	South Quantock	Ash Priors (Parish Meeting)	limited parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DAC - T	Bathealton Village hall	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe & District	Bathealton	satisfactory, no off street parking, ramp to entrance
	DAD - T	Neroche Hall, Bickenhall	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch & Blackdown	Bickenhall (Neroche)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DAE - B	Bicknoller Village Hall	Dunster	South Quantock	Bicknoller	Central location, good facilities and good parking
Double	DAF - T	Bishops Hull Hub	Bishops Hull and Taunton West	Comeytrove & Bishops Hull	Bishops Hull	New Station - used 2022
Double	DAG - T	Bishops Lydeard Village Hall	Lydeard	South Quantock	Bishops Lydeard (Bishops Lydeard Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DAH - T	Bishops Lydeard Village Hall	Lydeard	South Quantock	Bishops Lydeard (Cothelstone Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DAI - T	Bradford on Tone Village Hall	Upper Tone	Monument	Bradford on Tone	satisfactory, limited parking with no disabled parking spaces
	DAJ - B	Brompton Ralph Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Wiveliscombe & District	Brompton Ralph	Satisfactory
	DAK - B	Brompton Regis Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Dulverton & District	Brompton Regis	Satisfactory
	DAL - B	Brompton Regis Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Dulverton & District	Brompton Regis (Bury)	satisfactory
	DAM - B	Brushford Parish Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Dulverton & District	Brushford	Great Parking - Good facilities Good Access for all
	DAN - T	Coronation Hall, Burrowbridge	Monkton and North Curry	North Curry & Ruishton	Burrowbridge	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DAO - B	Carhampton Village Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Carhampton (Blue Anchor Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DAP - B	Carhampton Village Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Carhampton (Carhampton Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DAQ - T	Cheddon Fitzpaine Memorial Hall	Monkton and North Curry	West Monkton & Cheddon Fitzpaine	Cheddon Fitzpaine (Cheddon Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
Triple	DAR - T	West Monkton Village Hall	Taunton North	West Monkton & Cheddon Fitzpaine	Cheddon Fitzpaine (Maidenbrook Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DAS - T	Church Hall, Waterrow	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe & District	Chipstable	parking on road outside, good facilities, disabled access
	DAT - T	Churchinford Village hall	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch & Blackdown	Churchstanton	no issues, good car park and disabled access, large space available
	DAU - B	Clatworthy Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Wiveliscombe & District	Clatworthy	Rather tired but central to village and has the facilities we need
	DAV - T	Combe Florey Village Hall	Lydeard	South Quantock	Combe Florey	parking, good facilities and disabled access
Triple	DAW - T	Comeytrove Community Hall	Comeytrove and Trull	Comeytrove & Bishops Hull	Comeytrove (Part 1)	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
Triple	DAX - T	Comeytrove Community Hall (Walker Room)	Comeytrove and Trull	Comeytrove & Bishops Hull	Comeytrove (Part 2)	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DAY - T	Corfe Village Hall	Blackdown and Neroche	Trull, Pitminster & Corfe	Corfe	no issues, plenty of parking and level access
Double	DAZ - T	Cotford St Luke Community Hall	Lydeard	Cotford St Luke & Oake	Cotford St Luke	now this is a double station the room is a little cramped - would be worth investigating the use of the school hall
Double	DBA - T	Crech St Michael Village Hall	Monkton and North Curry	Crech St Michael	Crech St Michael	good parking, good facilities, good disabled access - can be dark outside
	DBB - B	Crowcombe Church House, Crowcombe	Dunster	South Quantock	Crowcombe	parking close by, hall is dark and there is a step - could consider using Crowcombe Hall
	DBC - T	Neroche Hall, Bickenhall	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch & Blackdown	Curland (Neroche)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DBD - B	Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Cutcombe	good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DBE - B	Dulverton Town Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Dulverton & District	Dulverton	Parking if lucky on road outside - small - Accessible
	DBF - B	Dulverton Town Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Dulverton & District	Dulverton (Outer)	Parking if lucky on road outside - small - Accessible
	DBG - B	Dunster Tithe Barn	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Dunster	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DBH - T	Durston Village Hall	Monkton and North Curry	Crech St Michael	Durston (Parish Meeting)	possibility of hall closing, alternative station could be Crech St Michael Village Hall (approx. 2.5 miles away)
	DBI - B	East Quantoxhead Village Hall	Watchet and Stogursey	Quantock Vale	East Quantoxhead (Parish Meeting)	limited parking on road outside
	DBJ - B	Stogumber Village Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Elworthy (Parish Meeting)	Perfectly ok and meets all our needs
	DBK - B	Exford Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Exford	parking outside, good facilities
	DBL - B	Simonsbath House	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Exmoor	parking available, no disabled access or disabled facilities - consider moving to Exford
	DBM - B	Exton and Bridgetown Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Exton	parking only available in lay-by up the road or on the roadside, limited disabled access as path quite steep and narrow
	DBN - T	The Tithe Barn, Fitzhead	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe & District	Fitzhead	no specific disabled parking, hall can be cold
	DBO - T	Halse Village Hall	Upper Tone	Milverton & District	Halse	no specific disabled parking
	DBP - T	Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch & Blackdown	Hatch Beauchamp	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DBQ - B	Holford Village Hall, Holford	Watchet and Stogursey	Quantock Vale	Holford	good facilities, good parking, good disabled access
	DBR - B	Huish Champflower Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Wiveliscombe & District	Huish Champflower	Tired but central and meets our needs
	DBS - B	Kilve Village Hall	Watchet and Stogursey	Quantock Vale	Kilve	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DBT -T	Kingston St Mary Village Hall	Rowbarton and Staplegrove	Norton Fitzwarren & Staplegrove	Kingston St Mary	good facilities but tellers easily congest the entrance
	DBU - T	Langford Budville Jubilee Hall	Upper Tone	Milverton & District	Langford Budville	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DBV - B	Luccombe Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Porlock & District	Luccombe	parking close by, hall is small and disabled access is not great
	DBW - B	Luxborough Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Luxborough	perfect
	DBX - T	Lydeard St Lawrence Village Hall	Lydeard	South Quantock	Lydeard St Lawrence (Lydeard St Lawrence Ward)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DBY - T	Lydeard St Lawrence Village Hall	Lydeard	South Quantock	Lydeard St Lawrence (Tolland Ward)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DBZ - T	Victoria Rooms, Milverton	Upper Tone	Milverton & District	Milverton	satisfactory, free public car park within 30 seconds walk of the venue
	DCA - B	Alcombe Methodist Church, Lower Meadow Road	Dunster	Minehead Central	Minehead (Alcombe North Ward)	quite a small location
Double	DCB - B	St Michaels Church, Alcombe	Dunster	Alcombe	Minehead (Alcombe South Ward)	satisfactory
Triple	DCC - B	Minehead Methodist Church Small Hall	Minehead	Minehead Central	Minehead (Minehead Central Ward 1)	satisfactory
Double	DCD - B	Roman Catholic Church	Minehead	Minehead Central	Minehead (Minehead Central Ward 2)	satisfactory
Triple	DCE - B	Minehead Methodist Church Main Hall	Minehead	Minehead North	Minehead (Minehead North Ward)	satisfactory
Double	DCF - B	Sainsbury Community Hall	Minehead	Periton & Woodcombe	Minehead (Periton & Woodcombe Ward)	satisfactory
	DCG - B	EMN Community Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Monksilver	perfect
	DCH - B	EMN Community Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Nettlecombe	perfect

	DCI - T	North Curry Village Hall	Monkton and North Curry	North Curry & Ruishton	North Curry	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
Double	DCJ - T	Norton Fitzwarren Village Hall	Lydeard	Norton Fitzwarren & Staplegrove	Norton Fitzwarren	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DCK - T	The Memorial Hall, Nynhead	Upper Tone	Milverton & District	Nynhead	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DCL - T	Oake and District Hall, Oake	Upper Tone	Cotford St Luke & Oake	Oake	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DCM - B	Porlock Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Porlock & District	Oare (Parish Meeting)	good parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DCN - B	Old Cleeve Community Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Old Cleeve (Old Cleeve Ward)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DCO - B	Roadwater Village Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Old Cleeve (Roadwater Ward)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DCP - B	Washford Memorial Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Old Cleeve (Washford Ward)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DCQ - T	Thurlbear Primary School	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch & Blackdown	Orchard Portman (Neroche)	request from school to move station. Small step to enter the building can make it awkward for disabled voters. Consider Neroche Hall
	DCR - T	Otterford Parish Hall, Bishopswood, Chard	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch & Blackdown	Otterford	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DCS - T	The Old School, Pitminster	Blackdown and Neroche	Trull, Pitminster & Corfe	Pitminster	disabled access is poor, parking very limited
	DCT - B	Porlock Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Porlock & District	Porlock	good parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DCU - T	Ruishton Village Hall	Blackdown and Neroche	North Curry & Ruishton	Ruishton (Ruishton Ward)	good parking, good facilities and good disabled access
	DCV - T	Ruishton Village Hall	Blackdown and Neroche	North Curry & Ruishton	Ruishton (Thornfalcon Ward)	good parking, good facilities and good disabled access
	DCW - T	The Parish Room, Sampford Arundel	Upper Tone	Monument	Sampford Arundel	small access and limited parking but seems to work reasonably well
	DCX - B	Sampford Brett Village Hall	Watchet and Stogursey	Watchet & Williton	Sampford Brett	good parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DCY - B	Allerford and Selworthy Community Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Porlock & District	Selworthy & Minehead Without (M'head W'out Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DCZ - B	Allerford and Selworthy Community Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Porlock & District	Selworthy & Minehead Without (Selworthy Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DDA - B	Upton Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Wiveliscombe & District	Skilgate (Parish Meeting)	Satisfactory
	DDB - T	Neroche Hall, Bickenhall	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch & Blackdown	Staple Fitzpaine (Neroche)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
Double	DDC - T	Staplegrove Village Hall	Rowbarton and Staplegrove	Norton Fitzwarren & Staplegrove	Staplegrove	good parking, good disabled access and roomy inside
	DDD - T	The Appley Pavilion (Stawley)	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe & District	Stawley	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DDE - B	Stogumber Village Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Stogumber	perfect
	DDF - B	Stogursey Victory Hall	Watchet and Stogursey	Quantock Vale	Stogursey	perfect
	DDG - T	Williams Hall, Stoke St Gregory	Monkton and North Curry	North Curry & Ruishton	Stoke St Gregory	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DDH - T	Stoke St Mary Village Hall	Blackdown and Neroche	North Curry & Ruishton	Stoke St Mary	good parking, good disabled access and roomy inside
	DDI - B	Kilve Village Hall	Watchet and Stogursey	Quantock Vale	Stringston (Part 1) (Parish Meeting)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DDJ - B	Stogursey Victory Hall	Watchet and Stogursey	Quantock Vale	Stringston (Part 2) (Parish Meeting)	good parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DDK - B	Timberscombe Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Timberscombe	good parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DDL - B	Luxborough Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Treborough (Parish Meeting)	perfect
	DDM - T	The Wyvern Club, Mountfields Road	Taunton South	Vivary	Trull (Killams Ward) (Vivary 3)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DDN - T	Trull Memorial Hall	Comeytrove and Trull	Trull, Pitminster & Corfe	Trull (Trull Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DDO - B	Upton Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Wiveliscombe & District	Upton	Satisfactory
Double	DDP - B	Watchet Phoenix Centre	Watchet and Stogursey	Watchet & Williton	Watchet	plenty of parking, good facilities but quite small and disabled access
Triple	DDQ - T	Wellington Baptist Church	Blackdown and Neroche	Wellington East	Wellington (Wellington East Ward)	parking close by, good facilities, disabled access
	DDR - T	Reminiscence Learning	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington North	Wellington (Wellington North Ward 1)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DDS - T	Wellington Rugby Club	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington North	Wellington (Wellington North Ward 2)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DDT - T	The Northfield Centre	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington North	Wellington (Wellington North Ward 3)	limited parking, good facilities, disabled access
Double	DDU - T	Rockwell Green Village Hall	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Rockwell Green	Wellington (Rockwell Green Ward)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DDV - T	Bulford Community Hall	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington South	Wellington (Wellington South Ward 1)	very limited space in terms of size and numbers that use it.
	DDW - T	Wellington Arts Centre	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington South	Wellington (Wellington South Ward 2)	New Station - used 2022
Triple	DDX - T	Wellington Baptist Church	Wellington and Rockwell Green	Wellington East	Wellington (Wellington South East Ward)	parking close by, good facilities, disabled access
	DDY - T	Sampford Arundel Beambridge Inn	Upper Tone	Monument	Wellington Without (Thorne St Margaret Ward)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DDZ - T	Sampford Arundel Beambridge Inn	Upper Tone	Monument	Wellington Without (Wellington Without Ward 1)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DEA - T	The Parish Room, Sampford Arundel	Upper Tone	Monument	Wellington Without (Wellington Without Ward 2)	small access and limited parking but seems to work reasonably well
	DEB - T	Popham Hall, West Bagborough	Lydeard	South Quantock	West Bagborough	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DEC - T	West Buckland Village Hall	Blackdown and Neroche	Monument	West Buckland	no issues
	DED - T	West Hatch Village Hall	Blackdown and Neroche	Hatch & Blackdown	West Hatch	limited parking, good facilities and disabled access
Triple	DEE - T	West Monkton Village Hall	Monkton and North Curry	West Monkton & Cheddon Fitzpaine	West Monkton (Part 1)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DEF - T	Brittons Ash Community Hall	Monkton and North Curry	West Monkton & Cheddon Fitzpaine	West Monkton (Part 2)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DEG - B	West Quantoxhead Village Hall	Watchet and Stogursey	Quantock Vale	West Quantoxhead	good parking, good facilities and disabled access
Double	DEH - B	Council Chamber, West Somerset House	Watchet and Stogursey	Watchet & Williton	Williton	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DEI - B	Winsford Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Winsford	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DEJ - B	Withycombe Memorial Hall	Dunster	Old Cleeve & District	Withycombe	limited parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DEK - B	Hawkridge Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Withypool & Hawkridge (Part - Hawkridge)	Location is a long way out for a very limited number of electors. Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access - consider moving to Withypool
	DEL - B	Withypool Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Exmoor	Withypool & Hawkridge	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
Double	DEM - T	Wiveliscombe Community Centre	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe & District	Wiveliscombe (Part 1)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
Double	DEN - T	Wiveliscombe Community Centre	Upper Tone	Wiveliscombe & District	Wiveliscombe (Part 2)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DEO - B	Wootton Courtenay Village Hall	Dulverton and Exmoor	Porlock & District	Wootton Courtenay	Good parking, good facilities, good disabled access
Double	DEP - T	Taunton Deane Bowling Club, Blackbrook Way	Taunton South	Blackbrook & Holway	Unparished (Blackbrook & Holway 1)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
Double	DEQ - T	Lisieux Way Methodist Church	Taunton South	Blackbrook & Holway	Unparished (Blackbrook & Holway 2)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DER - T	Skittle Alley, The Flying Horse	Taunton South	Blackbrook & Holway	Unparished (Blackbrook & Holway 3)	Good location for area
Double	DES - T	All Saints Church Hall, Roman Road	Taunton East	Halcon & Lane	Unparished (Halcon & Lane 1)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DET - T	Community Hall, Newton Road	Taunton East	Halcon & Lane	Unparished (Halcon & Lane 2)	parking available on road, good facilities, disabled access

Double	DEU - T	Lisieux Way Methodist Church	Taunton East	Halcon & Lane	Unparished (Halcon & Lane 3)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DEV - T	Lisieux Way Methodist Church	Taunton South	Halcon & Lane	Unparished (Halcon & Lane 4)	Good parking, good facilities, disabled access
	DEW - T	The Trident, Galmington Road	Bishops Hull and Taunton West	Manor & Tangier	Unparished (Manor & Tangier 1)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DEX - T	Parkfield School, Parkfield Road	Bishops Hull and Taunton West	Manor & Tangier	Unparished (Manor & Tangier 2)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
Double	DEY - T	North Town School	Bishops Hull and Taunton West	North Town	Unparished (North Town 1)	Various requests to move this to another location so they school does not have to close of election days. Satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access. No suitable alternative found
	DEZ - T	Community Hall, Wellesley Street	Taunton North	Priorswood	Unparished (Priorswood 1)	parking outside, good facilities, disabled access
	DFA - T	Function Room, The 68 Club	Rowbarton & Staplegrove	Priorswood	Unparished (Priorswood 2)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
	DFB - T	Function Room, The 68 Club	Taunton North	Priorswood	Unparished (Priorswood 3)	parking, good facilities and disabled access
Double	DFC - T	St Peters Church Hall	Taunton North	Priorswood	Unparished (Priorswood 4)	limited parking, good facilities, good disabled access
	DFD - T	Meeting Room, Wellsprings Leisure Centre	Taunton North	Priorswood	Unparished (Priorswood 5)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DFE - T	Holy Trinity Church Hall	Taunton East	Victoria	Unparished (Victoria 1)	
	DFF - T	Holy Trinity Church Hall	Taunton South	Victoria	Unparished (Victoria 2)	
	DFG - T	St James's School	Taunton East	Victoria	Unparished (Victoria 3)	limited parking during school opening hours, portakabin, disabled access is a z shaped climb.
	DFH - T	Victoria Park Pavilion	Taunton East	Victoria	Unparished (Victoria 4)	pay and display car park within a minutes walk. Room is a little cramped
	DFI - T	Meeting Room, Taunton Library	Bishops Hull and Taunton West	Victoria	Unparished (Victoria 5)	Good central location, plenty of parking nearby but no specific disabled parking outside location
	DFJ - T	Salvation Army, South Street	Taunton South	Vivary	Unparished (Vivary 1)	Satisfactory location, good parking directly outside
Double	DFK - T	The Wyvern Club, Mountfields Road	Taunton South	Vivary	Unparished (Vivary 2)	front door has a ledge which can cause issues for wheelchair users - look at purpose built ramp for future
	DFL - T	Taunton Catholic Centre	Bishops Hull and Taunton West	Vivary	Unparished (Vivary 4)	no allocated parking facility for location but road parking outside. Good disabled access
Double	DFM - T	St Andrews Hall, Kingston Road	Rowbarton & Staplegrove	Wellsprings & Rowbarton	Unparished (Wellsprings & Rowbarton 1)	limited parking on site but pay and display car park close by, good facilities, disabled access
	DFN - T	Community Room, Broomfield House, Quantock Road	Rowbarton & Staplegrove	Wellsprings & Rowbarton	Unparished (Wellsprings & Rowbarton 2)	parking on road outside, good facilities, disabled access
	DFO - T	Churchill Hall, Middleway	Comeytrove and Trull	Wilton & Sherford	Unparished (Wilton & Sherford 1)	satisfactory, plenty of parking and disabled access
	DFP - T	Dunning Room, St Georges Church Hall, Fons George	Comeytrove and Trull	Wilton & Sherford	Unparished (Wilton & Sherford 2)	parking, good facilities and disabled access



## Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places Responses to Consultation

### **Councillor C Ellis**

Can I pose couple of questions

1. presumably the Head teachers concerned where it's a school will get written to and invited to comment yes?
2. Is there a simple set of bullet points to refer to for what makes a suitable polling place so I can see what suggestions might be made re alternative for North Town to save the school from having to close? .
3. Is there any block on using part of Deane House for North Town since it's good location and accessible or can that go in the mix?

### **Councillor J Lloyd**

The Northfield Centre in Wellington has now closed. Wellington Library are moving there for 12 months while the current library is renovated, after that, the future of the building is uncertain.

Wellington Football Club is approx 50 yards away from the Northfield Centre and has a large room but it is on the other side of the road so I am not sure if that would be suitable and/or whether the club would be willing for it to be used as a polling station.

### **Councillor K Wheatley**

It is a total waste of council manpower and other resources to have voting at the Baptist Church, Arts Centre and Bulford Hall. A 400m radius would cover all three venues. The church is easily big enough to cope with extra volumes of voters and should be the single polling station.

*Response: Thank you for your response. Although I understand your comments, unfortunately we are not permitted to mix different elections in the same polling station, we have separate polling stations for each Parish Ward/Unitary Division. For example, Wellington East Ward votes in a different room at the Baptist Church to Wellington South East Ward. This is to prevent ballot papers being issued incorrectly.*

Thanks for the explanation. Some of our electoral rules and procedures are beginning to look prehistoric but I do understand that you have no flexibility in these areas.

### **Parish Councillor F Schott**

I am writing to you as Chair of the Exmoor Parish Council to say I was alarmed to hear that there are plans to make Simonsbath voters travel, possibly all the way to Exford Village Hall, to vote in future.

Simonsbath, apart from having disabled parishioners, has an ageing population and forcing them to travel anywhere, even the 5 miles to Exford, is likely to mean a large proportion just won't bother to vote!

Therefore, I feel that the decision reached in the Community Governance Review by the Election Committee on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton Council, apart from being disenfranchising, could be construed locally as being discriminatory.

I believe the pretext for this decision is because the current venue, Simonsbath House Hotel, is considered to be unsuitable for disabled voters.

There are several alternative venues available in Simonsbath, which would meet all the criteria for any disabled voters and enable them to cast their votes safely. For example, White Rock Cottage (Simonsbath Old School), Boevey's Tea Rooms or the entrance hall of The Exmoor Forest Inn would all be suitable sites.

Using any of these venues in future would mean that all the voters in Simonsbath could continue to vote in the village with the minimum of disruption to their everyday lives.

I hope, based on the above information, that you will reconsider your decision to make Simonsbath voters travel out of the village to cast their votes in future.

*Response: Thank you so much for responding to our polling district review. I am very grateful for the suggested alternatives as I would prefer to keep a polling station within the Parish. I will investigate them and hopefully find a suitable outcome.*

Thank you for responding to my email so quickly.

I am delighted to hear that you would prefer to keep the Polling Station within the Parish.

For what it's worth, of the possible listed alternatives to Simonsbath House Hotel, the Parish Council feels that White Rock Cottage (Simonsbath Old School) would probably be the best new venue.

I look forward to hearing from you once you have completed your investigations.

### **Councillor S Pugsley**

Many thanks for the polling station review documents.

I would wish to state in the strongest possible terms that in the remote communities of Exmoor it is extremely important that polling stations are reasonably accessible and that we do everything feasible to facilitate the ability to participate in the democratic process. Therefore, Hawkridge should retain a polling station, rather than residents be expected to make the at-least 4 mile journey to Withypool, and that the if the Simonsbath House Hotel is no longer deemed suitable for voting then an alternative should be found in the parish of Exmoor rather than forcing residents to go all the way to Exford.

*Response: Francis Schott has kindly responding regarding Exmoor and has suggested some alternative venues, One of her suggestions (and the favourite of the Parish Council) is White Rocks Cottage (Simonsbath Old School) and, having looked in up, I see that you are the Chairman of the Simonsbath and Exmoor Heritage Trust.*

*Please can you tell me if this building is available to hire as a polling station and who I need to contact to book it?*

*I also note your comments about Hawkridge, I think the main issue is the cost of providing the polling station for just 39 electors (10 of which are already postal voters).*

Thanks so much. Francis Schott handles the bookings for the Old School at Simonsbath so in the first instance he is the best person to contact. I am sure there will be no problem in hiring it as a polling station.

As to Hawkridge, I know that you and I have discussed it over the years - as a point of principle, I would always argue that democracy comes with a cost and we should be prepared to pay it (even for 39 electors). Hawkridge is a distinct remote community, with no discernible public transport, so the 4 miles to a polling station at Withypool will be a difficulty if not impossibility for some. I think it should be an expectation that you can exercise your right to vote in person rather than being made to do it by post.

### **Rebecca Tomalin, Clerk to Withypool and Hawkridge Parish Council**

I am writing as Parish Clerk of Withypool & Hawkridge Parish Council to say how alarmed the Parish Council is that the polling station at Hawkridge may be closed.

Hawkridge has an ageing population and forcing them to travel anywhere, even four miles to Withypool Village Hall is likely to be met with resistance and probably they will just not bother to vote at all!

In the current environment of equality it seems rather discriminatory to take away this choice for many long serving members of the community who have always voted in the village hall and know no other way to cast their votes.

The Parish Council would be happy to discuss the reasons for the potential closure with Somerset West and Taunton Council so that we may work together to ensure that Hawkridge parishioners may continue to vote in the most convenient place for them.



# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Full Council – 6 December 2022**

### **Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021/22**

**This matter is the responsibility of Cllr Benet Allen, Portfolio Holder for Communications and Corporate Resources**

**Report Authors: John Dyson, Corporate Finance Manager and Steve Plenty, Finance Specialist**

#### **1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Treasury Management activity of Somerset West and Taunton Council and performance against the Prudential Indicators for 2021/22.
- 1.2 Treasury management performance during the year has reflected the agreed strategy for the Council. Investment security remains with good credit ratings across the portfolio, whilst liquidity remains high and liquidity. Complementing this, strong performance of the Council's investment portfolio continues to excel when compared with other local authorities. Meanwhile, as predicted, there was high borrowing activity during the year, with £74million advanced to the Council. Vigilant action during the early part of the financial year provided favourable interest rates ahead of substantial increases in the money market as the year progressed. A suitable spread of loan durations were obtained, enabling substantial flexibility to become available when the new Unitary Council takes on the mix of loan and investment portfolios from the combining councils, whilst building in some benefit from low interest rates for borrowing that is due to mature in the medium term.

#### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note the Treasury Management activity for the 2021/22 financial year and compliance with the Prudential Indicators.
- 2.2 To endorse the recommendation made by the meeting of the Executive Committee on 20 July 2022 to Full Council to approve a reduction of £35m to the Approved Borrowing Limits in the Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 reflecting a reduction in capital financing requirement for expenditure no longer required (as referred to in paragraphs 6.33 and 6.34 of this report).

#### **3 Risk Assessment**

- 3.1 The Council has an agreed Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) and effective management practices to ensure compliance and risks are monitored and managed.

## **4 Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 was approved at Full Council on 30 March 2021. The Council invests substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.
- 4.2 Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of specific Codes of Practice issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, CIPFA. In abbreviated format, they are referred to as the 'Treasury Management Code of Practice' and the 'Prudential Code'.
- 4.3 The first Code is the Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes. The version that is relevant to the start of the financial year 2021/22 was published in 2017 and requires the Council to approve a Treasury Management Strategy before the start of each financial year and to approve, as a minimum, a half-year and annual treasury outturn report. This report fulfils the Council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the CIPFA Code.
- 4.4 In December 2021, CIPFA published a new release of the 'Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes.' Being a revision of the 2017 Treasury Management Code, it introduces strengthened requirements for skills and training, and for investments that are not specifically for treasury management purposes. Most aspects of the new 2021 update took effect from the time of publication, with the exception of new reporting requirements.
- 4.5 Reports prescribed by the Code are required to be adequately scrutinised by committee before being recommended to the Full Council. This role is undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 4.6 Working alongside the Treasury Management Code, the 2017 CIPFA The Prudential Code includes a requirement for local Councils to provide a Capital Strategy. This is a comprehensive and high-profile document approved by Full Council covering capital expenditure and financing, treasury management and non-treasury investments.
- 4.7 Similarly to the Treasury Management Code of Practice, CIPFA published a new release of the Prudential Code in December 2021. The Council's latest Capital Strategy, complying with CIPFA's requirement, was approved by Somerset West and Taunton Full Council on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022.
- 4.8 For continuity and clarity, CIPFA defines Treasury Management as:

"The management of the local Council's cash flows, its borrowings and its investments, the management of the associated risks, and the pursuit of the optimum performance or return consistent with those risks".
- 4.9 Overall responsibility for treasury management remains with the Council with operational

responsibility delegated to the S151 Officer. No treasury management activity is without risk; the effective identification and management of risk are integral to the Council's treasury management objectives.

## 5 External Context – Analysis by Arlingclose

- 5.1 This Council relies on the resources and experience of its appointed Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose. Commentary relating to the external context and economic analysis by Arlingclose can be found in Appendix A to this report.

## 6 Local Context

- 6.1 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, the Council had net cash investments of £79.030m arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. These components, which stem from the Council's Balance Sheet, are summarised in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary**

	<b>31.3.22 Actual £m</b>
General Fund CFR	135.243
HRA CFR	113.284
<b>Total CFR</b>	<b>248.527</b>
Less: External borrowing	-180.500
<b>Internal borrowing</b>	<b>68.027</b>
Less: Usable reserves	-87.653
Less: Working capital	-59.404
<b>Net Investments</b>	<b>-79.030</b>

- 6.2 Historically low official interest rates have reduced the cost of short-term, temporary loans and, similarly, reduced investment returns from cash assets that can be used in lieu of borrowing. The Authority pursued its strategy of keeping borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing, in order to reduce risk and keep interest costs low.
- 6.3 The treasury management position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and the change during the year is shown in Table 2 (overleaf).

**Table 2: Treasury Management Summary**

	<b>31.3.21 Balance £m</b>	<b>In-year Movement £m</b>	<b>31.3.22 Balance £m</b>
Long-term borrowing	-115.500	15.000	-90.500
Short-term borrowing	-47.000	-33.000	-90.000
<b>Total borrowing</b>	<b>-162.500</b>	<b>-18.000</b>	<b>-180.500</b>
Long-term investments	0.003	0.000	0.003
Short-term investments	3.254	-3.254	0.000
Cash and cash equivalents	41.507	-1.253	40.388
<b>Total investments</b>	<b>44.764</b>	<b>-4.507</b>	<b>40.391</b>
<b>Net Borrowing</b>	<b>-117.736</b>	<b>-22.507</b>	<b>-140.109</b>

**Borrowing Update**

- 6.4 Commercial property is any property which the local authority purchases or holds primarily for financial return. The value of the Council's commercial property portfolio as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 was £96.835m. All purchases were made prior to the revised CIPFA Prudential Code and shaped the Council's new external borrowing for 2021/22. As a result, £54.9m was added to the financing requirement following the in-year property acquisitions.
- 6.5 A requirement of the new CIPFA Prudential Code is that the Council will review the options for exiting these investments before undertaking further additional borrowing. Whilst this does not commit the Council to exit the investments, the ongoing continuation of holding commercial investments will be an ongoing matter for decision-making by the new Somerset Unitary Council after March 2023. Such decisions are expected to form a part of the Council's overall Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategy from 2023/24 and beyond.
- 6.6 **Municipal Bonds Agency (MBA):** The MBA has been working to deliver a new short-term loan solution, available in the first instance to principal local councils in England, allowing them access to short-dated, low rate, flexible debt. The minimum loan size is understood to be £25 million. With alternative sources of borrowing available to it for smaller amounts, this was not an option that was required by SWT Council during 2021/22.
- 6.7 **UK Infrastructure Bank:** £4bn was reported to have been earmarked for lending to local authorities by the UK Infrastructure Bank high-value and complex economic infrastructure projects. The Bank is wholly owned and backed by HM Treasury. It is understood that this service will launch in due course and will scale up its activity incrementally. Whilst SWT Council was, therefore, unable to participate, its borrowing needs did not match the objectives of the UK Infrastructure Bank.

**Borrowing strategy**

- 6.8 As at 31st March 2022 the Council held £180.5m of loans as part of its strategy for funding previous and current years' capital programmes. This represented an increase of £18m compared to the previous financial year-end, 31st March 2021. Outstanding loans on 31st March are summarised in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Borrowing Position**

	<b>31.3.21 Balance £m</b>	<b>Net Movement £m</b>	<b>31.3.22 Balance £m</b>
Public Works Loan Board (Long-term)	92.5	-5.0	87.5
Public Works Loan Board (Short-term)	10.0	-5.0	5.0
Banks (Fixed term)	3.0	0.0	3.0
Local Councils (Long-term)	10.0	0.0	10.0
Local Councils (Short-term)	47.0	28.0	75.0
<b>Total borrowing</b>	<b>162.5</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>180.5</b>

- 6.9 For clarification, long-term loans are defined as any loan with a maturity date exceeding 365 days from the date of a reported balance. The Council's chief objective when taking new borrowing during 2021/22 has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change being a secondary objective.
- 6.10 The Council has an increasing CFR due to the capital programme and an estimated borrowing requirement as determined by the Liability Benchmark, which also takes into account usable reserves and working capital. Having considered the appropriate duration and structure of the borrowing need based on realistic projections, it was decided to take a mixture of short-term and long-term borrowing. The Council currently has £100.5m of longer-term borrowings in respect of the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund, details of which are overleaf. These loans provide some longer-term certainty and stability to the debt portfolio. It is also worthy of note that loans shown in the table with a higher rate of interest reflect historically higher interest rates at the time when they were advanced to the Council.

**Table 4: External Long-term Borrowing Position as at 31 March 2022**

Long-dated Loans borrowed	Amount £m	Rate %	Maturity Date
Public Works Loan Board	7.0	2.70	28 Mar 2024
Public Works Loan Board	6.0	2.82	28 Mar 2025
Public Works Loan Board	7.0	2.92	28 Mar 2026
Public Works Loan Board	16.0	3.01	28 Mar 2027
Public Works Loan Board	7.0	3.08	28 Mar 2028
Public Works Loan Board	5.0	3.15	28 Mar 2029
Public Works Loan Board	5.5	3.21	28 Mar 2030
Public Works Loan Board	1.0	8.38	03 Aug 2056
Public Works Loan Board	1.0	7.38	06 May 2057
Public Works Loan Board	2.0	6.63	05 Sep 2057
Barclays	3.0	4.25	14 Jun 2077
Public Works Loan Board	10.0	1.64	12 Nov 2070
Buckinghamshire Council	10.0	0.44	22 Aug 2023
Public Works Loan Board	20.0	1.89	26 Mar 2071
<b>Total borrowing</b>	<b>100.5</b>		

- 6.11 The Council's borrowing decisions are not predicated on any one outcome for interest rates and a balanced portfolio of short- and long-term borrowing was maintained.
- 6.12 PWLB funding margins have lurched quite substantially and there remains a strong argument for further diversifying funding sources, particularly if rates can be achieved on alternatives which are below gilt yields plus 0.80%. The Council (including the new Unitary Council) will evaluate and pursue such lower-cost solutions and opportunities with its advisor Arlingclose, taking into consideration the amalgamation of the merging five Councils' borrowing and cash balances.

### **Treasury Investment Activity**

- 6.13 The Council holds significant invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held for a wide range of purposes. During the year, the Council's investment balances ranged between £30.137m and £82.754m due to timing differences between income and expenditure as well as cashflow movements. 2021/22 cashflow movements were unusually pronounced as a result of Covid grant funding and due to liquidity management ahead of property purchases. The investment position is shown in Table 5, overleaf.

**Table 5: Treasury Investment Position**

	<b>31.03.21 Balance £m</b>	<b>Net Movement £m</b>	<b>31.03.22 Balance £m</b>
Banks and Building Societies (unsecured)	0.867	0.763	1.630
Government (including local authorities)	14.042	-11.144	2.898
Money Market Funds	13.150	4.750	17.900
Cash Plus Funds	1.010	-0.027	0.983
Strategic Bond Funds	2.080	-0.095	1.985
Equity Income Funds	2.011	-0.031	1.980
Property Funds	4.898	0.799	5.697
Multi Asset Income Fund	6.706	0.018	6.688
<b>Total Investments</b>	<b>44.764</b>	<b>-5.003</b>	<b>39.761</b>

- 6.14 The new CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, already referred to above, was published on 20th December 2021. The Code defines treasury management investments as investments that arise from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity that ultimately represents balances that need to be invested until the cash is required for use in the course of business.
- 6.15 During 2021/22 the Council received central government funding to support small and medium businesses during the coronavirus pandemic through grant schemes. £19.71m was received during the year, temporarily invested in short-dated, liquid instruments such as call accounts and Money Market Funds. £18.49m was disbursed by the end of March 2022.
- 6.16 Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Council to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.
- 6.17 Ultra-low short-dated cash rates, which were a feature since March 2020 when Bank Rate was cut to 0.1%, prevailed for much of the 12-month reporting period which resulted in the return on sterling low volatility net asset value (LVNAV) Money Market Funds being close to zero even after some managers had temporarily waived or lowered their fees. However, higher returns on cash instruments followed the increases in Bank Rate in December, February and March. At 31st March 2022, the 1-day return on the Council's MMFs ranged between 0.51% - 0.58% p.a.
- 6.18 Similarly, deposit rates with the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF) initially remained very low with rates ranging from 0% to 0.1% but, following the hikes to policy rates, increased to between 0.55% and 0.85% depending on the deposit maturity. The average return on the Council's DMADF deposits was 0.04% in 2021/22.
- 6.19 The progression of risk and return metrics are shown in the extracts from Arlingclose quarterly investment benchmarking in Table 6, overleaf.

**Table 6: Investment Benchmarking – Treasury investments managed in-house**

	<b>Credit Score</b>	<b>Credit Rating</b>	<b>Bail-in Exposure</b>	<b>Weighted Average Maturity (days)</b>	<b>Rate of Return %</b>
31.03.2021	4.37	AA-	49%	7	4.36%
<b>31.03.2022</b>	<b>4.54</b>	<b>A+</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3.87%</b>
Similar Local Authorities	4.37	AA-	61%	43	2.38%
All Local Authorities	4.39	AA-	60%	14	2.10%

- 6.20 Arlingclose provided the Council with a report as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 which shows that £14.380m of the Council’s investments are held in externally managed strategic pooled funds where short-term security and liquidity are lesser considerations, and the objectives are, instead, regular revenue income and long-term price stability. These funds generated dividends of £0.563m in 2021/22, an income return of 4.15% which is used to support services in year, and an unrealised capital gain of £0.804m (5.93%).
- 6.21 In the nine months to December improved market sentiment was reflected in equity, property and multi-asset fund valuations and, in turn, in the capital values of the Authority’s property, equity and multi-asset income funds in the Authority’s portfolio. The prospect of higher inflation and rising bond yields did, however, result in muted bond fund performance. In the January to March quarter the two dominant themes were tighter UK and US monetary policy and higher interest rates, and the military invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February, the latter triggering significant volatility and uncertainty in financial markets.
- 6.22 In light of Russia’s invasion, Arlingclose contacted the fund managers of our MMF, cash plus and strategic funds and confirmed no direct exposure to Russian or Belarusian assets had been identified. Indirect exposures were immaterial. It should be noted that any assets held by banks and financial institutions (e.g. from loans to companies with links to those countries) within MMFs and other pooled funds cannot be identified easily or with any certainty because that level of granular detail is unlikely to be available to the fund managers or Arlingclose in the short-term, if at all.
- 6.23 Because these funds have no defined maturity date, but are available for withdrawal after a notice period, their performance and continued suitability in meeting the Council’s medium to long-term investment objectives are regularly reviewed. Strategic fund investments are made in the knowledge that capital values will move both up and down on months, quarters and even years; but with the confidence that over a three- to five-year period total returns will exceed cash interest rates. Investments within these funds have been maintained during 2021/22.

### **Non-Treasury Investments**

- 6.24 The definition of investments in CIPFA’s revised 2021 Treasury Management Code covers all the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds primarily for financial return. Investments that do not meet the definition of treasury management investments (i.e. management of surplus cash) are categorised as either for service purposes (made explicitly to further service objectives) and or for commercial purposes (made primarily for financial return).



- 6.25 Investment Guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) also broadens the definition of investments to include all such assets held partially or wholly for financial return. This represented a significant feature of CIPFA's new Code of Practice published in December 2021.
- 6.26 The Council holds £96.835m of such commercial property investments held as directly owned property and £5.069m as loans to local businesses, charities, partnerships and sports clubs as at 31 March 2022.
- 6.27 Commercial property investments generated £5.557m of gross investment income representing an average rate of return of 5.74% and the loans to local businesses generated £181k of investment income representing an average rate of return of 4.41%.
- 6.28 The Commercial Property Investment Strategy was developed to invest £100million between 2020/21 and 2021/22 to create a diversified, cross-sector, institutional grade property portfolio which will bring in gross additional income to the General Fund. The Strategy follows a reduction in Council income streams and increasing volatility around other funding sources, requiring Somerset West and Taunton Council to generate new sources of additional revenue to support front line services. Acquisition of the Council's capital investment portfolio of commercial properties was successfully completed on 17 December 2021. The Council has no plans to extend its investment in this field any further.

### **Treasury Performance**

- 6.29 The Council measures the financial performance of its treasury management activities in terms of its impact on the revenue budget as shown Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Performance**

	<b>Budget 2021/22 £m</b>	<b>Actual 2021/22 £m</b>	<b>Variance 2021/22 £m</b>
Interest Paid	3.507	2.940	-0.567
Interest Received	-0.594	-0.786	-0.192

- 6.30 The above excludes interest paid relating to commercial properties. Using a notional average interest rate of 1.5% for the year, £567k of interest costs was applied to the Council commercial property investment fund (compared to budget estimate of £525k).

### **Compliance**

- 6.31 The Section 151 Officer is pleased to report that all treasury management activities undertaken during the year fully complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice and with every one of the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy parameters – see Table 8, overleaf.

**Table 8: Investment Limits**

	<b>2021/22 Maximum</b>	<b>31.3.22 Actual</b>	<b>2021/22 Limit</b>	<b>Complied</b>
Any single organisation, except the UK Government	£7.0m	£5.5m	£7m	Yes
UK Government	£36.966m	£2.898m	Unlimited	Yes
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	£7.0m	£5.5m	£7m per Group	Yes
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£5.0m	£5.0m	£21m per Manager	Yes
Negotiable instruments held in a broker's nominee account	nil	Nil	£21m per Broker	Yes
Foreign Countries	nil	Nil	£7m per Country	Yes
Registered providers and registered social landlords	Nil	Nil	£21m in Total	Yes
Unsecured investments with building societies	Nil	Nil	£7m in Total	Yes
Loans to unrated corporates	nil	Nil	£7m in Total	Yes
Money Market Funds	£28.0m	£17.9m	£42m in Total	Yes
Real Estate Investment Trusts	nil	nil	£21m in Total	Yes

6.32 Compliance with the authorised limit and the operational boundary for external debt is demonstrated in Table 9 below, relating to 2021/22:

**Table 9: Debt Limits**

	<b>2021/22 Maximum</b>	<b>31.3.22 Actual</b>	<b>2021/22 Operational Boundary</b>	<b>2021/22 Authorised Limit</b>	<b>Complied</b>
Borrowing	£180.5m	£180.5m	£300.0m	£340.0m	Yes
<b>Total debt</b>	<b>£180.5m</b>	<b>£180.5m</b>	<b>£300.0m</b>	<b>£340.0m</b>	Yes

6.33 For the purpose of updating the Capital Investment and Treasury Strategy for 2022/23, at the meeting of the Executive on 20 July 2022 it was agreed to recommend to Full Council that a reduction is made to the approved capital programme budget for reported underspends totalling some £35.312m. Of this sum, £1m was on the Commercial Investment portfolio and £252k on vehicle acquisitions. In addition, in September 2020 Full Council, through a confidential report, approved a large capital investment of over £33m for town centre regeneration development in Taunton. Agreement for land acquisition was not concluded with the owners for a variety of reasons including purchase and development costs, and the impact of phosphates on new schemes that incorporate overnight accommodation. We are no longer in an active negotiation on the purchase of the site and conclude that the capital programme should be updated to reflect the removal of this scheme (further information was provided in confidential Appendix F to the report for the July meeting of the Executive Committee).

6.34 Members of the Audit and Governance Committee are therefore requested to endorse the recommendation from the Executive Committee to reduce the overall capital programme for budget allocations no longer required and, as a consequence, it is now recommended that Full Council approves a reduction of £35m in the Authorised Limit for borrowing in 2022/23 and subsequent years' estimates within the Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategy, which was approved by Council in March 2022. If approved, the effect would be to reduce the Authorised Limit for borrowing for each of the three years' estimates to the following:

<b>Authorised limit &amp; Operational boundary for external debt</b>			
	<b>2022/23 Estimate £'000</b>	<b>2023/24 Estimate £'000</b>	<b>2024/25 Estimate £'000</b>
Operational Boundary:			
Borrowing	265,000	315,000	335,000
Leases	10,000	10,000	10,000
<b>Total Operational Boundary</b>	<b>275,000</b>	<b>325,000</b>	<b>345,000</b>
Authorised limit:			
Borrowing	315,000	315,000	335,000
Leases	20,000	20,000	20,000
<b>Total Authorised limit</b>	<b>335,000</b>	<b>335,000</b>	<b>355,000</b>

### Treasury Management Indicators

6.35 The Council measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.

6.36 **Security:** The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	<b>31.3.22 Actual</b>	<b>2021/22 Target</b>	<b>Complied</b>
Portfolio average credit rating	A+	A-	Yes

6.37 **Liquidity:** The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

	<b>31.3.22 Actual</b>	<b>2021/22 Target</b>	<b>Complied</b>
Total cash available within 3 months	£39.76m	£20.00m	Yes

6.38 **Interest Rate Exposures:** This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk in the General Fund. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest upon variable rate investments and loans were:

Interest rate risk indicator	31.3.22 Actual	2021/22 Limit	Complied
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	£20,177	£50,000	Yes
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	£20,177	£50,000	Yes

6.39 The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at current rates, and that the business cases for commercial properties (costs and income) are stand alone.

6.40 Maturity **Structure of Borrowing:** This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of all borrowing were:

	31.3.22 Actual	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Complied
Under 12 months	44.32%	100%	0%	Yes
12 months and within 24 months	9.42%	100%	0%	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	16.07%	100%	0%	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	9.70%	100%	0%	Yes
10 years and above	20.50%	100%	0%	Yes

6.41 Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

6.42 Principal **Sums Invested for Periods Longer than a year:** The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the long-term principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end were:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Actual principal invested beyond year end	£nil	£nil	£nil
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£30m	£25m	£25m
Complied	Yes	Yes	Yes

### Other Matters – Revised CIPFA Codes, Updated PWLB Lending Facility Guidance

6.43 In August 2021 HM Treasury significantly revised guidance for the PWLB lending facility with more detail and 12 examples of permitted and prohibited use of PWLB loans. Authorities that are purchasing or intending to purchase investment assets primarily for yield will not be able to access the PWLB except to refinance existing loans or externalise

internal borrowing. Acceptable use of PWLB borrowing includes service delivery, housing, regeneration, preventative action, refinancing and treasury management.

- 6.44 CIPFA published its revised Prudential Code for Capital Finance and Treasury Management Code on 20th December 2021. The key changes in the two codes are around permitted reasons to borrow, knowledge and skills, and the management of non-treasury investments.
- 6.45 The principles of the Prudential Code took immediate effect although local authorities could defer introducing the revised reporting requirements until the 2023/24 financial year if they wish. SWT Council has adopted this deferral because the joining of Somerset councils into the new Somerset Unitary Council means that reporting will not be continuous. The new reporting requirements are, naturally, anticipated to commence from 2023/24.
- 6.46 To comply with the Prudential Code, authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. This Code also states that it is not prudent for local authorities to make investment or spending decision that will increase the CFR unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the authority. Existing commercial investments are not required to be sold; however, authorities with existing commercial investments who expect to need to borrow should review the options for exiting these investments.
- 6.47 Borrowing is permitted for cashflow management, interest rate risk management, to refinance current borrowing and to adjust levels of internal borrowing. Borrowing to refinance capital expenditure primarily related to the delivery of a local authority's function but where a financial return is also expected is allowed, provided that financial return is not the primary reason for the expenditure. The changes align the CIPFA Prudential Code with the PWLB lending rules.
- 6.48 Unlike the Prudential Code, there is no mention of the date of initial application in the Treasury Management Code. The TM Code now includes extensive additional requirements for service and commercial investments, far beyond those in the 2017 version.
- 6.49 The Council will follow the same process as the Prudential Code, i.e. delaying changes in reporting requirements to the 2023/24 financial year.

## **IFRS16**

- 6.50 The implementation of the new IFRS 16 Leases accounting standard was due to come into force for local authorities from 1st April 2022. Following a consultation CIPFA/LASAAC announced an optional two-year delay to the implementation of this standard, a decision which was confirmed by the Financial Reporting Advisory Board in early April 2022. Councils can now choose to adopt the new standard on 1st April 2022, 1st April 2023 or 1st April 2024. It is not yet known at which date the new Council, Somerset Council, intends to adopt the new standard, although this will undoubtedly form a part of the Local Government Review work being undertaken by staff across the five Somerset authorities.

## **7 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities**

7.1 The Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies support the delivery of the Corporate Aims.

## **8 Finance / Resource Implications**

8.1 The Treasury Management function has been well-managed during the year in compliance with the Treasury Management Strategy. As interest rates remain historically low, the opportunities to generate significant income through short-term investments has been limited.

8.2 This report provides full details of the Treasury Management activity during the year. A summary of the key points follows:

- As at 31 March 2022, Somerset West and Taunton Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes as measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) was indicatively £248.527m, while usable reserves and working capital which were the underlying resources available for investment were £87.653m and £59.404m respectively.
- As at 31 March 2022, Somerset West and Taunton Council had external borrowing of £180.50m, with £105.50m attributable to the Housing Revenue Account and £75.00m attributable to the General Fund.
- Somerset West and Taunton Council also had £39.761m of investments as at 31 March 2022.
- The Council's current strategy was to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, referred to as internal borrowing.

## **9 Legal Implications**

9.1 The S151 Officer has a statutory responsibility to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to adequately control the Council's resources. The Council is required to have regard to the Prudential Code, Treasury Management Code and relevant statutory guidance.

## **10 Climate and Sustainability, Safeguarding and/or Community Safety, Equality and Diversity, Social Value, Partnership, Health and Wellbeing, Asset Management, Data Protection and Consultation Implications**

10.1 None in respect of this report.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Audit, Governance and Standards Committee – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

**Reporting Frequency: Annually**

**List of Appendices**

Appendix A	External Context – Analysis by Arlingclose
Appendix B	List of Investments as at 31 March 2022

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### External Context – Analysis by Arlingclose

#### External Context

**Economic background:** The continuing economic recovery from coronavirus pandemic, together with the war in Ukraine, higher inflation, and higher interest rates were major issues over the period.

Bank Rate was 0.1% at the beginning of the reporting period. April and May saw the economy gathering momentum as the shackles of the pandemic restrictions were eased. Despite the improving outlook, market expectations were that the Bank of England would delay rate rises until 2022. Rising, persistent inflation changed that.

UK CPI was 0.7% in March 2021 but thereafter began to steadily increase. Initially driven by energy price effects and by inflation in sectors such as retail and hospitality which were re-opening after the pandemic lockdowns, inflation then was believed to be temporary. Thereafter price rises slowly became more widespread, as a combination of rising global costs and strong demand was exacerbated by supply shortages and transport dislocations. The surge in wholesale gas and electricity prices led to elevated inflation expectations. CPI for February 2022 registered 6.2% year on year, up from 5.5% in the previous month and the highest reading in the National Statistic series. Core inflation, which excludes the more volatile components, rose to 5.2% y/y from 4.4%.

The government's jobs furlough scheme insulated the labour market from the worst effects of the pandemic. The labour market began to tighten and demand for workers grew strongly as employers found it increasingly difficult to find workers to fill vacant jobs. Having peaked at 5.2% in December 2020, unemployment continued to fall and the most recent labour market data for the three months to January 2022 showed the unemployment rate at 3.9% while the employment rate rose to 75.6%. Headline 3-month average annual growth rate for wages were 4.8% for total pay and 3.8% for regular pay. In real terms, after adjusting for inflation, total pay growth was up 0.1% while regular pay fell by 1.0%.

With the fading of lockdown – and, briefly, the 'pingdemic' – restraints, activity in consumer-facing sectors improved substantially as did sectors such as oil and mining with the reopening of oil rigs but materials shortages and the reduction in the real spending power of households and businesses dampened some of the growth momentum. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by an upwardly revised 1.3% in the fourth calendar quarter of 2021 according to the final estimate (initial estimate 1.0%) and took UK GDP to just 0.1% below where it was before the pandemic. The annual growth rate was revised down slightly to 7.4% (from 7.5%) following a revised 9.3% fall in 2020.

Having increased Bank Rate from 0.10% to 0.25% in December, the Bank of England hiked it further to 0.50% in February and 0.75% in March. At the meeting in February, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted unanimously to start reducing the stock of its asset purchase

scheme by ceasing to reinvest the proceeds from maturing bonds as well as starting a programme of selling its corporate bonds.

In its March interest rate announcement, the MPC noted that the invasion of Ukraine had caused further large increases in energy and other commodity prices, with the expectation that the conflict will worsen supply chain disruptions around the world and push CPI inflation to around 8% later in 2022, even higher than forecast only a month before in the February Monetary Policy Report. The Committee also noted that although GDP in January was stronger than expected with business confidence holding up and the labour market remaining robust, consumer confidence had fallen due to the squeeze in real household incomes.

GDP growth in the euro zone increased by 0.3% in calendar Q4 2021 following a gain of 2.3% in the third quarter and 2.2% in the second. Headline inflation remains high, with CPI registering a record 7.5% year-on-year in March, the ninth successive month of rising inflation. Core CPI inflation was 3.0% y/y in March, was well above the European Central Bank's target of 'below, but close to 2%', putting further pressure on its long-term stance of holding its main interest rate of 0%.

The US economy expanded at a downwardly revised annualised rate of 6.9% in Q4 2021, a sharp increase from a gain of 2.3% in the previous quarter. In its March 2022 interest rate announcement, the Federal Reserve raised the Fed Funds rate to between 0.25% and 0.50% and outlined further increases should be expected in the coming months. The Fed also repeated its plan to reduce its asset purchase programme which could start by May 2022.

**Financial markets:** The conflict in Ukraine added further volatility to the already uncertain inflation and interest rate outlook over the period. The Dow Jones started to decline in January but remained above its pre-pandemic level by the end of the period while the FTSE 250 and FTSE 100 also fell and ended the quarter below their pre-March 2020 levels.

Bond yields were similarly volatile as the tension between higher inflation and flight to quality from the war pushed and pulled yields, but with a general upward trend from higher interest rates dominating as yields generally climbed.

The 5-year UK benchmark gilt yield began the quarter at 0.82% before rising to 1.41%. Over the same period the 10-year gilt yield rose from 0.97% to 1.61% and the 20-year yield from 1.20% to 1.82%.

The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 0.39% over the quarter.

**Credit review:** In the first half of FY 2021-22 credit default swap (CDS) spreads were flat over most of period and are broadly in line with their pre-pandemic levels. In September spreads rose by a few basis points due to concerns around Chinese property developer Evergrande defaulting but then fell back. Fitch and Moody's revised upward the outlook on a number of UK banks and building societies on the Authority's counterparty to 'stable', recognising their improved capital positions compared to 2020 and better economic growth prospects in the UK.

Fitch also revised the outlook for Nordea, Svenska Handelsbanken and Handelsbanken plc to stable. The agency considered the improved economic prospects in the Nordic region to have reduced the baseline downside risks it previously assigned to the lenders.

The successful vaccine rollout programme was credit positive for the financial services sector in general and the improved economic outlook meant some institutions were able to reduce provisions for bad loans. However, in 2022, the uncertainty engendered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine pushed CDS prices modestly higher over the first calendar quarter, but only to levels slightly above their 2021 averages, illustrating the general resilience of the banking sector.

Having completed its full review of its credit advice on unsecured deposits, in September Arlingclose extended the maximum duration limit for UK bank entities on its recommended lending list from 35 days to 100 days; a similar extension was advised in December for the non-UK banks on this list. As ever, the institutions and durations on the Authority's counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remains under constant review.



## Investments as at 31 March 2022

<b>Borrower</b>	<b>Amount £</b>	<b>Rate of Interest %</b>	<b>Date of Investment</b>	<b>Date of Maturity</b>
National Westminster Bank	1,630,092	0.01	N/A	On Demand
Debt Management Office	2,898,000	0.14	17/01/2022	18/04/2022
Federated Money Market Fund	5,200,000	Variable	N/A	On Demand
Aberdeen Standard Liquidity	5,500,000	Variable	N/A	On Demand
Aviva	3,200,000	Variable	N/A	On Demand
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	4,000,000	Variable	N/A	On Demand
CCLA Local Authority Property Fund	5,697,030	Variable	N/A	On Demand
Ninety-One (Formerly Investec)	2,752,351	Variable	N/A	On Demand
Columbia Threadneedle	1,980,392	Variable	N/A	On Demand
Royal London Enhanced Cash Fund	983,176	Variable	N/A	On Demand
Payden Sterling Reserve Fund	1,984,727	Variable	N/A	On Demand
AEGON Diversified Income Fund (Formerly Kames)	1,889,091	Variable	N/A	On Demand
Schroder Income Maximiser Fund	2,046,194	Variable	N/A	On Demand
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39,761,053</b>			



# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Full Council – 6 December 2022

### Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy and Delivery Plan

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Francesca Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing**

**Report Author: Chris Brown, Assistant Director Development & Regeneration**

#### **1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) declared a climate change emergency in 2019 committing the local authority to achieving carbon neutrality ahead of the Government's 2050 requirement.
- 1.2 As a social landlord the Council must comply with a requirement for its c5700 homes to achieve EPC C or better by 2030 and zero carbon by 2050.
- 1.3 The strategy sets out the baseline position of the Council's housing stock and sets ambitious targets which will progressively help SWT achieve zero carbon for its homes.
- 1.4 The Strategy identifies a significant number of risks which need to be navigated over the next two decades to achieve milestones and ultimately zero carbon.
- 1.5 A comprehensive delivery plan accompanies the strategy which outlines key principles to deliver the strategy. The delivery plan also confirms the funding available 2022-2029 to make the first significant steps towards achieving 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets.
- 1.6 The strategy places significant emphases on placing tenants at the heart of zero carbon and creating pathways to zero carbon for homes.
- 1.7 Officers have considered the finding of the Community Scrutiny's Retrofit Working Group and this strategy has many synergies with the view proposed by members.

#### **2 Recommendations**

That the Executive Committee recommends to Full Council the following report recommendations:-

-Full Council approve the Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy and Delivery Plan. The delivery of the strategy will need to be managed within the annual budget setting process, including the Medium Term Financial Plan and 30-Year Business Plan, to ensure the overall affordability of the schemes being proposed each year.

-The Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Director of Homes and Communities to progress the steps identified in the delivery plan and to promote the approach with Somerset County Council colleagues

### 3 Risk Assessment

3.1 Below are the main risks relating to the proposal:

Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	12 (4 x 3)	There are 8 risks in the risk assessment which are under this theme. The risk assessment and delivery plan offers mitigations to minimise additional unaffordable costs placed on the HRA business plan including alignment of decent homes and retrofit programmes and maximising grant opportunities
Failure to collect appropriate data.	8 (4 x 2)	There are 2 risks in the risk assessment which are under this theme. The risk assessment and delivery plan offers mitigations to ensure decisions are based on good quality data including greater use of the PAS 2035 quality assurance approach, open housing software and pathways to zero carbon based on archetype studies.
Failure to engage tenants	15 (5 x 3)	There are 3 risks in the risk assessment which are under this theme. The risk assessment and delivery plan offers mitigations to ensure tenants are at the heart of zero carbon. The approach will include more personalised approaches to engage tenants before, during and after capital works and improved procedures when delivering capital programmes directly or through sub-contractors. The mitigations also propose greater engagement with leaseholder.
Procurement and capital delivery	8 (2x4)	The economy is very challenging and this has seen significant inflation including building cost inflation. The council has also experienced the increasing risk averse nature of contractors and a more selective approach when tendering. SWT need to generate certainty for contractors and continuity of work. The strategy and delivery plan identifies some opportunities to mitigate the procurement challenges.
Failure to achieve targets	12 (3x4)	There are 3 risks in the risk assessment which are under this theme. The risk assessment and delivery plan offers mitigations to maximise the opportunity to achieve targets. The target most at risk is the services ability to reduce heat demand to 50kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr for all homes. Failure to achieve this ambitious level of heat demand will place more pressure on customers fuel costs as homes move from fossil fuel (gas) to electric heat. The main mitigations are additional yet uncosted fabric measures and / or additional onsite renewable heat and power. The strategy also highlights the need to conduct option appraisals on the worst performing stock t risk of missing the target.
External Risk Factors	10 (2x5)	There are 2 risks in the risk assessment which are under this theme. The risk assessment and delivery plan offers mitigations which provide the council with greater control in relation to achieving target. These include placing more



Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
		emphases on low heat demand rather than SAP/ EPCs as a measure to achieve zero carbon.

#### 4 Background and full details of the report

- 4.1 SWT In 2019 SWT declared a climate change emergency. Since 2019 SWT has been working with other Somerset Councils on a Climate Resilience plan (CDCM plan) and the Somerset Climate Change Emergency Strategy to help the County and District combat climate change and reduce carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Housing has a critical role in helping the council respond to the climate change emergency. To tackle the climate crisis, the UK government has legislated that the UK will reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050, meaning the UK will be putting no more carbon into the air than it is taking out. Homes account for about 14% of the UKs CO<sub>2</sub>.
- 4.2 The Council's housing stock is a small percentage of the District's stock however it generates a significant amount of CO<sub>2</sub>. SWT homes account for 9,144tCo<sub>2</sub> pa which is an average of 1.7tCO<sub>2</sub> per annum per property. SWT homes accounts for approximately one third of the CO<sub>2</sub> generated from SWT assets or activity. This amount of CO<sub>2</sub> excludes tenants goods and appliances which are difficult to measure and influence.
- 4.3 The UK and the world is experiencing unprecedented fuel price inflation and uncertainty. The District will see thousands of households experiencing fuel poverty for the first time during 2022 and a dramatic cost of living crisis is emerging. In the short term this strategy encourages energy saving advice and sign-posting tenants to further information sources to help manage energy costs. While these activities are useful they are unlikely to make a significant impact on the rapidly rising energy costs to customers. The council can make a huge impact as landlord in the medium and long term through an investment strategy which reduces the heat demand required by the Council's homes though fabric measures . This approach could see by 2040 over c60%-70% less fuel required to heat council homes.
- 4.4 The five main goals of the strategy and delivery plan are;
- a. Tenants at the heart of zero carbon
  - b. All SWT homes to achieve EPC C by 2030 (c1850 homes) or have an alternative investment option identified. Our current estimation is c300 homes could miss the target.
  - c. Aim to reduce heat demand on average from 135kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. to 50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. by 2040 through a 'fabric first' approach. This is a very ambitious target and many homes may require additional investment which will increase the cost of zero carbon significantly above the £135m or require more disinvestment options.
  - d. Replace fossil fuel in SWT homes with electric based heat and power by 2050 at a pace to ensure affordable energy for tenants and in line with available funds. This does not prevent replacing fossil fuel with electric heat and power immediately where their heat demand is sufficiently low and funding is available.
  - e. The investment remains affordable within the constraints of the Housing Revenue Account's annual, medium term and thirty year financial plans.

- 4.5 The strategy will progress a fabric first approach prioritising insulation and the reduction of heat demand over fuel switch from gas to electricity. Fuel switch away from gas will gain greater momentum once homes achieve a good level of insulation. It is likely
- 4.6 The costs of achieving zero carbon is estimated at c£135m over 28 years. This is based on today's prices. The strategy and delivery plan recognise that zero carbon is only affordable to the landlord under its current business plan if it adopts new approaches, including;
- a. Align Decent Homes Standard capital improvements with retrofit investment
  - b. Maximise grant and subsidy
  - c. Place tenants at the heart of zero carbon
  - d. Ensure good data influences decisions
  - e. Embrace a no regrets approach (this includes; correct specification of works for each individual property, improving ventilation and avoiding cold bridging and damp, progressive investment steps, selective demolition and disposal where targets cannot be achieved)

## **5 Links to Corporate Strategy**

- 5.1 In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to working towards achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030.
- 5.2 Maximising affordable housing remains a Corporate objective. Retaining and improving existing stock supports this objective.

## **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

- 6.1 Finance Officers have not undertaken any due diligence on the financial content of this report. The high-level estimated cost analysis of this strategy, which has been undertaken by the service, excludes any additional investment should customers require decanting, pre works and early replacement of components outside the decent homes lifetime lifecycles.
- 6.2 The delivery plan proposes a number of schemes over the next 10 years and these are currently contained within the proposed HRAs 10-Year Capital Programme and 30-Year Business Plan assumptions from 2022/23. The delivery plan has highlighted a number of grant opportunities 2023-2026 which are as yet unconfirmed and therefore at risk of not being achieved.
- 6.3 This is a significantly ambitious delivery plan within the current economic climate where there will be a real affordability challenge that could be aggravated if there is a divergence between rent increases and the cost inflation, as well as the cost of financing the capital programme placing further pressure on the business plan.
- 6.4 The delivery of this strategy will be highly dependent on external grant funding to make this affordable to deliver. Additional resource will be required to manage the administration and compliance of the terms and conditions of the grant(s).
- 6.5 The delivery of the strategy will need to be managed within the annual budget setting process, including the Medium Term Financial Plan and 30-Year Business Plan, to ensure the overall affordability of the schemes being proposed each year. This may

require the annual review of the delivery plan to be flexed to meet key financial performance indicators e.g. interest rate cover. The risk here would be that EPC C is not met by 2030 which means that those properties will not be lettable and will lose the business rental income.

- 6.6 Members are not being asked to commit resources to the strategy and delivery plan through this report but to consider investment within the annual HRA budget request.

### **Unitary Council Financial Implications and S24 Direction Implications**

- 6.7 This report does not require SWT to obtain consent of Somerset County Council's (SCC) executive in relation to the strategy. A number of the investment lines identified in the delivery plan have already received support through the council budget setting in or before February 2022. S24 consent would be required should any new contracts in excess of £1,000,000 be required prior to a unitary council in April 2023.
- 6.8 In terms of ongoing implications, the strategy and delivery plan will continue across the years and onwards under the new unitary authority. Continued management and oversight of the strategy and delivery plan will therefore continue far beyond vesting day. The Council's housing stock and all of the ongoing assets, liabilities, costs and income, and rights and obligations will transfer to the unitary on 1 April. The new council will be required to maintain a Housing Revenue Account for this service, as SWT does currently.

## **7 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 No legal issues to report.

## **8 Climate and Sustainability Implications**

- 8.1 In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to working towards achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030.
- 8.2 This strategy and delivery plan will provide the guidance for officers to delivery carbon reduction measures and ultimately zero carbon.

## **9 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 9.1 The strategy and delivery approach will support customers experiencing or at risk of experiencing fuel poverty in the medium and long term by a fabric first approach aims at reducing heat demand (fuel usage) by c60%-70%. The strategy also suggests additional measures such as onsite renewable heat and power where properties do not reduce heat demand sufficiently to allow fuel switch to take place without financial burden. The strategy proposes a review of processes when delivering capital programmes to better support tenants and especially vulnerable tenants.

## **10 Social Value Implications**

- 10.1 The capital programme will introduce practical measures to capture social value during investment in decent homes and low carbon retrofit programmes.

## **11 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 11.1 The right home environment is the foundation from which we can build healthy and fulfilling lives. Housing affects our wellbeing, risk of disease and demands on health and care services. We need warm, safe and secure homes to help us to lead healthy, independent lives and to recover from illness. The strategy and targets proposed will improve the quality of homes and the health quality of our customers. Affordable warmth and good ventilation are two benefits which the strategy emphasises.

## **12 Asset Management Implications**

- 12.1 The HRAs portfolio will improve through the adoption of the strategy and delivery plan. There are positive benefits such as greater investment in homes and pursuing a 'no regrets' approach as well as negative impacts for example some properties will require extra investment which may not be value for money. The strategy and delivery plan recognise that some properties may have costs which cannot be justified, and demolition or sale required. It is assumed these instances will be limited and only after full option appraisals are conducted.

## **13 Consultation Implications**

- 13.1 Consultation has taken place and is ongoing with tenants especially through the low carbon retrofit working group. There has been support from the tenants working group who have emphasised the need to ensure better and more personalised communication with tenants before during and after capital works.
- 13.2 Tenants have also emphasised the need for consistency in delivering works to customer's homes whether directly delivered by SWT staff or subcontractors. The strategy and delivery plan contain a number of recommendations which will be progressed by the service.

## **14 Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s)**

- 14.1 Community Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendation of the report.
- 14.2 The Scrutiny Committee was informed that the baseline for heat demand in the strategy would be changed prior to presenting to the Executive Committee as additional surveys have been analysed.
- 14.3 In response to questions raised by the committee the strategy has been refreshed to be more specific on the year (2035) that SWT will no longer replace gas boilers with new gas boilers and will switch fuel to electric. This date aligns with the decent homes investment cycle for boilers but will still be subject to properties having achieved a suitably low heat demand. The delivery plan has amended the KPI section to confirm the service will collect and monitor as a KPI the number of homes using fossil fuels.

### **Democratic Path:**

- Community Scrutiny – 26 October 2022
- Executive – 16 November 2022
- Full Council – 6 December 2022

Reporting Frequency: Once Only

**List of Appendices**

Appendix 1	Delivery Plan
Appendix 2	Architype Studies
Appendix 3	Risk Assessment
Appendix 4	Equality Impact Assessment

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Somerset West and Taunton  
Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy & Delivery Plan 2022-2028  
December 2022

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
  - a) What is low carbon retrofit
  - b) National Strategy
2. SWT housing stock baseline
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Appendix 1 - Delivery Plan

Appendix 2 – Architype studies

Appendix 3 – Risk Assessment

Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment

## Executive Summary

In 2019 SWT declared a climate change emergency. Since 2019 SWT has been working with other Somerset Councils on a Climate Resilience plan (CDCM plan) and the Somerset Climate Change Emergency Strategy to help the County and District combat climate change and reduce carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Housing has a critical role in helping the council respond to the climate change emergency. To tackle the climate crisis, the UK government has legislated that the UK will reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050, meaning the UK will be putting no more carbon into the air than it is taking out. Homes account for about 14% of the UK's CO<sub>2</sub>.

Although most homes in the District are private dwellings there is a significant proportion of social housing of which c5700 are owned and managed by the Council. SWT homes account for 9,144tCO<sub>2</sub> pa which is an average of 1.7tCO<sub>2</sub> per annum per property. SWT homes accounts for approximately one third of the CO<sub>2</sub> generated from SWT assets or activity.

This strategy will form an appendix of the Housing Revenue Account's Asset Management Strategy. A revision of the main body of the Asset Management Strategy and will be considered by Members in 2023. SWT's Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy 2022-2028 sets out the principles and practical steps to allow SWT homes achieve EPC C by 2030 and zero carbon by 2050. The strategy is supported by a delivery plan which identifies some of the short and medium term opportunities that will provide early momentum to achieve the estimated £135m investment required to achieve zero carbon.

The social housing environment is ever changing with the need to respond to national and local factors. This strategy recognises outside factors, such as new legislation and new technology, will bring opportunity and challenge to the delivery of zero carbon. The strategy and delivery plan will help guide decisions to help the Council steer an efficient path to zero carbon. The available technologies and grants in relation to low carbon retrofit will vary dramatically over the next twenty years meaning the Council must have a strategy, data and capacity able to respond.

The UK and the world is experiencing unprecedented fuel price inflation and uncertainty. The District will see thousands of households experiencing fuel poverty for the first time during 2022 and a dramatic cost of living crisis is emerging. In the short term this strategy encourages energy saving advice and sign-posting tenants to further information sources to help manage energy costs. While these activities are useful they are unlikely to make a significant impact on the rapidly rising energy costs to customers. The council can make a huge impact as landlord in the medium and long term through an investment strategy which reduces the heat demand required by the Council's homes through fabric measures. This could see tenants by 2040 using c63% less fuel on average to heat their homes.

To reflect the changing environment the strategy will be reviewed every five years as the council progresses towards zero carbon and the delivery plan will be reviewed annually to feed into the housing revenue accounts annual budget setting cycle.

The five main goals of the strategy and delivery plan are;

1. Tenants at the heart of zero carbon



2. All SWT homes to achieve EPC C by 2030 (c1850 homes) or have an alternative investment option identified. Our current estimation is c300 homes could miss the target.
3. Aim to reduce heat demand from 135kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. to 50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. by 2040 through a 'fabric first' approach. This is a very ambitious target and many homes may require additional investment which will increase the cost of zero carbon significantly above the £135m or require more disinvestment options.
4. Replace fossil fuel in SWT homes with electric based heat and power by 2050 at a pace to ensure affordable energy for tenants and in line with available funds. This does not prevent replacing fossil fuel with electric heat and power immediately where their heat demand is sufficiently low and funding is available.
5. The investment remains affordable within the constraints of the Housing Revenue Account's annual, medium term and thirty year financial plans.

The costs of achieving zero carbon is estimated at c£135m over 28 years. This is based on today's prices. The strategy and delivery plan recognise that zero carbon is not affordable to the landlord under its current business plan and therefore it needs to;

- Align Decent Homes standard improvements with retrofit programmes
- Maximise grant and subsidy
- Place tenants at the heart of zero carbon
- Ensure good data influences decisions
- Embrace a no regrets approach (correct specification of works for each individual property, improving ventilation and avoiding cold bridging and damp, progressive investment steps, selective demolition and disposal where targets cannot be achieved)

The housing service is transforming the decent homes capital programme to fully integrate a zero carbon 'no regrets' approach. Once achieved, this will permit the current business plan capital programme to contribute significantly towards zero carbon in both the specification of products it delivers and the timing of the replacement components. In addition, the service will build on the Council's success of bidding for grant and substantially increase its investment plans with available grants and steer away from investment where the investment contradicts the pathway to zero carbon identified for that archetype or individual property.

The Council has invested in the new 'Open' databases, which includes Open Housing and Open Assets, and retrofit software (Parity Portfolio). It has also employed specialist retrofit advisors and PAS2035 coordinators. Through good data and surveying the Council has been able to create archetype studies by property form. SWT has identified 12 pathways to zero carbon which cover 96% of the Council's properties. SWT is able to carry out modelling of different pathways to zero carbon for sub archetypes as investment opportunities emerge. Through archetype studies and pathways to zero carbon SWT understand the specification and types of components required to achieve a c60%-70% heat demand reduction and the timing of fuel switch away from fossil fuel. As a result the service is able to better align the council's decent homes investment and retrofit investment.

The council has been working with specialist retrofit consultants to guide our delivery plan and invest significantly in specialist PAS 2035 co-ordination and individual property PAS2035 assessments and design. In addition, most contractors will be required to be TrustMark registered which provides a significant level of confidence in their skills, design, the recording of data and warranties for products.

As a result of this approach SWT and tenants confidence will increase and the council will have evidence of success in delivering measures to reduce CO2 and fuel use. Monitoring success pre and post works is essential. New SMART heating controls and energy monitoring technology will be introduced into more homes to help tenants manage their heat and power consumption better. The service is also seeking to install monitoring technology which will help the tenants and council if there are problems with the property such as high humidity, excessive fuel costs and will identify properties behaving better or worse than the average.

Our approach will maximise grant opportunities by identifying the pathways to zero carbon which provides the service with the transparency to identify properties which qualify for grant and which would benefit from the grant.

SWT has developed this strategy with tenants. In particular the council has worked with tenants through the Low Carbon Retrofit Working Group. However, the strategy is also influenced by the Strategic Tenants Group (TSG), members of the tenants working group (TWG) the Damp and Mould Working Group and the NTWP Works and Low Carbon Working Group. Engagement and communication with tenants is critical if SWT is to achieve zero carbon. Communication prior and during work programmes must be of a high standard and personalised to localities and customers need. The Tenant Engagement Plan and Vulnerable Persons Policy has been developed to assist SWT staff, tenants and contractors with the aim of preparing tenants with the information and support they need to participate in works. The policies are aimed at increasing access at the first time of asking to ensure the council and its contractors carry out surveys and works. In addition, customers will need to understand any new technology which is in their home, especially boiler controls and performance data. To this end the service will need to enhance the knowledge of all front line staff to offer timely and accurate advice. It is also considered beneficial to introduce tenant feedback processes and remote monitoring to help identify any problems, for example, under performance against the anticipated improvement from investment.

## 1 Introduction

### What is low carbon retrofit

Responding to climate change requires the need to reduce energy consumption and improve the resilience of the built environment. Buildings account for 30%-40% of the energy consumed and 20%-36% of energy related greenhouse gas emissions across the European Union, United Kingdom and US. Increases in flooding and extreme weather triggered by climate change pose heightened risks to assets like buildings and property. Governments, landowners, property managers and investors alike are recognising these challenges and looking for solutions to safeguard buildings and users, shore up their investments and respond to policy imperatives. One area where they have found common ground is the huge and urgent need for upgrades to improve the energy efficiency, affordability, comfort and resilience of housing and building stock. Retrofit is simply the process of making changes to existing buildings so that energy consumption and emissions are reduced.

SWT in developing its approach to new build zero carbon affordable homes and zero carbon affordable housing retrofit builds on some of the knowledge and experience. SWT has considered good practice and the advice of leading organisations such as the London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) and the Good Homes Alliance. This strategy has interpreted LETI's retrofit 2021 guidance to meet the challenges of SWT's stock and has gone further by calculating the estimated financial cost of achieving zero carbon. The strategy does welcome LETI's good practice guidance and endorses the LETI definition as presented in its Climate Emergency Retrofit Guide;

'Retrofit isn't just about reducing carbon emissions. A best practice retrofit should reduce fuel bills and also improve health and wellbeing. Retrofit at scale would also generate significant employment opportunities and stimulate the economy'.

A massive transformation is needed to meet the demand for energy efficient homes and buildings and to keep climate change within the bounds of the Paris Accords. The scale of the retrofit challenge is significant with roughly 15,000 houses across Europe needing to have retrofit works carried out every day for the next 30 years to achieve the target.

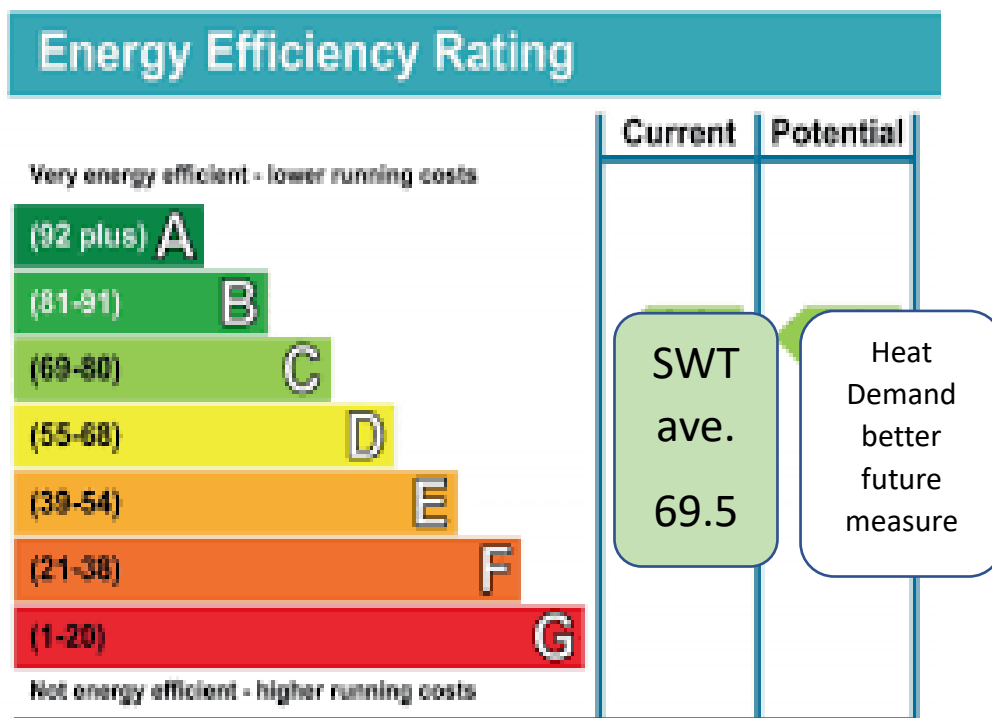
SWT has set down a strategic ambition to achieve zero carbon ahead of 2050 and is making investment decisions to progress carbon reduction in all aspects of its work and influence. In the UK 80% of the homes which exist today will be in use in 2050. Officers forecast that c80% of SWT's affordable homes will be Council affordable homes in 2050 with c20% of the stock new build homes built to a zero carbon standard. The Council will lose c20% of homes through the Right to Buy, selective disposal and selective demolition. Retrofitting SWT homes by 2050 is a challenge proportionate to the national challenge and requires transformation in how we invest and provide our services.

### National Targets

There are two main low carbon retrofit targets which the council must achieve or risk being unable to let the properties.

The UK Government passed the Climate Change Act 2019 which committed the UK to a legally binding target of net zero by 2050. In addition, social landlords are required to achieve EPC C or better (B, A) as measured through the Standards Assessment Procedure (SAP) for all households in their homes suffering from fuel poverty by 2030. The revised definition of fuel poverty is someone living in a property rated D, E, F or G and therefore the council in practice have to bring their homes up to EPC C by 2030. Image 1 shows the efficiency rating bands and the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) points for each band. Band A is considered Excellent (high SAP points) and Band G is considered very poor (low SAP points) in terms of energy efficiency. Although EPC Bands allow properties energy efficiency to be compared very easily this strategy proposes heat demand and fuel source as the critical measures as we seek to achieve zero carbon.

Image 1 – Energy Efficiency Rating System and SWTs average SAP rating



To achieve zero carbon by 2050 we will need to remove the use of fossil fuels from homes and switch to fossil free renewable sources of energy primarily electric. However, without reducing the heat demand of our homes through improved insulation, often referred to as a fabric first approach, or without a significant reduction in the cost of electricity a fuel switch strategy would be unaffordable for many tenants. Government recognise that a fabric first approach has the opportunity to reduce heat demand in homes to allow the switch for many homes to affordable electric heat and power.

The strategy has considered the SWT Community Scrutiny Committees Task and Finish Group's report on Council Housing Zero Carbon Retrofit 2022. The report

included a wide range of recommendations including a fabric first, whole house approach to retrofit, learning from local and national best practice, removal of fossil fuels and building customer awareness. This strategy embraces and reinforces many of the sentiments of the Task and Finish Group.

The London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) is a leading zero carbon collective which produces excellent guidance which officers have used in the development of zero carbon new build and retrofit standards. The LETI principles are:

- Reduce energy consumption
- Prioritise occupant's health
- Have a whole house retrofit plan
- Measure performance
- Think Big

This strategy follows the principles but not the absolute letter of the London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) guidance or retrofit blueprint (image 2). SWT will apply these principles to our archetypes and property forms (houses, bungalows and apartments).

Image 2 – LETI's retrofit blueprint (this image is to illustrate the complexity and connected considerations which a best practice approach to retrofit requires, a readable version can be found online at <https://www.leti.uk/retrofit>)

## A blueprint for retrofitting the UK's homes to meet the climate challenge

A policymaker's summary of the LETI Climate Emergency Retrofit Guide

### LETI's six principles for good retrofit

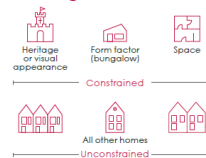
Follow these principles to maximise the multiple benefits of retrofit and minimise the risks. For example: reducing energy consumption is key to reducing carbon emissions, tackling fuel poverty and improving national energy security.

- 1: Reduce energy consumption
- 2: Prioritise occupant and building health
- 3: Have a whole building Retrofit Plan
- 4: Measure the performance
- 5: Think big!
- 6: Consider impact on embodied carbon

### LETI's recommended energy performance targets

The current industry measurement of energy performance is an EPC. However a good EPC score does not necessarily indicate a building with high levels of energy efficiency.

LETI has defined what good retrofit looks like through best practice and exemplar energy targets for constrained and unconstrained buildings.



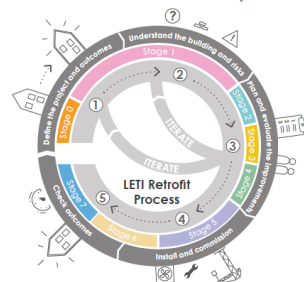
### LETI's whole house Retrofit Plan

LETI recommends a whole house approach to retrofit rather than retrofitting individual elements in isolation. A whole house Retrofit Plan should:

- Set out the key building information, constraints, risks and opportunities.
- Define the key works proposed along with related strategies and details.
- Define the sequence of work.
- Be appropriate in its level of detail and intervention for the building size, context, use, owner and occupants, scope of work and heritage value.
- Include a plan for monitoring and reporting energy consumption.
- Keep your retrofit plan with the building for future occupants.

This is similar to PAS 2035's risk-based paths; avoiding abortive work and minimising risk.

### LETI's recommended retrofit process



	LETI best practice retrofit	LETI exemplar retrofit
Fossil fuel free	Fossil fuel free home	Fossil fuel free home
Energy Use Intensity	50 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr +10 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr Additional allowance for constrained retrofit	40 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr
Space heating demand	50 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr +10 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr Additional allowance for constrained retrofit	25 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr
Hot water demand	20 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr +5 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr Additional allowance for homes <75m <sup>2</sup>	20 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr +5 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr Additional allowance for homes <75m <sup>2</sup>
Renewable energy	40% of total energy covered by renewables Maximise renewables where conditions are suitable	40% of total energy covered by renewables Maximise renewables where conditions are suitable

### New build vs retrofit

It is generally preferable to retrofit than demolish and build new, because of the much greater embodied carbon in new build than in retrofit.

For retrofits that include a new build element, or any new builds, we recommend you look at LETI's [Climate Emergency Design Guide](#) and the [Embodied Carbon Primer](#).

For new buildings, there is consensus that a huge shift is needed in policy to produce net zero carbon compliant buildings - please see LETI's response to the Future Homes and the [Future Buildings Standard](#).

It is hoped that this strategy and delivery plan is further evidence of the council leading by example. Social housing providers have emerged as innovators of low carbon transitions in the UK residential sector. Research published in the *Energy and Buildings Journal (Vol 177)* suggested social housing providers tend to have a

significant amount of influence over large housing stocks, have opportunities to access funding to retrofit on a large scale, can make explicit connections between reduced carbon emissions and improved quality of life for low-income residents, and foster a close relationship with the place and communities they serve. In effect, social housing providers are not only facilitators but also realise low carbon transitions through various strategies.

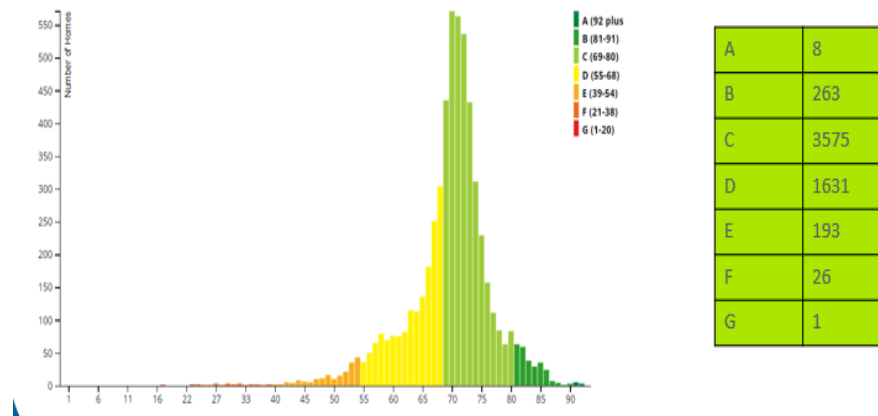
## 2. SWT housing stock baseline

The Council's c5,700 homes are estimated to account for nearly one third of the Council's own carbon footprint. In 2018/19 12,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e was the estimated volume of carbon released from SWT homes and in 2021/2022 we are now calculating this at 9,860tCO<sub>2</sub> using Parity Portfolio software. Our modelling predicts that an investment of £135m will achieve zero carbon by 2050 with a significant number of archetypes and properties unable to meet our ambition of zero carbon using a heat demand of 50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. However, some of these properties will achieve zero carbon with additional measures and interventions or with ongoing higher than desired fuel usage.

SWT's retrofit investment must be based on robust data and analysis. The housing service has invested in Parity Portfolio and Open Housing and Open Assets software as well as developing pathways to zero carbon through archetype studies. Although our data is constantly improving there is sufficient confidence in the data to allow investment priorities and principles to be created. Our data sets allow the Council to create pathways to zero carbon for 12 different property archetypes covering 96% of the stock. Our data has significantly improved over the past 12 months and will continue to improve through surveys, use of software and new staff capacity to analyse data. The service is also changing to better capture the data following decent homes and retrofit capital investment programmes.

SWT's baseline has been created through our own resources and by the use of specialists, Parity Portfolio software and our own stock condition and EPC records. Our 'Parity Portfolio' modelling which uses EPC's, capital investment data, such as boiler replacements and other indicators, is able to provide many insights into our stock profile and retrofit requirements. Chart 1 shows that although 1851 SWT homes do not meet the 2030 target the average SAP rating across the stock as a whole does achieve EPC C (69.5). Of those homes not achieving EPC C 86% are in EPC Band D and a small number of low cost interventions such as quality windows low energy lighting, improved loft insulation or gas boiler upgrade will bring the majority of these homes up to the standard will move these homes to band C. It should be noted that pre works assessments will identify the accuracy of the data we hold and this may lead to retrofit solutions being reconsidered. Please note that EPC's and SAP are not a measurement fit for purpose to identify carbon reduction.

Chart 1 – Profile of SWT properties 2022 in relation to EPC bands



Although EPC's and SAP measurements are not appropriate for measuring carbon reduction the data does suggest that 3845 properties are EPC A, B or C. We can therefore assume that 66% of council homes already meet the 2030 target and governments fuel poverty measure.

The average cost of bringing SWT homes up to EPC C is £3.2k which is a moderate business plan investment. SWT do have some outliers such as Woolaway and Cornish non-traditional properties, pre 1930 homes and solid wall properties. The Council will need to consider if these homes offer value for money on a cluster or individual basis and if a retention or disposal strategy should be pursued. In addition, some stock will become tiered and not merit investment but offer opportunities for demolition to create sites for new build council homes or disposal.

Chart 2 shows SWT stock profile by age. SWT has recognised the need to make disinvestment decisions such as demolition and disposal where an overriding case is presented. SWT have recently experienced the need to disinvest in woolaway and Wordsworth Drive Flats as the properties have been recognised as uneconomic to bring to a decent homes and zero carbon standard. Although the HRA investment pre 2030 to achieve EPC C is significant the greater challenge is to bring homes up to the 2050 zero carbon standard. On average homes will cost c£24k. This cost does not include any complementary work such as support for customers, decanting, refixing of components disturbed during work or early replacement of components before their anticipated failure date.

Chart 2 – Stock profile by age

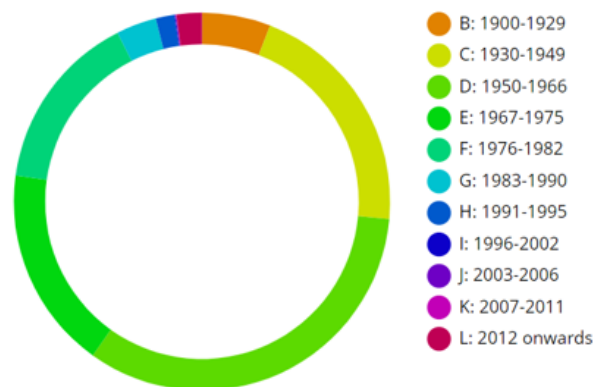


Table 1 below provides a summary of some of the baseline stock data which is helpful when considering low carbon retrofit and investment options. The baseline data suggests each home on average produces 1.7 tons of CO2 annually which is 9,685 tons of carbon annually from all SWT homes. A key baseline measure important in the strategy is heat demand. Officers using archetype studies based on a limited number of property survey's have estimated the average heat demand of 135 kWh/m2/yr. This measure excludes household domestic energy appliances, equipment or vehicles as the landlord can only influence but not control these items. It should be noted that as more homes are surveyed pre works the baseline will



change. Reducing heat demand along with switching fuel to electricity will be key indicators when measuring success of the strategy.

Table 1 – SWT Baseline Stock Data

	2022 Baseline
SWT Properties (excludes leaseholders)	5697 (100%)
Houses	2848 (50%)
Apartments	1994 (35%)
Bungalows	855 (15%)
Leaseholder	450 (100%)
Properties above EPC C (C, B, A) (excludes leaseholders)	3846 (65.78%)
Properties EPC D or below (D, E, F) (excludes leaseholders)	1851 (33.2%)
Average SAP	69.5 (EPC C)
Archetypes	14
% of stock covered by Archetype studies	96%
% of stock covered by PAS surveys (or other retrofit assessment)	0.004%
Average CO2 per units	1.7 tCO2 pa
Total CO2	9,685 tCO2
Average Heat demand per property	135 kWh/m2/yr

*\*note data will change as more property surveys are conducted pre works*

## Archetype Studies

SWT is creating c12 high level archetype pathways to zero carbon (table 2) which also consider a properties form (bungalow, house, apartment). This strategy places significant emphasis on the archetype studies to establish our base line, targets and pathways to zero carbon. As more individual property studies are conducted baselines, targets and pathways will be refined. The importance of zero carbon pathway modelling is critical to understand the investment decisions including the sequence of investment based on a fabric first approach. These high level studies cover 96% of SWT homes and will ultimately be transparent to allow tenants, staff and Members to understand how SWT plan to achieve zero carbon and reduce fuel usage for each home/archetype. Table 3 shows the 14 SWT property archetypes and tables 2, 3 and 4 are examples of how these archetype template help officers understand the measures to achieve zero carbon. These studies show the importance of considering each archetype on its merit and these high level studies are followed by whole house and block surveys often using the PAS 2035 assessment process.

Table 2 – Property Archetype Studies

SWT Architype Studies 2022						
Architype		% of SMT Stock	Units	Heat demand Baseline (kWh/m2/yr)	Ambitious 2040 Heat demand (kWh/M2/yr)	Modelled 2040 heat demand as % of 2022 heat demand
1	Conventional House	77.40%	4417	130	49.75	30.62%
2	Conventional Apartment				25	
3	Conventional Bungalow				41.25	
4	Woolaway House semi	3.80%	218	170	37	29.41%
5	Woolaway House Terrace				37	
6	Cornish House	6.30%	359	160	65	40.63%
7	Cornish Apartment				65	
8	Cornish bungalow				65	
9	Easiform House	7.10%	407	139	57	38.13%
10	Easiform Apartment				53	
11	Easiform maisonette				53	
12	BISF House Semi	1.30%	77	159	56	35.22%
13	Others	4.10%	228	No Architype studies planned assume 130	50	38.46%
		100.00%	5706	135	42	32%

**Table 3 - Profile of SWT stock by architype**

Architype	SWT Units
Conventional	4417
Easiform	407
Cornish PRC	359
Woolaway*	218
Airy	24
BISF	77
HSG REV AC	1
Relocat	10
Special PP	3
Rema PRC	43
Stanard WIC	8
Tru-steel	24
Concrete	63
Timber	52
	5706

\* Some woolaways are currently under demolition

The Council's most common property architype is a brick build conventional semi detached house. This example below is has a heat demand of 110kWh/m2/yr. With external wall insulation, improved windows and doors and mechanical ventilation this property will achieve a reduced heat demand of 45kWh/m2/yr. This property could achieve an even better heat demand of 24kWh/m2/yr. however this would require greater disruption to the household and significantly higher costs.

**Table 4 – Archtype 1 – Pathway to Zero Carbon – Conventional cavity wall semi-detached house**

Property: Drive	Baseline	Fabric <90 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	EPC-B	EPC-A
<b>EPC Information</b>		EWI/DOORS & WINDOWS/AP50/MEV	...plus PV	...plus FLOOR/MVHR/ASHP/LOFT
Existing EPC	<b>D-68</b>			
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>D-63</b>	<b>C-75</b>	<b>B-85</b>	<b>A-92</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>110.75</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>24</b>
Floor U Value	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.18
Wall U-Value	1.55	0.18	0.18	0.18
Roof U-Value	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.13
Door U-Value	2.9	1.2	1.2	1.2
Window U-Value	2.8	1.2	1.2	1.2
Air Tightness	11.88	3	3	3
Solar PV KWP			3	3
ASHP				YES
Ventilation Type	IEV	MEV	MEV	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency				90%

(a larger version of this table is available at appendix 2)

Table 5 again shows an Easiform property archetype which is a non traditional apartment often 3-4 storeys. The circles on table 5 shows the baseline and optimum investment to ensure the home is affordable to the tenant and zero carbon once the grid is decarbonised. This archetype has the potential to reduce its heat demand from 138kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. to 35.5kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. which is 28% of its current fuel consumption. This archetype only achieves the target heat demand of 50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr with the addition of external wall insulation and triple glazing.

**Table 5 – Archtype 2 – Pathway to Zero Carbon – Easiform Non traditional apartment**

Property: Flat	Baseline	Phase 1A < 90kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr	Phase 1B – EPC C	Gas Option	Phase 2 – EPC B	Phase 3 – NET Zero Future
<b>EPC Information</b>		CWI + Openings	Phase 1A + MVHR	Phase 1B – Gas boiler** instead of ASHP	Phase 1B + Solar	Phase 2 + EWI
Existing EPC	<b>D-56</b>					
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>D-60</b>	<b>C-69</b>	<b>C-72</b>	<b>C-73</b>	<b>B-82</b>	<b>B-85</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>138.7</b>	<b>65.4</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>35.5</b>
Floor U Value	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80
Wall U-Value Level*	1.23	<b>0.52</b>	0.52	0.52	0.52	<b>0.18</b>
Roof U-Value	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Door U-Value	3.00	<b>1.20</b>	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
Window U-Value	2.80	<b>1.00</b>	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Air Tightness (AP50)	4.99	<b>3.00</b>	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Solar PV KWP					<b>1.5 (SW)</b>	1.5 (SW)
ASHP	Daikin	Daikin	Daikin		Daikin	Daikin
Ventilation Type	None	None	<b>MVHR</b>	MVHR	MVHR	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency						

(a larger version of this table is available at appendix 2)

Table 6 is again a common property archetype which is a brick build conventional bungalow. The circles on table 6 shows the baseline and optimum investment to ensure the home is affordable to the tenant and zero carbon once the grid is decarbonised. This archetype has the potential to reduce its heat demand from

188kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. to 41.25kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. This archetype requires an insulated floor to achieve a maximum heat of 50 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. If a property has a concrete foundation insulated floors can be expensive and intrusive. This example allows asset managers to consider if bungalows and ground floor apartments merit having their floors insulated when a property becomes void and/or when it requires a new kitchen and bathroom to limit the extra disruption to tenants and limit what would be expensive additional costs. Please note that insulating concrete floors create additional costs such as replacing/realigning existing fixtures including skirting, stairs, kitchen, bathroom, ramps and steps. These additional costs as well as rent loss and decant costs are not included in the £135m investment to achieve zero carbon.

**Table 6 – Architype 2 – Pathway to Zero Carbon – conventional brick built Bungalow**

	Baseline	Fabric <90 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	EPC-B	EPC-A
<b>EPC Information</b>		EW/DOORS & WINDOWS/AP50/MEV	...plus PV	...plus FLOOR/MVHR
Existing EPC	E-43			
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>E-45</b>	<b>C-73</b>	<b>B-91</b>	<b>A-94</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>188</b>	<b>83.25</b>	<b>83.25</b>	<b>41.25</b>
Floor U-Value	0.77	0.72	0.72	0.18
Wall U-Value	1.55	0.18	0.18	0.18
Roof U-Value	0.27	0.13	0.13	0.13
Door U-Value	3.05/4.5*	1.2	1.2	1.2
Window U-Value	2.8	1.2	1.2	1.2
Air Tightness	6.57	3	3	3
Solar PV KWP			2.5	2.5
ASHP	YES**	YES**	YES**	YES**
Ventilation Type	IEV	MEV	MEV	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency				90%

(a larger version of this table is available at appendix 2)

### Parity Portfolio Software

Parity Portfolio software helps landlords model options to improve the energy and carbon performance of the existing housing stock. The software includes the latest RdSAP method, with additional and enhanced analysis using georeferenced data. The parity software uses SWTs stock condition data and other relevant data sources to produce property profiles made up of all c5700 SWT homes. The collation and cleansing of data will usually involve some cloning and highlight conflicting or missing data. As the data analysis is done automatically and at individual property level, when new data is updated for example following surveys or capital works the baseline and scenarios update automatically.

The data is available for SWT to run an unlimited number of scenarios to help the Council consider a broad range of approaches to achieve zero carbon. The software has numerous property component options which its intelligence can match to the scenario. The service has restricted the choices available when running scenarios to avoid too many component combinations which would be too bespoke to deliver and maintain and /or lead to greater tenant disruption and cost. A fabric first approach excluding internal wall insulation (IWI) and limited floor insulation followed by fuel switch was the preferred scenario which has provided our investment cost estimates.

## Data collection and PAS2035 Surveys

The council has a new asset database called Open Assets which sits within the new Open data base for the housing service. The data base is populated with our stock condition data which supports the decent homes programme. The retrofit programme and decent homes programme are now coming together as the single capital programme with the aim of timely investment to ensure all SWT homes are achieving the decent homes standard and also achieving the low carbon and zero carbon standards.

Landlords conduct EPC surveys as part of the lettings process to ensure incoming tenants are aware of the energy efficiency rating of homes. Landlords also carry out stock condition surveys to understand the investment needs of their homes to keep them to the decent home's standard. Increasing both Government and landlords have been concerned about the problems which have arisen as bi-products of inappropriate Decent Homes retrofit works, specifications, design or components. Issues such as damp and mould or cold bridging are examples of these failings. To support a 'no regrets' approach the government require local authorities to follow the PAS 2035 process and appoint TrustMark accredited contractors if they wish to receive government grant. PAS 2035 is a new, comprehensive domestic retrofit standard which will protect landlords and tenants and ensure works are identified and specified correctly. Certified organisations who have the TrustMark accreditation deliver the installations, record and lodge information correctly and issue the appropriate warranties and guarantees.

SWT will follow the PAS2035 requirements and use PAS coordinators and PAS qualified assessors and designers as it develops its programmes of capital works where it is likely the property will qualify for government grant.

## SWT low carbon retrofit Targets

Good customer engagement and communication, a fabric first approach and proactive pursuit of subsidy will be embraced to maximise the delivery of;

- a) the greatest CO2 reduction in the shortest time,
- b) a sustainable reduction in average fuel consumption
- c) affordability of retrofit works to the HRA business plan.

Table 7 shows some key baseline data, and the low carbon retrofit targets for 2030, 2040 and 2050. The targets show that the Council can become compliant with the 2030 target at relative low costs and moderate costs (c£3.2m per units). It will incur significantly more cost to reduce heat demand to c50 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. (c13k per unit).

The period 2040-2050 will focus on removing fossil fuels (c9k per unit) and resolving challenges to properties unable to achieve the target. There are a large number of properties which will fail to achieve a heat demand below 50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. which will require either additional fabric measures or additional on site renewable energy solutions to ensure the fuel costs are sustainable for the tenant.

Table 7 – SWT 2022 baseline and targets 2030, 2040 and 2050.

	2022 Baseline	2030 Target EPC C	2040 target Fabric first 50 kWh/m2/yr	2050 Target Zero Carbon
SWT Properties (excludes leaseholders)	5697 (100%)	5500 (100%)*	5200 (100%)*	5000 (100%)*
Houses	2848 (50%)			2250 (45%)*
Apartments	1994 (35%)			1895 (37%)*
Bungalows	855 (15%)			855 (18%)*
Leaseholder	450 (100%)			727 (100%)*
Properties above EPC C (C, B, A) (excludes leaseholders)	3846 (65.78%)	5397 (95%)	5200 (100%)	5000 (100%)
Properties EPC D or below (D, E, F) (excludes leaseholders)	1851 (33.2%)	c300 (c5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Average SAP	69.5 (EPC C)	TBC	TBC	91.9 (EPC B)**
Archetypes	14	14	14	14
% of stock covered by Archetype studies	96%	96%	100%	100%
% of stock covered by PAS surveys (or other retrofit assessment)	0.004%	20%	75%	100%
Average CO2 per units	1.7 tCO2 pa	TBC	0.63 tCO2	0 tCO2 pa
Total CO2	9,685 tCO2	TBC	3,587 tCO2	0 tCO2
Average Heat demand per property	kWh/m2/yr	95 kWh/m2/yr	50 kWh/m2/yr	50 kWh/m2/yr
Properties anticipated to miss target	0	223	664	664
Total investment for stock to achieve target***	0	£6,000,000	£66,000,000	£135,000,000
Average investment per property to achieve EPC C	0	£3,270	£12,638	£23,697
<i>* assumption 'best guess' based the potential variance due to Right to Buy Sales plus disposals and demolitions plus new build homes</i>				
<i>** does not assume additional increase due to stock reduction (EPC A is likely)</i>				
<i>*** Do include associated costs such as decanting, environmental works, replacement of components in advance of their renewal date, surveys, etc</i>				

A key concern for many Members and observers is the pace which fossil fuel is being replaced by on site or grid renewable heat and power. Image 3 provides a picture of the relative progress of key measures which supports a fabric first approach within a restricted budget. The position taken by the strategy is based primarily on the following assumptions:

- The Housing Revenue Account will have insufficient funds to deliver all required measures for Zero Carbon through a one off whole house approach. The housing service will need to revisit many properties over the next 28 years to achieve the standard.
- A fabric first approach will reduce the heat and power required for a property regardless of fuel source. When a properties heat demand is reduced through insulation measures the amount of fossil fuel used to heat and power the property reduces. If a 50 kWh/m2/yr. target is achieved the housing stock will reduce fuel usage by 70%+. In theory this means fuel regardless of type will reduce by 70%. This would be a significant achievement and avoid higher electricity costs for many customers.
- A fabric first approach means that when fossil fuel is replaced in SWT homes the specification for the new electric heating system will be based on the lower heat demand required to keep the property warm. This means boilers will be more efficient and smaller. If heating system require less electricity then any demands on the grid or PV will be less.

- Some SWT properties will receive a whole house approach with multiple measures which will include renewable heat and power between 2022. An estimate is that c1100 properties could benefit from early replacement of fossil fuel. A gas boiler has a 15 year assumed life and therefore SWT will plan to stop upgrading gas heating systems from 2035 and upgrade with mains electric systems. However, a low heat demand for a property will be required to switch fuel pre 2040.
- Significant progress has been made by the grid in decarbonising over the past ten years and this will continue. The heat demand target of <50 kWh/m2/yr. is set as it is thought for a household with average income electric heating from the grid will be affordable. For some low income / vulnerable customers SWT would like to go further through on site renewable heat and power providing greater cost efficiency. The strategy recognises that the largest contribution to reducing CO2 and fuel usage in the short term within the assumed financial resources is an ambitious target.
- The government are emphasising the fabric first approach through the various grant and obligations they control. This means that in the short term SWT can deliver more fabric measures as more subsidy is available for fabric than renewable heat and power measures.

Image 3 - Why Fabric First -



Achieving 2030 Targets

SWT will strive to achieve EPC C for all SWT homes by 2030. This will require 1891 homes to receive investment in low carbon measures primarily through three work packages and some will need to be considered as part of an asset management option appraisal. As new grant opportunities are introduced more new investment packages will be introduced. The three work packages are:

1. Multiple measures usually moving properties two EPC bands through multiple fabric measures including improved wall, loft, window, door insulation, improved air tightness and ventilation and where funding permits renewable

heat and power – Examples of this would be plans being progressed for some non-traditional properties including some Woolways, Cornish, Easiform and apartment blocks. The service has a significant funding pledge from an energy provider to deliver comprehensive improvements to public and private dwellings with c£6m estimated for SWT homes between 2022 and 2026. This initiative will use a neighbourhood based social housing led approach to delivering energy company obligation. Properties in this category should require few future measures following works to achieve zero carbon.

2. Windows replacement scheme with a minimum insulation value of U1.2 supported by a wraparound energy package where the property will receive complementary draught proofing, loft insulation, low energy lighting, improved boiler controls and property monitoring technology. The service hopes to improve 1100 homes from EPC D to EPC C between 2022 and 2026 using this approach and is commencing on a priority list of 617 homes.
3. Continuation of our boiler replacement scheme with the replacement of inefficient gas, electric or solid fuel with more efficient heating. The majority of replacement systems will be new gas combi boilers but some electric and renewable systems. Properties improved with a new boiler will also be supported by a wraparound energy package where the property will receive complementary draught proofing, loft insulation, low energy lighting, improved boiler controls and property monitoring technology. The service hopes to upgrade c250 homes from EPC D to EPC C between 2022 and 2024. These properties will still require fabric first measures to achieve a heat demand of 50 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. and zero carbon.

### Achieving 2040 Targets

SWT will strive to achieve 50 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. for all SWT homes by 2040. This will require circa 5000 homes to receive significant fabric investment and frequent use of high performing double or triple glazing and doors, greater attention to air tightness and draught proofing measures and increased use of mechanical ventilation. The stock will also see an increase in the use of external wall insulation. The service is investing in software and staff capacity to help analyse retrofit and decent homes data to identify properties able to cost effectively receive multiple fabric first measures through a whole house approach. Between 2028 and 2040 the alignment of decent homes and retrofit will remain in significant focus as multiple measures delivered simultaneously will reduce prelim costs. The nature of the interventions will mean a significant uplift in the average cost of works. It is likely that during this period some additional measures such as floor insulation will be introduced within the void programme in particular for bungalows and some apartments in order to minimise any decants required as a result of retrofit. The decanting of tenants will significantly increase the complexity of the works programme and incur additional costs and major disruption for tenants. The service is preparing block investment plans which will place the Council's 440 housing blocks within timelines for investment and also allow consultation with leaseholders and tenants on comprehensive block refurbishment packages.

### Achieving 2050 Targets



SWT will strive to achieve zero carbon by switching fuel away from fossil fuel once properties heat demand is significantly low to minimise the impact of fuel affordability. Some fuel switching is taking place at the moment as some heating systems need replacing and the tenant should be no financially worse off after fabric works. Solid fuel systems and inefficient electric systems will be replaced by more efficient electric systems such as quantum or Air Source Heat Pumps. However, switching tenants from gas prior to significantly reducing heat demand or a significant change in the cost of electricity compared to gas will have the potential to increase fuel poverty for more tenants and exaggerate the cost of living crisis. It would also be the case that the property would require the specifying of a larger/more powerful boiler than would be required post fabric first insulation works as the system would be specified for heating more colder air. It is worth noting that c650 (11%) Air Source Heat Pumps have been installed in SWT homes although there is significant variation in the heat demand for those properties leading to both good and poor user experiences. All homes which use electric heating and no fossil fuel will automatically be zero carbon as soon as the national grid is decarbonised. Therefore c1700 homes are already compliant albeit with insufficient insulation to make the homes efficient to heat.

In order to achieve zero carbon in the most cost economic way whilst saving the greatest amount of carbon and fuel in the shortest time fuel switching should in the majority of cases take place once a property has achieved its optimum heat demand as close to 50 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. possible. In some cases where grants become available and the heat demand is sufficiently low immediate investment in fuel switch would be progressed. For example 37 Woolaway properties are proposed for an all walls out refurbishment improving their heat demand from 170kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr to 39 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. This has coincided with a grant guidance being announced which will permit the additional costs of Air Source Heat Pumps to be met.

#### Asset management plans to manage investment and disinvestment

The service will refine its asset strategy to identify properties at risk of not achieving zero carbon at an affordable fuel cost to the tenant by 2050. Our experience has highlighted that exploring low and zero carbon for some of our stock can identify shortfalls in the value for money investment would provide. Our recent experience at Wordsworth Drive flats turned an investment opportunity into a disinvestment project as the properties were not of sufficient build quality to merit investment to the decent homes and zero carbon standard. It is inevitable that the council will need to consider if some homes should be retained and if not should they be sold or demolished.

#### Customers at the Heart of Zero Carbon Retrofit

Achieving zero carbon, tenancy sustainment and fuel affordability are just three of the reasons for the Council and tenants to work ever closer. The Council must work with tenants to ensure our staff and contractors can carry out surveys, works and maintain properties in an efficient and timely manner. Through this cooperation tenants will benefit from lower energy bills and healthier homes. Tenants guidance and insight about their homes and neighbourhoods is extremely valuable in ensuring the Council is able to deliver information, works and services appropriately. The service

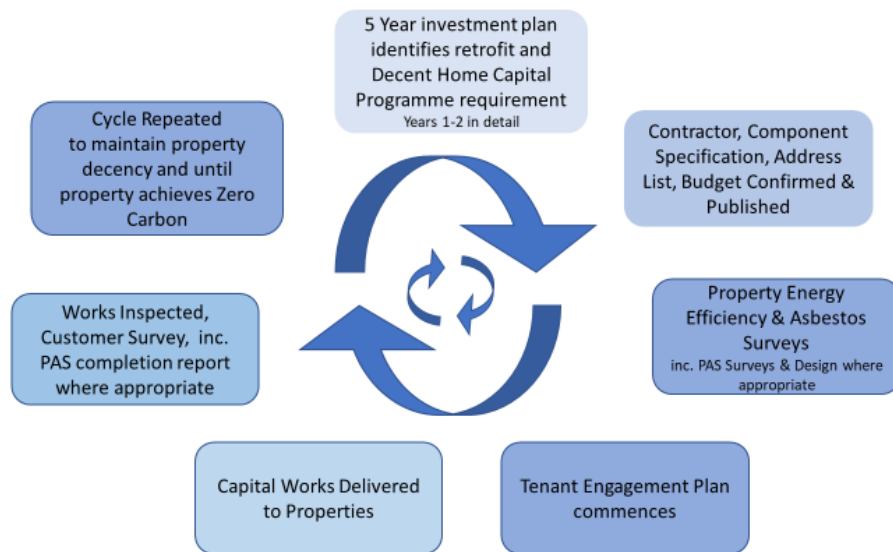
experiences a high number of access refusals and by working with tenants the Council will deliver capital schemes faster, more economically and more efficiently.

SWT has been working with tenants through the Tenants Strategic Group (TSG), members of the Tenants Working Group (TWG), Damp and Mould Working Group and through two Low Carbon Working Groups including one looking in detail at the 256 zero carbon new build and retrofit homes in North Taunton and the other District wide working group with tenants representing tenants from all over the district to specifically help guide officers on this retrofit strategy and delivery plan. Customers are shaping the procedures we seek to adopt during the retrofit programmes. Below is a list of the most common themes which tenants have raised through these forums:

- Good communication to promote low carbon and zero carbon retrofit in different formats is essential – face to face, newsletters, websites and social media, local open events or drop in opportunities, show houses, tenant liaison officers, housing officers, call centre
- Good communication and doing what is promised will develop more trust and encourage more tenant interest.
- A standardised approach to tenant consultation, engagement and support before, during and after capital works from the Council and its contractors
- Promotion of the benefits of well insulated, warm, healthy and affordable homes to tenants needs to be prominent
- A more personalised approach during consultation with more opportunities for face to face contact and advice prior and during works, such as tenant liaison officers and open events. Easy to read guides and face to face inductions are important to allow tenants to become familiar with any new technology in their homes
- Better use of technology to inform and support tenants including web based information, smart controls, feedback from remote monitoring to evidence homes are more efficient following works
- Timely publication of capital investment programmes enabling tenants to access to information about their home such as an online carbon or fuel calculator.
- Standard policies to be issued at the tender stage to potential contractors which set out SWTs requirements on matters such as customer engagement, additional support for vulnerable customers before and during works and a social value requirement.
- Ensuring homes are left tidy following works
- Showing what works and the benefits for tenants of retrofit through virtual means and show houses
- Joined up messages from SWT officers, trades and contractor about works, the benefits of retrofit and use of components
- Ensuring staff and contractors are wearing the appropriate identify badges when calling on tenants
- A dedicated person (tenant liaison officer) to call or meet when there are questions
- More jobs completed on first visit or within the same programme of work
- Clarity of start and end dates for works prior to work commencing
- Tenants to act as champions promoting the benefits to other tenants

As a result of these themes a number of new initiatives and practices will be actioned. Chart 3 is a circular process which will become common in order to deliver capital works and ensure customer information, engagement and feedback is built into the delivery of capital programmes. The process is cyclical as many homes will need visiting several times to deliver retrofit works over the next two decants and properties also move in and out of decent homes standard as components wear out.

Chart 3; Circular Capital Programme Process



These include:

- The production and use of a number of policy statements when procuring contractors or during capital works carried out by SWT or their contractors. These will include; expected standards of tenant engagement to inform a contractor’s tenant engagement plan. a statement on the expected standard of additional support for vulnerable customers during work programmes and a standard approach to collecting customer satisfaction data. These policies will reflect the need to target the tenant and not the property.
- Work programmes to be designed and agree earlier to allow the timely promotion of works, ensure a good lead in time for consultation in advance of work, reduce access problems and help align more work programmes and surveys to reduce the number of visits to tenants homes
- Build in funding and time to capital programmes to support vulnerable tenants with preparatory works ahead of installation e.g. cleaning lofts and moving furniture.
- The launch of a show house in early spring 2023 to promote low carbon components to tenants, staff, Members and contractors. The show house will include displays and virtual tours of other SWT zero carbon new build and retrofit projects as well as showing materials and technology commonly used in retrofit.
- Identify additional capacity to ensure SWT can prepare and deliver programmes of work in a timely way.

- Set up a leaseholder forum to ensure leaseholders understand the implications of zero carbon for them and the financial contributions they may have to make.
- The development of standardised written information to be used at specific stages of consultation. Ensure we are able to explain why things are needed, and who will be doing them and when they will take place.
- A mechanism to ensure the landlord and its contractors can have better customer insight when engaging customers during works by making best use of the data available through our open system.
- Grown skills and the capacity of the Councils workforce to deliver low carbon works.
- Training and support for SWT colleagues to ensure joined up messages during customer contact
- Ensure contract specifications are clear and the council works with contractors to ensure technical information is clear, correct, and easy to understand.
- Include tenant representatives in the selection of smart controls and devices prior to contract award.
- Continue with the Tenants Low Carbon Working Group in order to support tenant retrofit champions and guide officers as we deliver works, agree work programmes, appoint contractors, and engage with other customers.

## 4. Fuel Poverty and Healthy Homes

### Healthy Homes

The right home environment is the foundation from which we can build healthy and fulfilling lives. Housing affects our wellbeing, risk of disease and demands on health and care services. We need warm, safe and secure homes to help us to lead healthy, independent lives and to recover from illness

Generally speaking, the health of older people, children, disabled people and people with long term illnesses is at greater risk from poor housing conditions. The home is a social determinant of health and as a result is a key driver of health inequalities. Those living in poverty are more likely to live in poorer housing, precarious housing circumstances or lack accommodation altogether.

Tenure is also a key social determinant of health. Generally speaking, 63% of people are owner occupiers, 17% live in social homes, whilst 20% are in the private rented sector

- Owner occupied homes: a shrinking resource and the most (by number) of unhealthy homes. Many are inaccessible and a significant proportion are under-occupied. Many elderly residents own their homes but are income poor
- Social homes: a shrinking resource but the most healthy and accessible homes. Highest proportion of overcrowding. The range of issues will vary dependent on location and provider
- Private rented sector: The biggest proportion of unhealthy homes: The least affordable and least stable. Occupiers have a younger demographic compared to other

Interventions on housing standards are essential to remove health inequalities

The right home environment can:

- Protect and improve health and wellbeing and prevent physical and mental ill-health;
- Enable people to manage their health and care needs, including long-term conditions, and ensure positive care experiences by integrating services in the home;
- Allow people to remain in their own home for as long as they choose. In doing so it can:
  - Delay and reduce the need for primary care and social care interventions, including admission to long-term care settings;
  - Prevent hospital admissions;
  - Enable timely discharge from hospital and prevent re-admissions to hospital;
  - Enable rapid recovery from periods of ill-health or planned admissions.

Key features of the right home environment (both permanent and temporary)

- It is warm and affordable to heat and has adequate ventilation to support good air quality and thermal comfort in extreme conditions.

- It is free from hazards, safe from harm and promotes a sense of security;
- It enables movement around the home and is accessible, including to visitors;
- There is support from others if needed.
- Tenure that is stable and secure

## Fuel Poverty

As noted above, the ability to live in thermal comfort is essential to health, especially for those who are vulnerable by reason of age or disability

The UK and many parts of the world are undergoing significant fuel inflation and both the UK and SWT district have a cost of living crisis which is under-pinned by fuel price inflation and an uncertain economic environment. Many households in the district will experience fuel poverty for the first time this year leading to choices between basic household requirement. A household's fuel poverty status depends on the interaction of three key variables

- Energy efficiency of the home
- Income
- Energy prices

The government have recently (2021) changed the definition of fuel poverty. Fuel Poverty in England is now measured using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator, which considers a household to be fuel poor if:

- It is living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G as determined by the by the most up-to-date Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Rating (FPEER) Methodology\*
- Its disposable income (income after housing costs (AHC and energy needs) would be below the poverty line (defined as an equivalised disposable income of less than 60% of the national median)

The definition of fuel poverty has become more nuanced over time. Between 2013 and 2021, the definition was based on variables relating to fuel cost and income. This was the Low Income/High Costs definition. This definition took no regard to the energy efficiency of the home. Prior to 2013, the definition was based purely on the proportion of income that was spent on heating.

A critical factor of the new definition is that, should the home have an energy efficiency rating of A to C, then the residents are regarded as not being within fuel poverty, regardless of income. Key partners have adopted the recent Government change in definition. This includes the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) who are important partners within Somerset Independence Plus (SIP), providing advice on warm homes, as well access to grants

## Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) Indicator

The ONS has recently published a detailed analysis of fuel poverty across England, using the LILEE indicator (Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics in England, 2022 (2020

data)). The LILEE indicator is based on statistics collected in the English Housing Survey (EHS) which is a continuous national survey commissioned by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). It collects information about people's housing circumstances and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England.

## Fuel Poverty Gap

Within the recent ONS analysis, it was observed that the average fuel poor household would require a reduction of £223 to their fuel costs to be moved out of fuel poverty, this is the average fuel poverty gap. The average gap in 2020 is 2.3% lower than 2019 (£229) and 34% lower than in 2010 (£339) in real terms. The main reason for the reduction in fuel poor households in 2020 was energy efficiency. 52.1% of low income homes achieved an energy efficiency rating of band C or higher, up from 47.8% in 2019 and just 14.6% in 2010.

Fuel costs for the least efficient properties (band G) are almost three times higher than costs for the most efficient properties (bands A-C) in 2020. It is important to note that, since the publication of the ONS report, the cost of living crisis has impacted many of our poorer households and, undoubtedly, these figures will now be in reverse. This should be considered when reading the following paragraphs.

## Targets

The Government has in place a statutory fuel poverty target which is: To ensure that as many fuel poor households as reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of band C by 2030 (currently 52.1% nationally and 68.4% of SWTs stock), with interim targets of band E by 2020 (currently 97.2% nationally and SWT 99.5% ), and band D by 2025 (currently 90.1% nationally and SWT 96%).

The ONS report contains a detailed analysis of fuel poverty data, illustrating many points including:

- The cumulative number of energy efficiency measures installed has increased significantly between 2013 and 2020
- The average gap and proportion of households in fuel poverty is highest for those living in properties with uninsulated walls
- The average fuel poverty gap is highest for detached properties despite these having the lowest rate of fuel poverty
- Smaller properties are more likely to be occupied by the fuel poor
- Households living in properties built before 1919 have the highest share of fuel poverty
- Households living in the South West had the highest average fuel poverty gap (£287)
- Rural households have a much larger fuel poverty gap
- Fuel poor households are more likely to be off the gas grid and have an average fuel poverty gap three times higher than gas households

- The proportion of households in fuel poverty was highest for private renters at 25% whilst owner occupiers (outright owners) have the highest average gap at £292. The lowest gap (£150) was within the social housing sector
- Single parents have the highest proportion of households in fuel poverty and couples aged over 60 have the highest average gap

More detail about fuel poverty across Somerset (and the districts) can be found on the Somerset Intelligence Network (SINe) website, although the data on here is dated 2016 and relates to the previous definitions of fuel poverty.

\* FPEER methodology is based primarily on the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) for assessing the energy performance of domestic properties. Building on SAP, the FPEER Methodology also accounts for the impact of policy interventions that directly affect household energy costs. In the same way as SAP, the methodology generates an energy efficiency rating from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest). This rating is then translated into an energy efficiency 'Band' from G (lowest) to A (highest), in a way that is analogous to a SAP rating being used to generate an overall energy efficiency Band (again from G to A) for Energy Performance Certificates.

#### Fuel Poverty recommendations

It is recommended that SWT adopts the Government definition (EPC C) as a means of measuring those in fuel property. An abbreviated definition for SWT is:

A household is considered to be fuel poor if;

- i). The property has an energy efficiency band rating of D, E, F or G

The council will strive towards achieving EPC C for all SWT rented homes by 2030 in line with the government target. Using this measure SWT can compare itself with national performance and align with key partners for the convenience of funding bids and joint working arrangements. In addition;

- ii). This strategy is recommending that a fabric first ambition of 50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr by 2040 is recognised as an ambitious target for Council homes in order to allow the council to achieve zero carbon and minimise fuel poverty in the District. Achieving a fabric first target of 50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr will allow households with an average regional income to afford to run an electric heating without the additional benefit of Air source heat pump or solar photovoltaic panels and battery storage. The fabric first target would reduce average heat demand by circa two thirds. properties which do not achieve this heat demand target should be automatically for additional energy reduction measures such as Air Source Heat Pumps, Photovoltaic Panels and batteries.

Neighbourhood based programme will be encouraged where certain properties or localities are statistically likely to be more vulnerable.

The council cannot impose on customers rules in relation to the purchase and use of appliances and electrical equipment which they use in their homes. However, over time the Council will replace gas with electric only supply and therefore fossil fuel will not be an option for tenant to heat their home or cook. The Council will;



- Help customers understand how they can save energy in the home through providing advice and information
- Promote the work of other agencies who are seeking to improve resident's health and help people as the cost of living crisis affects more households
- Provide an induction on the low carbon energy saving components of a home during lettings process
- Introduce SMART devices in the customers home to allow customers greater awareness of energy use and the ability to manage their heat and in some cases remote monitoring to allow early intervention.
- Create a more aware workforce which can direct tenants to the support they need should they have questions relating to the energy efficiency of their homes or use of the home's components

## 5. Ensuring affordability to the Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of the Council is ring fenced and its income comes from tenants' rents. Most Council rents are set at a 'social rent' which uses a formula which typically sets social rents between 50% and 60% of market rent. SWT for new build homes has recently used 'affordable rent' which is around 80% of market rent. These properties generate more income for the HRA which compensates to a greater degree for the additional costs of building a zero carbon home. The HRA in recent years has been subject to a government imposed rent cap and a cap is also being consulted on by government. Depending on the level at which a rent cap is set the HRA can find that it has to make hard choices and where it priorities spending. In addition, the Right to Buy will mean some homes receiving additional investment will be sold with the sale price unlikely to compensate the council for the additional investment. Local authority and housing association landlords have also adopted higher standards in many areas of their work including compliance and Health and Safety works leading to more costs.

The Council annually sets rent levels within the constraints of the formula. Funding the retrofit strategy will be one of the many considerations for the council when setting rents. Constraints on rents may reduce immediate financial pressures on tenants however this benefit may be offset by a greater proportion of energy inefficient homes for longer.

The cost of achieving zero carbon for the 5797 homes is estimated at £135m which is an average of c£23,700 per property. With little opportunity to create new income the HRA will need to be very efficient in managing its business. Although the general fund is able to provide subsidy to the HRA to deliver the council zero carbon ambition as soon as possible it is assumed this opportunity is remote. The solutions to HRA business plan affordability are to be found in;

- Alignment of decent homes and retrofit programmes
- Maximise subsidy / grants
- Ensure good data influences decisions
- Tenant at the heart of zero carbon
- Selective property disposal or demolition.
- Delivering the retrofit strategy will be one of the considerations for the council when rents are set annually.

### Alignment of decent homes and retrofit programmes

The decent homes programmes have c£50m over the next 5 years (c£10m per year) and has investment built in throughout the HRA business plan. Some spending will be required on essential component replacement of items unrelated to retrofit such as kitchens and bathrooms, but the majority of decent homes components can be specified to contribute to the retrofit strategy.

In considering the decent homes, compliance and retrofit programme as one programme asset managers can make decisions which provide dual purpose. There are a number of components such as windows, doors, ventilation, insulation, lighting,

roofing as well as heating systems and controls which could be installed with a specification appropriate for decent homes, compliance and retrofit requirements. In addition, there are a few retrofit works that could be efficiently done when a property is void and between tenancies although these opportunities should be limited due to the diseconomies of scale.

The 30 year business plan assumes significant levels of funding for these items which can be enhanced to achieve a retrofit specification. The alignment of decent homes, compliance and retrofit works would contribute to reducing the additional cost of delivering zero carbon retrofit. In addition, there may be efficiencies by delivering multiple measures to a property using a whole house approach or package of complementary works. Efficiencies could come from streamlining surveys, tenant consultation and liaison, contract management and collecting post works data and satisfaction.

The delivery plan (appendix 1) provides examples of how retrofit is being aligned to decent homes and compliance programmes.

#### Maximise subsidy and grants

The Council need to be enthusiastic and proactive in pursuing relevant subsidy which is often in the form of government grant or energy company obligation. There are and will continue to be for many years a number of grants each set up to achieve benefits for different tenures (Private Sector, Social Housing) or encourage the delivery of different measures (Insulation, fabric first, fuel switch, tackle solid wall properties, renewable heat and power, etc). Subsidies keep changing and grant rules will keep changing and therefore it is critical that the HRA has an explicit pathway to zero carbon for each property archetype and form.

However, grants should not be pursued without a clear purpose in mind which means the Council asset management service using software such as open assets and archetype pathways to zero carbon must be able to match opportunities with properties. It is also critical that opportunities can be matched swiftly as funders often provide very limited time windows to submit grant and deliver works. Currently we see many grants aimed at a fabric, worst first approach and this reflects the current UK need to reduce the heat demand of homes. Reducing heat demand will have the dual benefit of saving the most carbon for the least investment for the majority of homes and reduce the amount of electricity on a nation scale required for residential use. It should be noted that fossil fuels are still being used to generate a significant amount of grid electricity so a switch early to electricity may not save initially as much carbon as in future years. It is likely that once heat demand reduces, and the grid decarbonises more grants for fuel switch will be introduced to remove fossil based gas domestic heating with mainly electric powered systems. It is also likely that technology will advance significantly over the next twenty years and new components will be encouraged by making grants available.

The delivery plan (appendix 1) provides examples of how SWT is making use of current grants and aligned to decent homes investment to match fund grant requirements. The council is also progressing energy company obligation funding to

provide the capacity, skills and 100% resources to deliver some of the 'worst first' homes.

### Ensure good data influences decisions

In previous sections the strategy has outlined the approach to data collection and analysis. As the council's Open Assets data base becomes more established and more property data is collected and verified the council will be able to be more sophisticated in aligning its investment and disinvestment. Additional resources are being priorities over the next few years to ensure our data is robust, validated, and ready to support grant applications and capital programmes. Although the use of the PAS2035 coordination and assessment will introduce additional surveying costs this approach reduces the likelihood of expensive problems such as damp and mould and failure to achieve the expected energy efficiency improvements (performance gap). The strategy is also encouraging the use of SMART controls on boilers and technology to identify early underperforming properties.

The delivery plan (appendix 1) provides examples of how good data is leading to better use of decent homes capital programme funds and early identification of properties likely to be suitable for subsidises such as Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund 1 & 2 and ECO4.

### Tenant at the heart of zero carbon

In previous sections of this strategy it has been emphasised that the tenant must be at the heart of delivering zero carbon. Where the council and customers both see the merits of zero carbon communication and access to deliver programmes of investment will be more efficient and tenants will benefit from reduced fuel consumption sooner.

It is critical that leaseholders are also engaged early and become aware of the opportunities and potential cost of retrofit works. It is likely that external wall insulation will be one of the opportunities to ensure apartments achieve a low heat demand. The service is aware that leaseholders may have a property asset but may also be on a limited income.

The delivery plan (appendix 1) is promoting the introduction of a number of policies aimed at providing customers with the communication and support they require to welcome retrofit and other capital and compliance works.

### A no regrets approach to zero carbon

Through the greater use of the PAS 2035 approach to surveying homes and designing out problems the council will pursue a no regrets approach. This approach should benefit the service by avoiding issues such as damp and mould by designing these problems out pre investment. The service will need to take a no regrets approach including considering in more detail the large number of homes which are at risk of not achieving 50 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr by 2050 or 2050. Selective disposal of some homes will pass the liability of some of the most expensive properties to retrofit to the private sector but

generate a capital receipt which will strengthen the business plan. The council's ambition is to grow its housing stock rather than dispose of properties will remain foremost when considering options for investment and disinvestment. Additional investment is the likely outcome for many homes. However, to invest in retrofit and new build zero carbon homes the selective sale of some homes following a clear appraisal process is part of a comprehensive asset management and investment strategy.

Although homes are built to last for many years and the council invests in capital programs to maintain them properties do eventually deteriorate with age. Some properties reach a point where the benefit of investment is outweighed by the benefit of demolition. SWT must now consider zero carbon retrofit alongside compliance and decency. The council has experience of demolish homes due to investment in the homes failing to achieve value for money and would not provide quality homes in terms of health or quality of accommodation. It is noted that the demolition and replacement by new build homes has a carbon impact as the carbon already captured in the existing building is lost and the carbon used to build a new home is incurred.

It is recognised that when disposing of a property the private sector may not invest in retrofit works however legislation and grant funding may be available to the private sector which the social housing sector cannot access.

## Conclusion

The Strategy accompanied by its delivery plan will make a significant contribution towards reducing CO<sub>2</sub> from the district housing stock. Housing has a critical role in helping the council respond to the climate change emergency. SWT are setting through this strategy ambitious targets in relation to the retrofitting of its own homes. The three main targets are:

- 2030 SWT homes to be EPC C
- 2040 SWT to strive for a heat demand of 50 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr.
- 2050 All homes to be Zero Carbon

Through the creation of zero carbon pathways for all of the Council's homes based on archetype studies and individual property assessments SWT has a blueprint to guide its investment over the next 20 years and inform customers of the changes their home are likely to undergo. In achieving targets the council believe it will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> by 9,144t pa and make fuel switch away from fossil fuel affordable to customers.

As data and technology improve so the strategy and delivery plan will need to adapt. To reflect the changing environment the strategy will be reviewed every five years as the council progresses towards zero carbon and the delivery plan will be reviewed annually to feed into the housing revenue accounts annual budget setting cycle.

The five main goals of the strategy and delivery plan are;

1. Tenants at the heart of zero carbon
2. All SWT homes to achieve EPC C by 2030 or have an alternative investment option identified. Our current estimation is c300 homes could miss the target.
3. Aim to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and fuel consumption on average from 135kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. to 50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. by 2040 through a 'fabric first' approach.
4. Replace fossil fuel in SWT homes with electric based heat and power by 2050 at a pace to ensure affordable energy for tenants and in line with available funds.
5. The investment remains affordable within the constraints of the Housing Revenue Account's annual, medium term and thirty year financial plans.

The estimated cost of delivering this strategy is £135m over twenty-eight years with half the cost in fabric measures (Insulation) and half the cost in fuel switch and renewable heat and power. The estimated costs does not include pre-works, any cost of decanting tenants, early replacement of components and works required as a result of damage or works to facilitate low carbon works. There are a large number of risks associated with delivery this strategy and its targets. If the Council is unable to mitigate these risks the costs and timescales to achieve targets will grow.

The strategy and delivery plan recognise that zero carbon is not affordable to the landlord under its current business plan and therefore it needs to;

- Align Decent Homes Standard improvements with retrofit programmes

- Maximise appropriate grant and subsidy
- Place tenants at the heart of zero carbon
- Ensure good data influences decisions
- Embrace a no regrets approach

SWT has developed this strategy with tenants. In particular, the Council has worked with tenants through the Low Carbon Retrofit Working Group. However, the strategy is also influenced by the Strategic Tenants Group, the Damp and Mould Working Group and the NTWP Works and Low Carbon Working Group. Engagement and communication with tenants is critical if SWT is to achieve zero carbon. Communication prior and during work programmes must be of a high standard and personalised to localities and customers need.





## Low Carbon Retrofit Delivery Plan 2022-2028

December 2022

1. Introduction
  
- 2 Five key delivery principles
  - a) Alignment of decent homes programme and retrofit
  - b) Maximise subsidy and grant
  - c) Ensure good quality data influences decisions
  - d) Tenants at the heart of zero carbon
  - e) A no regrets approach
  
- 3 Risks and challenges to delivery Zero Carbon Retrofit
  
- 4 Achieving targets
  
5. Measuring progress and KPIs

## 1. Introduction

The Council's c5,700 homes are estimated to account for nearly one third of SWTs own carbon footprint. Our modelling predicts that an investment of £135m will achieve zero carbon by 2050 through a fabric first approach (insulation) and then switching fuel from fossil fuel to electric heating systems. The Council has identified £9m-£12m investment through the HRA over the next seven years although if it is successful in partnerships which provide grant the investment over the same period of time is c£31-£57m, see section 2b.

The strategy identified five delivery principles which should be progressed to achieve zero carbon.

- Alignment of decent homes programme and retrofit
- Maximise subsidy and grant
- Ensure good quality data influences decisions
- Tenants at the heart of zero carbon
- A no regrets approach

The critical consideration in the delivery of zero carbon retrofit is the additional financial pressures place on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA of the Council is ring fenced and its income comes from tenants' rents. The HRA has limited opportunities to increase its income and there are many pressures on expenditure. The HRA business plan has very limited capacity to manage the scale of investment identified in the strategy whilst keeping within good financial parameters.

Most Council rents are set at a 'social rent' which uses a formula that typically sets social rents between 50% and 60% of market rent. SWT for new build homes has recently set rents at 'affordable rent' levels which is around 80% of market rent. These properties generate more income for the HRA which compensates to a greater degree for the additional costs of building zero carbon homes. The Council cannot switch social rented homes to affordable rented homes to increase income.

The environment social landlords operate within, including the Council, continues to change. Recently there have been requirements to adopt higher standards in areas such as compliance and fire safety and there is new legislation requiring higher service standards and greater tenant engagement. In addition to new pressures investment in replacement components in an aging stock through its capital programme is essential to maintain homes to the decent home's standard. The service losses c35 homes per year through the Right to Buy and although the council will be increasing its investment in zero carbon measures some homes will be sold with the sale price unlikely to compensate the council for the additional investment. Most business plan commitments are essential to be a good landlord and comply with statute and therefore there are few aspects of spending which are optional and could be curtailed. New build homes in general support the long term HRA business plan especially if 'affordable rents' are applied and where demolition is not required.

The cost of achieving zero carbon for the c5700 homes is estimated at £135m by 2050 which is an average of £23,700 per property. With little opportunity to create new income the HRA will need to be very efficient in managing its business. The general fund is legally able to provide financial support to the HRA to deliver the council zero carbon ambition or deliver works at a faster pace. However, it is assumed this

opportunity is remote as the general fund has many calls on its income. The recommended solutions to delivering zero carbon retrofit is to apply the five key delivery principles. Embracing these principles will be challenging and require commitment and capacity.

This delivery plan is not set in stone and will be reviewed annually as more is understood about our homes, grants evolve, new technologies develop and the council grows in confidence at delivering zero carbon retrofit. There are many challenges and risks and the strategy is extremely ambitious in its targets in particular the lowering of heat demand to c50kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. Nonetheless the opportunity to move towards zero carbon at a faster pace than many landlords exists for SWT and the service is seeking to embrace the change required.

## 2. The Five Key Delivery Principles

### a) Alignment of decent homes and retrofit programmes

Through aligning programmes the service will deliver low carbon measures through existing business plan funding. In addition, this existing funding acts as match funding for grant applications. The specifications of Decent Homes items such as windows, doors, insulation, roofs, boilers and ventilation would be varied to reflect the low carbon pathway requirement of homes. In addition, a “no regrets” approach would be progressed through the use of PAS 2035 standards and pathways reducing the risk of replacing components before their decent home’s life expectancy has ended. This approach allows existing budgets to be maximised in the pursuit of retrofit as well as decency.

The decent homes capital programmes has c£50m investment identified over the next five years in the HRAs Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the business plan allocates decent homes funding throughout the 30 year business plan. Some spending will be required on essential component replacement of items unrelated to retrofit such as kitchens and bathroom but the majority of decent homes components can be specified to contribute to the retrofit strategy. Each year the council approve the HRA capital programme budget. The annual budget round will need to approve the budget and any grant match funding available to the service to deliver on its decent homes, retrofit and new build targets. Delegations of authority to ensure grants can be accessed without lengthy governance requirements will be essential to help submit grant applications. Whilst working to deliver retrofit targets the council must also maintain compliance and stock decency (decent homes standard). To align decent homes and retrofit there is a need to:

- Better define the roles of asset management and capital investment team
- Resource the service in particular the asset management team to ensure data is accurate, surveys to check assumptions and to create specifications, support and capacity for contract procurement
- Recalculation of budget for different decent homes components bringing some items forward and placing some items in later years.

- Create a packaged approach to capital works delivery in place of the single item only approach.

In considering the decent homes capital programme and retrofit programme as one programme asset managers can make decisions which provide a dual purpose. There are a number of components such as windows, doors, ventilation, insulation, lighting, roofing as well as heating systems and controls which could be installed with a specification appropriate for decent homes, compliance and retrofit requirements. In addition, there are a few retrofit works that could be efficiently done when a property is void and between tenancies although these opportunities should be limited due to the diseconomies of scale.

Some components have limited overlap with low carbon retrofit such as kitchens and bathrooms and therefore programmes of replacements can continue generally separate to retrofit investment. It should be noted that as the council's retrofit delivery becomes more advanced even bathrooms and kitchens capital programmes may change to allow greater low carbon benefits for example allowing bungalows with concrete floors to benefit from floor insulation when kitchen and bathrooms are being replaced. However, in the short term the service recognises that the majority of decent homes components such as surveys, roofs, windows, doors, insulation, ventilation and heating systems can be specified differently to provide retrofit as well as decent homes.

Ideally many components would be replaced simultaneously to provide the greatest benefit for the customer and ensure components are designed in a way which are complementary. However, one of the challenges of optimising decent homes and retrofit alignment is the life cycle of components. Components which are replaced before their life cycle due date will cost the HRA business plan more and therefore inflate the investment needs. Table 1 sets out some of the consideration now required to align decent homes and retrofit.

Table 1 – Some considerations when aligning decent homes and low carbon retrofit

Decent Homes components and their potential to contribute to low carbon retrofit		
Component	Decent Homes Life Cycle	Potential contribution
Surveys	N/A	Surveys could capture retrofit benefits as well as stock condition and EPC data. The use of the PAS 2035 approach will be required when requesting government grant/subsidy
Kitchens	20 yrs	The timing of the replacement and plumbing can help ensure external wall insulation is not disturbed or spoilt. Where there are bungalows with concrete floors needing floor insulation the insulation abortive costs will be avoided if delivered simultaneously with kitchen and bathroom replacement.
Bathrooms	30 yrs	
Roofs inc. insulation, rainwater goods, scaffold, pointing	50 year+	External Wall insulation will be an essential requirement for many homes achieving retrofit targets. There may be cost savings by aligning wherever possible roof replacement and external wall insulation as well as windows and doors. However the more components included in a programme the greater the likelihood that components will be replaced before their anticipated life cycle end date. Additional loft insulation up to 400mm will be the standard in pitched roofs and flat roofs will need a higher insulation quality than present. Grant regimes which allow many components to be replaced simultaneously will be enthusiastically explored.
Windows	30 yrs	Increasing the U value of windows from standard building regulations of 1.4 to 1.3, 1.2, 1.1 or 1 will improve efficiency of homes. Many SWT homes have U values of 1.8 due to their age creating an opportunity for improvement. However the replacement of windows where external wall insulation will follow overtime will lead to design challenges and aesthetic problems for example wider frames. Grant regimes which allow many components to be replaced simultaneously will be enthusiastically explored.
External Doors	30 yrs	Increasing the U value of Doors to 1.2 or less will improve efficiency of homes. Many SWT homes have U values of 1.8 due to their age creating an opportunity for improvement. However the replacement of Doors where external wall insulation will follow overtime will lead to design challenges and aesthetic problems for example wider door frames. Grant regimes which allow many components to be replaced simultaneously will be enthusiastically explored.
Insulation	N/A	Significant increased investment in external wall insulation, cavity insulation, replacement cavity insulation, floor and loft insulation will be required to achieve heat demand targets. Grant regimes which allow many components to be replaced simultaneously will be enthusiastically explored.
Ventilation	N/A	pre works surveys and component specification will consider ventilation in significant detail to avoid problems such as damp and mould as homes become better insulated. Some properties will require mechanical ventilation and heat recover and this would be disruptive.
Heating	10-15 yrs	SWT have a well established low energy specification for replacement boilers. This has a significant benefit on a properties EPC rating/ SAP rating. Where a property is well insulated and grants are available fuel switch to Air Source Heat Pumps or quantum heater will be considered. However more homes will see their gas heating renewed as part of cyclical programmes over the next few years and then at their next renewal cycle fuel with will be more likely.

The service is also seeking to provide a wraparound package of simple works when delivering window and boiler replacement programmes. This 'Fuel Saving Box' will consist of components and one visit installation service. The visit will check against the 'Fuel Saving Checklist' and install if components are not present. The checklist includes:

- Thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs)
- Boiler SMART controls and potentially remote monitoring
- Loft insulation (400mm)
- Simple draught proof measure

- Low energy light bulbs
- Energy powerdowns
- Mechanical ventilation where passive systems are in place
- The package will also provide the customer with a 100 ways to save energy booklet

A new EPC would be carried out shortly after the visit and the council shall develop a means of customers accessing energy performance data on their home.

b) Maximise subsidy and grants

The Council should be enthusiastic and proactive in pursuing relevant subsidy which is often in the form of government grant or energy company obligation. There are and will continue to be for many years a number of grants each set up to achieve benefits for different tenures (Private Sector, Social Housing) or encourage the delivery of different measures (insulation, fabric first, fuel switch, tackle solid wall properties, renewable heat and power, etc). Subsidies keep changing and grant rules will keep changing and therefore it is critical that the HRA has an explicit pathway to zero carbon for each property archetype and form. The housing service will also need the resources to apply and manage multiple grant programmes. To allow access to grant the service requires sufficient delegated authority to allow grant funding to be progressed as the time window and requirements may not fit current approval timescales and increase the risk of bid failure or delivery failure.

However, grants should not be pursued without a clear purpose in mind which means the Council asset management service using software such as open assets and reference to archetype pathways to zero carbon must be able to match opportunities with properties. Currently we see many grants aimed at a fabric, worst first approach and this reflects the current local and nationwide need to reduce the heat demand of homes. It may also be the case that grants come with conditions and contracts. Sometimes the benefits of the grant funding will be significantly offset by the contract conditions especially where the grant does not align to the council's strategic priorities and stock requirements.

Currently the main subsidies for social housing are:

- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 & 2 . This grant is aimed at worst first homes moving them to EPC C and a heat demand of 90kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. Wave 2 is significantly less beneficial than Wave 1 as cost caps have been lowered and match funding requirements increased. Wave 1 provided 2/3 grant contribution and a property cap of £10k-£16k. Wave 2 provides a 50% contribution and cost cap of £5k-£10k. With both waves an additional revenue grant of 15% of the grant share can be claimed for both waves. Obviously, the capital grant is a smaller proportion in Wave 2 and therefore more dwellings are required in the bid if the revenue element is to be significant. The service has struggled to deliver Wave 1 outcomes and it is critical that both resources and procedures need to be considered in order to be successful.

ECO4 – Energy company obligation ECO4 is replacing ECO3. This is a 100% grant and can be used to move properties two EPC bands. This will often require

some form of wall insulation plus other fabric and potentially renewable heat measures. The funding is likely to be ideal for solid wall, non traditional and block properties as well as properties which require cavity wall insulation. The service is finalising a £25m neighbourhood ECO4 scheme with E-ON and their contractors. If successful, this may benefit council stock in excess of c£6m-£19m and private rented accommodation by c£5m-£19m. The service has identified the first scheme area which contains significant local authority homes and the contractor is ready to carry out surveys on a second potential scheme area if the contract is completed. The Neighbourhood scheme with E-ON is important to the service as it requires limited capacity from the council who will mainly agree measures and quality checks. The funding is comprehensive and the works will take properties closer to zero carbon than SHDF which has a more limited ambitions.

To illustrate the importance of grant tables 2 summaries the number of units and value of the programme with or without grant based on three delivery plan scenarios. The HRA business plan without grant could invest c£9m and benefit 937 homes over seven years. Within seven years £12m HRA funding could deliver a £31m programme and benefit 2001 homes. Should grant cease after 2026 the HRA would need to invest proportionally more to continue along the pathway to zero carbon. In the third scenario £19m of grant would be supported by £37m of HRA investment and benefit 2701 homes.

Table 2 – HRA investment strategy with grant 2022-2029 (Low)

Comparison of programme with and without grant 2022-2029			
	No Units	Programme Value	% funded by grant
Without Grant (HRA funding only)	937	£9,000,000	0.00%
With Grant and £12m HRA contribution	2001	£31,000,000	60.35%
With Grant and £37m HRA Contribution	2701	£57,100,000	33.68%

Tables 3 and 4 provide two scenarios (high grant low HRA funding scenarios) of the potential investment levels 2022-2029 with grant. The illustrations only include grant funding for the first four years as grants post 2025 are unknown although it is highly likely they will be available.

In table 3 (high grant but low HRA investment scenario) we see how c£31m of decent homes, capital programme, energy company obligation and social housing decarbonisation fund Wave 1 & 2 could deliver retrofit improvement to 2001 units 2022-2029 of which 701 units would have received significant whole house retrofit works in one visit. The service has identified c£18.74m of grant funding for the delivery of works up to 2025. Grant programmes by their design tend not to be know many years in advance and therefore more grants are likely in years 2025-2029. The annual capital programme budget approval, MTFP and 30 year business plan are the mechanisms to be used to ensure funding requests are affordable to the HRA.

**Table 3 – HRA investment strategy with grant 2022-2029 (high grant and low HRA investment scenario)**

Low Carbon Retrofit Investment scenario 2022-2029 (High grant, low HRA investment)						
		UNITS	SUB TOTAL	GRANT	SWT Cost Total	% of grant
2022	2023	223	£2,269,250	£825,000	£1,444,250	36.4%
2023	2024	517	£8,770,750	£6,520,000	£2,250,750	74.3%
2024	2025	554	£8,799,000	£6,490,000	£2,309,000	73.8%
2025	2026	389	£7,353,000	£4,905,000	£2,448,000	66.7%
2026	2027	109	£1,698,000	£0	£1,698,000	0.0%
2027	2028	109	£1,560,750	£0	£1,560,750	0.0%
2028	2029	100	£600,000	£0	£600,000	0.0%
TOTAL		2001	£31,050,750	£18,740,000	£12,310,750	60.35%
AVE OVER 7 YEARS			£4,435,821	£2,677,143	£1,758,679	

In table 4 (high grant and high HRA investment scenario) we see how c£57m of decent homes, capital programme, energy company obligation and social housing decarbonisation fund Waves 1 & 2 could deliver retrofit improvement to 2701 homes before 2029. The number of homes receiving significant whole house retrofit works in one visit would also be 701 units although 500 more homes would receive at least one new measure. The grant funding would be slightly higher at £19.2m. The table tries to emphasis the importance of grant in delivering the scale of investment required to achieve zero carbon. Although the HRA could continue to align decent homes funding and retrofit it is unable to sustain the pace of change without maximising grant. As in table 3 grant has not been assumed from 2026-2029 although it is likely grant funding will be available for SWT to submit bids.

**Table 4 – HRA Investment Strategy with grant 2022-2029 Summary (High grant and high HRA investment scenario)**

Low Carbon Retrofit Investment scenario 2022-2029 (High Grant/High HRA investment)						
		UNITS	SUB TOTAL	GRANT	SWT Cost	% of
2022	2023	223	£2,269,250	£825,000	£1,444,250	36.4%
2023	2024	517	£8,770,750	£6,520,000	£2,250,750	74.3%
2024	2025	554	£8,799,000	£6,490,000	£2,309,000	73.8%
2025	2026	489	£11,078,000	£5,405,000	£5,673,000	48.8%
2026	2027	309	£9,148,000	£0	£9,148,000	0.0%
2027	2028	309	£9,010,750	£0	£9,010,750	0.0%
2028	2029	300	£8,050,000	£0	£8,050,000	0.0%
TOTAL		2701	£57,125,750	£19,240,000	£37,885,750	33.68%
AVE OVER 7 YEARS			£8,160,821	£2,748,571	£5,412,250	



### c). Ensure good quality data influences decisions

The strategy has outlined the required approach to data collection and analysis. As the Council's Open Assets data base becomes more established and more property data is collected and verified the council will be able to be more sophisticated in aligning its investment and disinvestment. Additional resources are being prioritised over the next few years to ensure our data is robust, validated, and ready to support grant applications and capital programmes. Although the use of the PAS2035 quality assurance process will introduce additional survey and design costs this approach reduces the likelihood of expensive problems such as damp and mould and failure to achieve the expected energy efficiency improvements (performance gap). The strategy is also encouraging the use of SMART controls on boilers and technology to identify underperforming properties early and remotely.

The council's open assets database is populated with our stock condition data which supports the decent homes programme. The retrofit programme and decent homes programme are now coming together as the single capital programme with the aim of timely investment to ensure all SWT homes are achieving the decent homes standard and also achieving the low carbon and zero carbon standards.

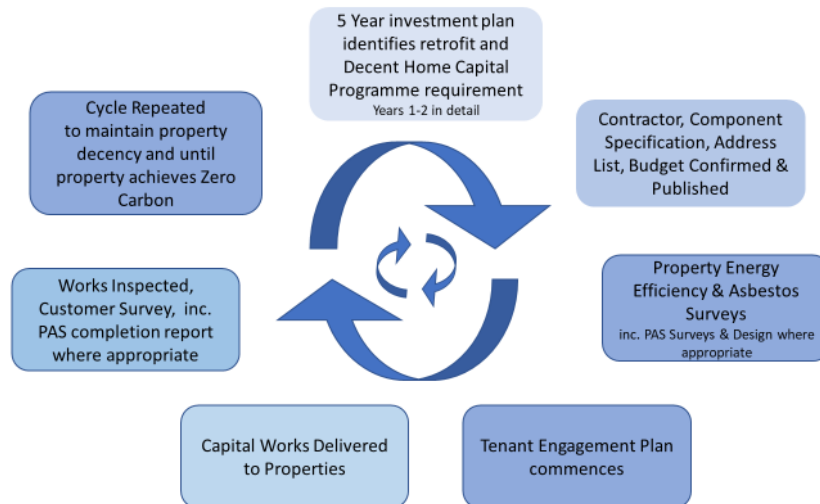
The service has identified a significant budget in its capital programme to carry out appropriate surveys to ensure capital investment can be delivered efficiently and to the appropriate standard.

### d) Tenants at the Heart of Zero Carbon

In previous sections of this strategy, it has been emphasised that the tenant must be at the heart of delivering zero carbon. Where the council and customers both see the merits of zero carbon communication and access for deliver teams will be more efficient and tenants will benefit from reduced fuel consumption sooner.

The strategy has emphasised the need to have high levels of customer support and awareness to ensure works can be delivered in homes efficiently. This will require improvements to the current practices including surveying, stock analysis, procurement, communication, engagement, quality of delivery, tenant support including to the most vulnerable, leaseholder engagement and monitoring post works. Diagram 1 presents a picture of perpetual engagement, learning, data refinement, surveying, programme delivery and quality checks. This continuous cycle and joined up approach provides significant efficiency when delivering the landlords ongoing investment.

Diagram 1; Customers are the key to successfully achieving Zero Carbon



It is critical that leaseholders are also engaged early and become aware of the opportunities and potential cost of retrofit works. It is likely that external wall insulation will be one of the opportunities to ensure apartments achieve a low heat demand. The service is aware that leaseholders may have a property asset but may also be on a limited income.

SWT will continue to work with Tenants to agree improvement in communication and the delivery process. As a result of tenants suggestions, the following actions will be progressed:

- Personalise tenant engagement when planning, delivering and evaluating works.
- The production and use of a number of policy statements when procuring contractors or during capital works carried out by SWT or their contractors. These will include; expected standards of tenant engagement to inform a contractor’s tenant engagement plan. a statement on the expected standard of additional support for vulnerable customer during work programmes, a standard approach to collecting customer satisfaction data, a social value statement/requirement. These policies will reflect the need to target the tenant and not the property.
- Work programmes to be designed further in advance to allow the timely promotion of works, ensure a good lead in time for consultation in advance of work, reduce access problems and help align more work programmes and surveys to reduce the number of visits to tenant’s homes
- Build in funding and time to capital programmes to support vulnerable tenants with preparatory works ahead of installation e.g. cleaning lofts and moving furniture.
- The launch of a show house in early spring 2023 to promote low carbon components to tenants, staff, Members and contractors. The show house will include displays and virtual tours of other SWT zero carbon new build and retrofit projects as well as showing materials and technology commonly used in retrofit.
- Identify additional capacity to ensure SWT can prepare and deliver programmes of work in a timely way.

- Set up a leaseholder forum to ensure leaseholders understand the implications of zero carbon for them and the financial contributions they may have to make.
- The development of standardised written information to be used at specific stages of consultation. Ensuring the council is able to explain why things are needed, and who will be doing them and when they will take place.
- A mechanism to ensure the landlord and its contractors can have better customer insight when engaging customers during works by making best use of the data available through our open system.
- Grown skills and the capacity of the Councils workforce to deliver low carbon works.
- Training and support for SWT colleagues to ensure joined up messages during customer contact
- Ensure contract specifications are clear and the council works with contractors to ensure technical information is clear, correct, and easy to understand.
- Include tenant representatives in the selection of smart controls and devices prior to contract award.
- Continue with the Tenants Low Carbon Working Group in order to support tenant retrofit champions and guide officers as we deliver works, agree work programmes, appoint contractors, and engage with other customers.

#### e). A no regrets approach to zero carbon

A no regrets approach is one where the investment of the council does not lead to unexpected and negative consequences such as damp and mould, unsustainable household fuel costs or the early replacement of retrofit measures due to specifications not being joined up with compliance or decent homes or insufficient foresighted enough.

Landlords conduct EPC surveys as part of the lettings process to ensure incoming tenants are able to be informed of the energy efficiency of their home. EPCs are based on SAP and have traditionally be used as the key measure to understand the stocks energy efficiency. SWT will continue to collect EPC data as this is important to bid for grant and remains a requirement when letting homes. However, the council will turn increasingly towards measuring success by measuring a homes heat demand.

Government and landlords have been concerned about the problems which have arisen as bi-products of inappropriate Decent Homes surveys, works, work specifications, design or components. Issues such as damp and mould or cold bridging are examples of these failings. The service will identify a means of evidencing right first time and no regrets.

To support a 'no regrets' approach SWT will use the PAS2035 assessment and design approach in all projects involving grant and extend this where it is felt the works are sufficiently complex to merit the investment. The service will without many exceptions require contractors to have the TrustMark accreditations which sets standards for works delivery, warranties and quality.

Through the use of the PAS 2035 approach when surveying homes and greater consideration in designing the works the service will reduce problems and pursue a

no regrets approach. This approach should benefit tenants and the service by avoiding issues such as damp and mould pre investment.

A no regrets approach will also have to consider getting financial investment 'Right First Time'. This will mean greater analysis to join up compliance, decent homes and retrofit programmes and option appraisals to consider disposal of properties which will not provide value for money through investment. Although homes are built to last for many years and the council invests in capital programs to maintain them properties do eventually deteriorate with age. Some properties reach a point where the benefit of investment is outweighed by the benefit of demolition. SWT must now consider zero carbon retrofit alongside compliance and decency. The council has experience of needing to demolish homes as retaining homes would not provide quality homes in terms of health or quality of accommodation. It is noted that the demolition and replacement by new build homes has a carbon impact as the carbon already captured in the existing building is lost and the carbon used to build a new home is incurred. Selective disposal of some homes will pass the liability of some of the most expensive properties to the private sector but generate a capital receipt which will strengthen the business plan and in so doing protect investment in new or existing homes. The council's ambition is to grow its housing stock rather than dispose of properties will remain foremost when considering options for investment and disinvestment. Additional investment is the likely outcome for many homes although the extra funding would need to be identified. It is recognised that when disposing of a property the private sector may not invest in retrofit works however legislation and grant funding may be available to the private sector which the social housing sector cannot access.

### 3. Risks and the challenges of delivering zero carbon retrofit

The strategy and delivery plan recognises that delivering zero carbon retrofit is very complex. National experience has shown good examples of retrofit but also many challenges. A significant number of risks have been identified and appendix 3 of the Strategy contains a comprehensive list of risks and mitigations. In addition, low carbon retrofit is one of the risks within the directorates risk register. Risks tend to fall into the following main themes:

- Zero carbon retrofit could be unaffordable to the HRA business plan
- Failure to collect appropriate data
- Inability to achieve low heat demand for the majority of homes leading to challenges in relation to fuel poverty when switching fuel
- Failure to engage tenants and leaseholders affectively
- Inability to procure contractors
- Failure of the national grid to be decarbonised
- Lack of appropriate grant opportunities

### 4. Achieving 2040 Targets

Although the investment pre 2030 is moderate the greater challenge is to bring homes up to the 2050 zero carbon standard.

The average cost of bringing SWT homes up to EPC C is £3.2k which is a moderate business plan investment. According to our data SWT has c1300 homes which are in EPC band D (SAP 55-69) but within 0.5 - 6 SAP points of EPC C (SAP 69.5 - 80). Properties receiving a combination of small measures could benefit from 0.5 - 6 SAP points. The service aim to use the following two approaches to move many properties to EPC C:

- A large window replacement programme replacing double glazed windows due for replacement pre 2030 with higher quality double glazed windows which have an improved thermal efficiency standard minimum 1.2U value. Some doors will also be replaced to a higher thermal standard and a wraparound package of small measures called the 'Fuel Saving Box' will be installed where possible.
- A structured boiler replacement programme replacing heating systems with more efficient heating system. The service will also investigate new SMART controls to help customers manage their fuel usage and some technology to help the service remote monitor the house to identify properties not conforming to the expected efficiency. The boiler replacement programme will also receive a wraparound package of small measures called the 'Fuel Saving Box'.

On average homes will cost c£24k to bring to the zero carbon standard. This costs does not include any disruption costs or complementary work such as decanting, refixing of components disturbed during work, early replacement of components before their anticipated failure date or inflation. The council do have some outliers which will cost substantially more such as Woolaways, Cornish and some of the other non-traditional properties as well as pre 1930 stock and solid wall properties. These properties will be the hardest and most expensive to fund and accessing schemes such as ECO4 becomes very important to ensuring affordability to the HRA.

SWT will strive to achieve 50 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr for all SWT homes by 2040. This will require c£66m of investment in Fabric measures. Around c5000 homes will receive c22,000 fabric measures which are assumed to include:

- £31m Improved wall insulation such as External Wall insulation
- £31m Glazing
- £1.6m Roof insulation
- £1.7m Ventilation including mechanical ventilation
- £100k low energy lighting

The stock will see an increase in the use of external wall insulation. The service will need to invest in software and staff capacity to help analyse retrofit and decent homes data to identify and cost programmes delivering multiple fabric first measures and a whole house approach. Between 2028 and 2040 the alignment of decent homes and retrofit will remain in significant focus as multiple measures delivered simultaneously will reduce costs and reduce tenant disruption. It is likely that to achieve the ambitious heat demand targets some additional measures will be introduced during void works such as floor insulation in particular for bungalows. The decanting of tenants will significantly increase the complexity of the works programme and incur significant costs and complications and therefore most measures identified will be carried out whilst tenants remain in their homes.

## 5. Measuring progress and KPIs

The service has a Programme Board and a Performance Board. The annual capital programme is reported to the programme Board and this structure will continue to monitor the progress of elements of the capital programme which have a low carbon benefit including boiler replacement, window, door, roof and insulation. In addition, any grant funded programme will be reported through the Programme Board.

The Performance Board will receive updates from the asset management team on progress against KPI target. Proposed KPI targets include:

- Average stock SAP and EPC score (initially from parity software but eventually from SWTs own records, annual or biannual KPI)
- Number of units with an EPC score 69 or less (EPC D, E, F, G) (initially from parity software but eventually from SWTs own records, annual or biannual report)
- Number of units moving from EPC D, E, F, G to C, B or A within quarter/year (initially from parity software but eventually from SWTs own records, annual or biannual report)
- Grant awarded and % of grant claimed
- Average stock Heat Demand (this will be an annual report and will be based on archetype studies and post works surveys)
- Number of units with a heat demand 91 or higher, 90-71, 70-50, 50 or less (this will be an annual report and will be based on archetype studies and post works surveys)
- Number of properties with electric heat and power / Number of units with fossil fuel.
- Number of homes with PV
- Number of homes with Air/Ground Source Heat Pumps
- Number of homes predicted to fall out of decency for each of the next 5 years under agreed MTFP

## Archetype Studies – Zero Carbon Pathways

- 1 SWT is creating c12 high level archetype pathways to zero carbon (table 2) which also consider a properties form (bungalow, house, apartment). This strategy places significant emphasis on the archetype studies to establish our base line, targets and pathways to zero carbon.
- 2 The importance of zero carbon pathway modelling is critical to understand the investment decisions including the sequence of investment based on a fabric first approach.
- 3 The Council has 14 SWT property archetypes (Table 1). These high level studies cover 96% of SWT homes and will ultimately be transparent to allow tenants, staff and Members to understand how SWT plan to achieve zero carbon and reduce fuel usage for each home/archetype. As more individual property studies are conducted baselines, targets and pathways will be refined.

Table 1 - Profile of SWT stock by archetype

Archetype	SWT Units
Conventional	4417
Easiform	407
Cornish PRC	359
Woolaway*	218
Airy	24
BISF	77
HSG REV AC	1
Relocat	10
Special PP	3
Rema PRC	43
Stanard WIC	8
Tru-steel	24
Concrete	63
Timber	52
	5706

*\* Some woolaways are currently under demolition*

- 4 Table 2 is a summary of the baseline for archetypes and the optimum reduced heat demand each archetype could achieve following its Zero Carbon Pathway. These archetype templates help officers understand the measures and sequence of investment to achieve zero carbon. These studies show the importance of considering each archetype on its merit and these high level studies are followed

by whole house and block surveys often using the PAS 2035 assessment process.

**Table 2 – Property Architype Studies**

SWT Architype Studies 2022						
Architype	% of SMT Stock	Units	Heat demand Baseline (kWh/m2/yr)	Ambitious 2040 Heat demand (kWh/M2/yr)	Modelled 2040 heat demand as % of 2022 heat demand	
1	77.40%	4417	130	49.75	30.62%	
2				25		
3				41.25		
4	3.80%	218	170	37	29.41%	
5				37		
6	6.30%	359	160	65	40.63%	
7				65		
8				65		
9	7.10%	407	139	57	38.13%	
10				53		
11				53		
12	1.30%	77	159	56	35.22%	
13	4.10%	228	No Architype studies planned assume 130	50	38.46%	
	100.00%	5706	135	42	32%	

- 5 Below are a number of examples of Zero Carbon Pathways. Each pathway provides a guide to the investments required to achieve the optimum reduced heat demand.
- 6 The tables shown in the left hand column the main retrofit components and their baseline qualities. Reading to the right the low carbon qualities of the architype improve with the right hand column considered the best low carbon standard.
- 7 The strategy has set a heat demand of c50kWh/m2/yr and therefore the optimum investment and measures will be to the right of the table but not necessarily the furthest right. It must be remembered that if the architype is using electric heat and power then with a decarbonised grid the property will be Zero Carbon.
- 8 Architype studies are helpful in modelling and creating broad investment decisions. However each property will need to be surveyed and considered on its own merit and peculiarities. Individual property assessments will often lead to low carbon property designs.
- 9 The architype studies have identified some common requirements for example most of SWTs homes will require external wall insulation, double glazing with a minimum u value of 1.2 and doors with a U value of between 1 and 1.2, loft insulation to a depth of 450mm and some form of mechanical ventilation.



- 10 The archetype studies have also identified that disruptive floor insulation can be avoided in all properties except bungalows if walls, windows, roofs and doors achieve the higher standard. Insulating under wooded floors is significantly more practical than insulating on top of concrete floors. Insulating concrete floors require surface insulation which raises the floor level and has an impact on many other components such as kitchen units, skirting, stairs and their falls, door heights and bathroom furniture.
- 11 On the following pages are a sample of archetype studies and pathways to zero carbon

Pathway to Zero Carbon – System Built non traditional semi-detached house

Project Ave	Baseline	Fabric <90 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	EPC-B	EPC-A
<b>EPC Information</b>		EWI/DOORS & WINDOWS/APS0/MEV	...plus PV	...plus FLOOR/ASHP/MVHR/APS0
Existing EPC	<b>E-48</b>			
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>E-48</b>	<b>C-73</b>	<b>B-89</b>	<b>A-95</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>193</b>	<b>49.75</b>	<b>49.75</b>	<b>25</b>
Floor U-Value	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.18
Wall U-Value (Sys Build)	2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Roof U-Value	2.4	0.13	0.13	0.13
Door U-Value	2.85	1.2	1.2	1.2
Window U-Value	2.7	1.2	1.2	1.2
Air Tightness	9.78	5	5	3
Solar PV KWP			3	3
ASHP				YES
Ventilation Type	IEV	MEV	MEV	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency				90%


Pathway to Zero Carbon – Easiform non traditional apartment

Property: Flat 	Baseline	Phase 1A < 90kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /yr	Phase 1B – EPC C	Gas Option	Phase 2 – EPC B	Phase 3 – NET Zero Future
EPC Information		CWI + Openings	Phase 1A + MVHR	Phase 1B – Gas boiler** instead of ASHP	Phase 1B + Solar	Phase 2 + EWI
Existing EPC	<b>D-56</b>					
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>D-60</b>	<b>C-69</b>	<b>C-72</b>	<b>C-73</b>	<b>B-82</b>	<b>B-85</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>138.7</b>	<b>65.4</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>35.5</b>
Floor U Value	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80
Wall U-Value Level*	1.23	<b>0.52</b>	0.52	0.52	0.52	<b>0.18</b>
Roof U-Value	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Door U-Value	3.00	<b>1.20</b>	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
Window U-Value	2.80	<b>1.00</b>	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Air Tightness (AP50)	4.99	<b>3.00</b>	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Solar PV KWP					<b>1.5 (SW)</b>	1.5 (SW)
ASHP	Daikin	Daikin	Daikin		Daikin	Daikin
Ventilation Type	None	None	<b>MVHR</b>	MVHR	MVHR	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency						

Pathway to Zero Carbon – conventional brick built Bungalow

	Baseline	Fabric <90 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	EPC-B	EPC-A
<b>EPC Information</b>		EW/DOORS & WINDOWS/AP50/MEV	...plus PV	...plus FLOOR/MVHR
Existing EPC	E-43			
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>E-45</b>	<b>C-73</b>	<b>B-91</b>	<b>A-96</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>188</b>	<b>83.25</b>	<b>83.25</b>	<b>41.25</b>
Floor U Value	0.77	0.72	0.72	0.18
Wall U-Value	1.55	0.18	0.18	0.18
Roof U-Value	0.27	0.13	0.13	0.13
Door U-Value	3.05/4.5*	1.2	1.2	1.2
Window U-Value	2.8	1.2	1.2	1.2
Air Tightness	6.57	3	3	3
Solar PV KWP			2.5	2.5
ASHP	YES**	YES**	YES**	YES**
Ventilation Type	IEV	MEV	MEV	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency				90%

## Pathway to Zero Carbon – Carvity Wall Semi detached Bungalow

	Baseline	Fabric <90 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	EPC-B	EPC-A
EPC Information		EWI/DOORS & WINDOWS/AP50/MEV	...plus PV	...plus FLOOR/ASHP/MVHR/AP50
Existing EPC	<b>D-65</b>			
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>D-58</b>	<b>C-70</b>	<b>B-86</b>	<b>A-93</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>159.75</b>	<b>76.25</b>	<b>76.25</b>	<b>27.75</b>
Floor U-Value	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.18
Wall U-Value	1.55	0.18	0.18	0.18
Roof U-Value	0.2	0.13	0.13	0.13
Door U-Value	2.9	1	1	1
Window U-Value	2.8	1	1	1
Air Tightness	7.82	3	3	3
Solar PV KWP			3	3
ASHP				YES
Ventilation Type	IEV	MEV	MEV	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency				90%

Pathway to Zero Carbon – conventional brick built Semi detached

Property Drive	Baseline	Fabric <90 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	EPC-B	EPC-A
EPC Information		EWI/DOORS & WINDOWS/AP50/MEV	...plus PV	...plus FLOOR/MVHR/ASHP/LOFT
Existing EPC	<b>D-68</b>			
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>D-63</b>	<b>C-75</b>	<b>B-85</b>	<b>A-92</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>110.75</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>24</b>
Door U Value	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.18
Wall U-Value	1.55	0.18	0.18	0.18
Roof U-Value	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.13
Door U-Value	2.9	1.2	1.2	1.2
Window U-Value	2.8	1.2	1.2	1.2
Air Tightness	11.88	3	3	3
Solar PV KWP			3	3
ASHP				YES
Ventilation Type	IEV	MEV	MEV	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency				90%

Pathway to Zero Carbon – Top floor flat non traditional 3 story block

Property: <span style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 2px;">[Redacted]</span> Rd	Baseline	Fabric <90 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	EPC-B	EPC-A
<b>EPC Information</b>		CWI/FLAT ROOF/MEV	...plus Solar	...plus EWV/W&D/MVHR
Existing EPC	<b>D-64</b>			
Full SAP EPC Rating	<b>D-56</b>	<b>C-73</b>	<b>B-89</b>	<b>A-94</b>
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	<b>187</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>25</b>
Floor U-Value	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wall U-Value	1.55	0.55	0.55	0.18
Roof U-Value	2.03	0.19	0.19	0.19
Door U-Value	2.9	2.9	2.9	1
Window U-Value	2.8	2.8	2.8	1
Air Tightness	4.17	4.17	4.17	3
Solar PV KWP			2.5	2.5
ASHP				
Ventilation Type	IEV	MEV	MEV	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency				90%

Pathway to Zero Carbon – Woolway non traditional terrace

Property	Baseline	Fabric <90 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	EPC-C	EPC-B	EPC-A	LETI – Best Practice	LETI - Exemplar	Net Zero
<b>EPC Information</b>		EWI, Windows, Doors, Roof & MEV	EWI, Windows, Doors, Roof & MEV	EWI, Windows, Doors, Roof, PV & MEV	EWI, Windows, Doors, Roof, Floor, PV & MVHR	LETI Retrofit Standard (Best Practice)	LETI Retrofit Standard (Exemplar)	LETI New Build Standard
Existing EPC	E-46							
Predicted EPC (as tested)	E-46							
Predicted EPC (with evidence)								
Full SAP EPC Rating	E-43	C-72	C-72	B-86	A-92	A-93	A-97	A-97
<b>Heat Demand:</b>								
Final Heat Demand (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	222.43	80.4	83.6	83.6	52.14	47.02	44.03	42.17
<b>Model Inputs:</b>								
Floor U Value	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.2	0.15	0.15	0.15
Wall U-Value (System Build)	2.16	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.18	0.15	0.13
Roof U-Value	0.5	0.13	0.15	0.15	0.13	0.12	0.12	0.1
Door U-Value	3	1.2	1.6	1.6	1.4	1	0.8	0.8
Window U-Value	2.7	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.2	0.8	0.8	0.8
Air Tightness	11.92	3	3	3	3	2	1	1
Thermal Mass Parameter	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Thermal Bridging	35.72	32.85	32.85	32.85	18.14	18.14	18.14	18.14
Solar PV KWP				2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0
<b>Ventilation Inputs:</b>								
Ventilation Type	IEV	MEV	MEV	MEV	MVHR	MVHR	MVHR	MVHR
Thermal Efficiency					90%	90%	90%	90%



## Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy and Delivery Plan Risk Assessment

Appendix 3

Risks & Mitigations						
	Risk	Description	Impact	Probability	Risk Score	Mitigation
1	Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	Failure to align decent homes spending with retrofit budget requirements.	4	2	8	Asset management service tasked with aligning component replacement, additional resources (analysts) being introduced to the team, joined up working of capital delivery team and asset management team, MTFP to reflect investment alignment
2	Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	Aligning decent homes spending with retrofit budget requirements leads to early component replacement and repeated investment. In efficient use of budgets.	3	4	12	Asset management service tasked with aligning component replacement as best as possible to minimise early replacement, asset management working with capital delivery, void and compliance teams to agree component specification, additional resources (analyst) being introduced to the team, stock condition data will be tracked to understand early component replacement, grant bids will build in component lifetime value loss where possible.
3	Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	Inability of HRA income (rents) to keep pace with services costs and budget requirements.	4	3	12	The Council sets rent annually, and the housing service will present a case to Member which highlights the financial pressures within the service including market conditions, statutory requirements and inflationary pressures. The retrofit programme will be designed to allow works to come forward or be held back depending on available funding. Reprofiting delivery dates will impact on the expected date to achieve targets.

4	Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	Resourcing asset management and delivery teams. To deliver retrofit some new skills and capacity is required. The main areas are asset management, capital programme delivery and tenant liaison but communication/press and grant administration is also critical.	4	3	12	Current resources are being flexed to provide some additional capacity in the asset management team and capital budgets for surveys established in the MTFP. As grants are pursued consideration will be given to the revenue funding available. Capitalisation of salaries will be considered where staff are transforming the service or improving an asset. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund provides a 15% revenue contribution. As more grant funds are introduced the service will need to increase resources unless the works displace other decent homes or compliance works. The Council has also agreed an MoU with E-ON introducing significant energy company obligation funding and third party capacity to deliver a large element of the 2022-2025 programme. This partnership will allow learning from a third party and limit the growth of directly employed staff.
Page 190	Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	Addition maintenance costs as a result of introducing low carbon technology	3	4	12	Component specifications will be agreed between Asset management, capital programme delivery, voids team, compliance team and repairs. Replacement costs will be noted and considered in the 30 year business plan and MTFP.
Page 190	Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	Failure to attract grant to subsidise works.	3	3	9	The service will constantly need to understand the grant opportunities and create capacity to apply for grant. SWT has been successful in attracting grant as a WECA consortium member and individually via a partnership with E-ON. Resources will be required to administer grant requirements and delegated authority will need to reflect the timescales often demanded by grant providers. The 2022-2026 retrofit programme is forecast to benefit from £12-£28m grant or subsidy. There is no subsidy identified to support the period 2026-2029 as grants are usually launched for shortly before the delivery period.
7	Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	Increase costs of works due to additional preparation works such as decanting customers, structural works, joinery, plumbing and utility connections/disconnections.	4	3	12	The delivery plan has selected a limited range of components to avoid additional disruption to customers or the property wherever possible. Some components such as internal insulation and floor insulation may require the decanting of customers, changing to carpentry, doorways and the reconfiguration of stairs at significant expense. External insulation has been preferred to internal insulation wherever possible.

8	Unaffordable costs placed on HRA business plan.	Stock Reduction. Some properties will be coming to the end of their life expectancy and/or have significant costs. Options appraisals will be required to understand if investment, demolition or disposal is the best financial option for the Council. The sale or demolition of property places additional cost pressure on the residual stock units/rental income.	2	4	8	The service will use option appraisals on properties anticipated to cost significantly more than the average to meet structural, decent homes and zero carbon requirements.
9	Failure to collect appropriate data.	Failure to collect appropriate data.	4	2	8	The service has invested in open Assets and parity software data bases. The service is seeking to employ additional asset management analysts to ensure better data inputting and accuracy. The service will work hard to ensure improvements to homes are recorded swiftly following capital works. The MTFP has included significant budgets for survey works.
10	Failure to collect appropriate data.	Failure to survey and design solutions appropriately.	4	2	8	The service is introducing PAS 2035 assessments wherever grant funding is being used. The PAS approach includes quality assurance in design and implementation. Surveys will be pre and post works and allow the service to measure changes in property performance in EPC, SAP and Heat demand.
11	Failure to engage tenants	Failure to bring customers on the journey to zero carbon.	5	3	15	The service is developing communication and engagement strategies to raise awareness of the benefits of low carbon retrofit. The service has secured funding to develop a show house Spring 2023 and video clips of low carbon works are being collected. The service will learn from the approach being taken by E-ON as they deliver neighbourhood based ECO4 projects.

12	Failure to engage tenants	Failure to access customers' homes. The council has 1891 homes failing the 2030 target and the majority of these homes require very marginal works to achieve target.	5	3	15	The service is developing communication and engagement strategies to raise awareness of the benefits of low carbon retrofit. The service has secured funding to develop a show house Spring 2023 and video clips of low carbon works are being collected. The service will learn from the approach being taken by E-ON as they deliver neighbourhood based ECO4 projects. New procedures are being introduced to ensure more timely communication and work standards.
13	Failure to engage tenants	Failure to support tenants in a timely way when delivering works.	5	3	15	The service is reviewing and refining its tenant engagement and communication processes to ensure customers have the right communication and support when surveys and works are to take place in their home. The service is introducing policy statements during the contract stage to ensure contractors bidding to work for the council will understand expectations and deliver in a more consistent way.
14	Failure to engage with leasehold and private owners	The council has xx leaseholder who homes are spread throughout the 440 blocks owned by SWT. The leaseholder and council (as freeholder) both have rights however the council will need to agree access and financial contribution towards investment with the leaseholder. Considering the scale of investment to achieve zero carbon this process could be challenging. Some components such as external wall insulation needs to wrap the whole of a block when being applied.	4	4	16	The council will commence its investment on houses and bungalows to allow additional time to prepare block investment strategies and commence consultation with tenants and leaseholders in blocks, the council will investigate the creation of sinking funds allowing more leaseholders to build up funds to support capital investment contributions. The council will consider grants which could benefit leaseholders as well as tenants. The ECO4 partnership is an example of where this may be possible.

15	Blocks	The council has 440 buildings which it classifies as blocks ranging from 4 units to xx units. Block will have extra complications such as flat roofs, common areas, extra access challenge and some properties will be leasehold and permissions and costs have to be agreed with owners.	4	3	12	The service will prepare block investment strategies. It will refine its architype studies to provide greater clarity in relation to the 440 blocks owner by the council. The capital investment plan will create a block investment investment strategy which will feed into the MTFP and annual HRA budget request to Council. The service will work towards developing a leaseholder working group. The service will seek to join up compliance, cyclical maintenance, decent homes and retrofit requirements through a single block investment plan. Grants such as ECO4 will be used to explore efficient delivery approaches.
16	Procurement & capital programme delivery	Failure to procure in line with grant pressures.	4	4	16	The service is developing standard specifications for components and plan capital programmes over five years. These actions should overtime allow the service to procure contractors who are able to deliver works over several years and reduce the frequency of procurement. Over time the service should be able to use the strategy and delivery plan to forecast the range of contractors required to support the delivery plan.
17	Failure to procure & deliver programme	Failure to attract contractors. The environment is very challenging and there are risk that contractors will not commit to tendering or tender with excessive costs.	4	4	16	The strategy and delivery plan allows the council service to provide more certainty to contractors in terms of the type, volume and timing of contracts which the council will be seeking. The transparency of our programme should allow more engagement with the market to encourage companies to bid for contracts.
18	Procurement & capital programme delivery	Shortage of skills and materials . The market has seen the costs of some components and labour increase due to their scarcity. As a result, prices have increased, more of the risk has been placed on the client and some contracts have no or limited bidders.	4	4	16	The strategy and delivery plan allows the council service to provide more certainty to contractors in terms of the type, volume and timing of contracts which the council will be seeking. The transparency of our programme should allow more engagement with the market to encourage companies to bid for contracts.

19	External Risks	The national Grid does not decarbonise by 2050. This would mean the council would not achieve zero carbon or it would need to offset some of its carbon. The strategies aim is to replace all fossil fuel (Gas/solid Fuel/Oil) by 2050 with electric based heating systems. If electricity continues to use fossil fuel in its production the council will not achieve its goal.	5	2	10	This is an external factor and cannot be controlled by the council. The strategy is introducing a fabric first approach and an ideal heat demand of 50kWh/m2/yr. The reduced heat demand will significantly reduce fossil fuel use even if the grid is not fully decarbonised. The use of ASHP and energy efficient quantum heaters will further reduce the amount of energy.
Page 134	External Risks	Introduction of a new SAP calculation methodology. The government is proposing to introduce a new methodology for calculating SAP. This may impact on EPC and other methods of comparing a properties energy efficiency.	4	2	8	The strategy proposes to move away from EPC and SAP as the main forms of energy assessment to Heat Demand. This will allow the council to assess more accurately progress towards zero carbon. EPCs based on SAP calculation may still be important in relation to grant applications however as the details are unknown of the methodology other impacts are hard to assess.
21	Failure to achieve Targets	Failure to achieve EPC C by 2030	5	2	10	The delivery plan outlines over 2600 homes will receive low carbon capital works. This figure includes 1300 homes which are within 6 SAP points of EPC C. These homes should achieve target through window or boiler replacement combined with a package called the Fuel cost care box. The service is about to agree an MoU with E-ON to delivery multiple measures to the worst performing homes. It is envisaged a limited number of homes will struggle to achieve target.

22	Failure to achieve Targets	Failure to achieve a heat demand for homes of 50kWh/m2/yr. by 2040. This is a very real risk as the target is very ambitious. The service has projected the target using archetype studies which clone surveys to predict opportunity. The council ambition is to achieve 50kWh/m2/yr. should permit affordable warmth to tenants regardless of the electric heating system introduced. Homes which do not achieve this ambitious target will require additional fabric or power saving investment.	3	5	15	The strategy is ambitious in its goal of 50kWh/m2/yr. by 2040. Failure to achieve this target will lead to either higher fuel cost than desired when a property switches from fossil fuel to electric fuel and/or it will mean the council may wish to carry additional fabric measures or provide PV to compensate the tenant for some of the higher costs of fuel. The failure to achieve the target impacts primarily on the customer and their fuel costs.
23	Failure to achieve Targets	Failure to achieve zero carbon by 2050. The council has c 4000 homes which use fossil fuel for heat.	4	2	8	The council is able to switch fuel from fossil fuel to electricity through the replacement of gas, solid and oil boilers with ASHP, quantum heaters or other individual or community electric heating systems. The service is able to use its boiler replacement programme to switch fuel sources. Should grant become available for fuel switching then this will offset the additional cost of some electric heating systems such as ASHP.





## **Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022**

### **Portfolio Holder Report for the Leader of the Council.**

The majority of my time and that of the Senior Leadership Teams has been focused on the creation of the new Somerset Council whilst also ensuring our core tasks endure, as you will see throughout the rest of the portfolio holders reports. There have been a lot of events happening since our last Full Council and below is a selection of them.

#### **HM Queen Elizabeth II**

Alongside attending the official proclamation I also attended a service of commemoration of Her Majesty the Queen at Taunton Minster. It was a moment in history for us all to celebrate her remarkable dedication to our country and to give thanks.

My thanks go to all the team members involved in ensuring that Operation London Bridge ran smoothly and all of us as a community were able to pay our respects and thanks for a lifetime of service.

#### **Remembrance**

I was asked by Great Western Railways if I would like to represent SWT by placing a wreath on the train from Taunton to Paddington at just before 8.30 am on 11 November. The wreaths were then carefully carried to London and placed at the war memorial on Platform 1, Paddington Station, creating a display of remembrance for all the communities served by intercity trains.

We also held the memorial in Taunton Town Centre at 11am on 11 November, it is always poignant to see our veterans, their families but also the community in support. On Sun 13 November I attended the Civic Service of Remembrance at Taunton Minster and then Vivary Park, Taunton for the Service of Remembrance.

We must ensure that we continue to teach our children the importance of remembrance so that they learn from what has gone before and the sacrifices that have been made.

#### **Community**

Recently I was invited to attend a service of Thanksgiving and Celebration of the Platinum Jubilee, All Saints Church, Taunton and was also invited to attend Holway Allotments Flower Show on the same day.

I also attended Wiveliscombe Town Council to see the work that they have undertaken on their community plan, usage of their covid high street money and issues that are affecting them.

I think that it is really important to engage with our local councils and communities to understand the issues that they face so do get in contact if there is something of interest.

### **Cost of Living Event**

In September I attended the cost of living crisis support event which was held at the Creative Innovation Centre, Memorial Hall, Taunton.

Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) Council's [Community Employment Hubs](#) service held the event in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), at the Memorial Hall, Taunton.

The event was open to anyone concerned about the cost of living crisis which was a one-stop-shop for comprehensive support and advice and an opportunity to ask face-to-face questions from a range of organisations that will be present, including:

- Citizen Advice
- Christians Against Poverty
- The DWP
- Wessex Water
- Somerset Independence Plus
- The Centre for Sustainable Energy
- The Food Pantry

It was good to attend and find out about the different options available for support and to show how the council is keen to engage and work with others to help in our communities.

### **Cultural Forum**

I was invited to attend the Somerset West and Taunton Cultural Forum Open Day which was held at Deane House, Taunton.

The day brought together Somerset West & Taunton Council (SWT), arts and culture providers and stakeholders for an engaging day and lunch to commemorate the district's Cultural Strategy and to help us future gaze on a range of subjects and themes.

We got to hear about what has been happening in the district, with updates on projects, we heard from local experts and councillors and members of the public were able to share their thoughts on things that matter to them. We were also given the opportunity to view the new Arts Hub at Flook House.

In the afternoon there were round table discussions and information on the Somerset Wide Cultural Strategy/Local Government Re-Organisation, Creative People/Youth, Events and Town Centres, Heritage, Public Art and updates on the Firepool Development.

### **Coal Orchard**

On Saturday 5 November I attended the official opening of Coal Orchard, Taunton. The town centre development encompasses riverside living, retail, working and leisure space. Members of the public were invited to attend and to have a look at the development which incorporates a grand plaza with a stepped terrace to make the most of its position on the River Tone. There was also live music on the day and entertainment. SWT is also in the process of developing a car club pilot which aims to deliver eco-friendly shared transport in the heart of Taunton.

I am excited to see this ambitious development come to fruition and am grateful to everyone involved in the project which has been delivered during some of the most challenging times for our country and the construction industry.

We have created a stunning development celebrating Coal Orchard's heritage while raising design quality with modern building and green initiatives that will compliment the Taunton Independent Quarter and the wonderful businesses in the area alongside opening up to the Brewhouse and its great programme of events for us all to enjoy.

### **Cllr Trollope-Bellow**

Somerset West and Taunton Council paid tribute to Councillor Anthony Trollope-Bellew who died suddenly on Friday 28 October. Cllr Trollope Bellew served the South Quantock ward and represented SWT on the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee and the Joint Scrutiny Panel of the Somerset Waste Board.

Prior to the formation of SWT in 2019, he represented the Crowcombe and Stogumber ward at West Somerset District Council where he was a long-serving member and leader from 2015-2019.

We are all deeply saddened by the loss of such a well-respected friend and colleague. Anthony was a true gentleman known for his tremendous service, his immense knowledge and his passion for the area he loved. He was an exceptionally kind, firm but fair man who cared deeply about the community he loved to serve and devoted so much to the people of West Somerset and the wider Somerset West and Taunton area.

I will certainly miss his presence in our council meetings and I am grateful for the support and advice he has provided over the past three years especially in relation to Local Government reorganisation in Somerset.



# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Sports, Parks, Leisure and Phosphates.

### Parks and Open Spaces

#### Britain in Bloom Awards

The Taunton, Minehead and Wellington achieved Silver Gilt across each area improving the award for both Minehead and Wellington from the previous year.

This is a really great achievement and reflect hard work both from our teams and Community groups.

#### Play Areas

The installation of new Play Equipment for Walkers Gate, Wellington and Heavitree, Taunton were started by contractors on 7/11/22 and due to be completed in a four-week period. The following locations are due to have equipment updates in the early new year

- Crofters Green, Taunton
- Humphreys Road, Wellington
- Cleeve Road, Taunton
- Courtlands, Courtlands Close, Watchet

### Leisure

#### Leisure Centres (Everyone Active)

SLM continue to operate well in testing circumstances. Rising utility costs have had a significant impact on their finances and ability to deliver the business plan but membership and usage numbers have held up well. Mitigation measures have been agreed and implemented to mitigate the rise in energy costs.

The recruitment of qualified staff remains an issue.

The new Pure Gym at the Hankridge Retail Park which opened on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022 may have an impact on membership but at the time of writing it is too early to tell.

The golf course has enjoyed a good year in terms of usage. The Council has worked in partnership to erect additional safety netting to prevent balls being struck into nearby properties/roads and is exploring some ongoing flooding issues on holes 5 & 6.

Staff from Blackbrook Leisure recently helped to save the life of a customer who suffered a heart attack whilst taking part in 'Walking Cricket'. After performing CPR and using the on site defib the gentleman made a complete recovery in hospital. The Council has formally thanked the staff for their prompt actions.

Extensive gully repair work at Taunton Pool has been completed whilst a new Building Management System (BMS) has been installed at Wellington Sports Centre to help to manage energy performance before the decarbonisation project is delivered.

#### Leisure Projects

##### Tennis Court Refurbishment

Discussions continue to be held with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to finalise the project to upgrade the tennis courts at Vivary Park and Cheddon Road. The LTA are providing up to 90% of the project costs but due to procurement issues on the part of the LTA it is now more likely that this project will take place in spring 2023.

### **Taunton Green Pavilion**

Refurbishment and compliance works at the Taunton Green Pavilion on Cheddon Road have started on site. Once complete the Baseball Club will move from Victoria Park to Taunton Green and make the latter their 'home ground'.

### **Norton Fitzwarren Playing Field**

The work to create a new playing field with a football pitch, tennis court, car parking area and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Norton Fitzwarren has taken major steps forward. Planning permission has been obtained and works began on site in early November 2022. The first phase will involve the creation of a tennis court, multi use games area and car parking area whilst the work to the pitch will take place in spring 2023.

### **Phosphates**

#### **Strategic Solution for Phosphates**

As Members are aware, on 5 October 2021, Full Council approved an Interim Strategy of mitigation measures. A Planning Phosphates Sub-Committee has been set up to oversee this programme. This Sub Committee has considered a number of officer reports on various matters and updates on the interim programme.

A countywide workshop on phosphates took place 1 November 2022. The workshop involved portfolio holders, members and senior officers from each of the Somerset Authorities. Officers were asked to develop interim governance arrangements for a "phosphate board" to operate prior to the formal arrangements within the new Somerset Council.

On 10 November 2022 members of the Phosphate Planning Sub Committee were updated on the Council's programme of interim measures which create phosphate (P) Credits.

In summary: officers advised that the Council:

- Has established a Phosphate Credit Scheme.
- Is moving towards determining applications held in abeyance.
- That there are additional resources in place to support this process.
- Is at the forefront of this process, one of only a handful of LPAs to reach this milestone.

In total the interim phosphate strategy which has been agreed with Natural England is now expected to generate a phosphate offset of 75.5 kg/year and will unlock between 174 and 871 homes within the River Tone sub catchment.

The Council circulated a survey to all affected applicants in October 2022, to gauge the level of demand for the P credits generated by the Council's phosphate mitigation projects and to understand the extent to which impacted applicants were pursuing their own phosphate mitigation measures.

Officers are currently in the process of assessing the survey responses and prioritising the Council's P credits and are aiming to issue P credits and determine impacted planning

applications shortly. In due course, a summary of the survey results will be upload onto the SWT phosphate web page.

For those applicants affected by the phosphate issue, an agents/developer forum meeting has been arranged for the 29 November 2022.

With regard to national advice, we are still awaiting promised details on the Defra Nutrient Mitigation Scheme, which was announced on 20 July 2022.

Further work continues with the other Somerset authorities to update the phosphate calculator in line with the Natural England calculator which was recently published and to develop a nutrient management plan for the Ramsar site.

Cllr. Perry





# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Communications and Corporate Resources.

I am pleased to present this report, which shows Somerset West and Taunton holding up well under difficult circumstances – a very effective council continuing to provide support and development for the district. I am very grateful for the leadership shown by senior staff and the continuing effort at all levels to keep the ship afloat and sailing smoothly. While we prepare to merge with our neighbours into Somerset Council, we have also created a Town Council for Taunton, got our finances in good order, and taken effective action to provide a responsive service to the people of Somerset West and Taunton.

### CORPORATE SERVICES

Please find below the relevant updates relating to each of the Corporate Teams providing the main support functions to the council.

#### HR Team Update

##### Recruitment

During the last quarter, SWT budget was for 637.42 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. The actual average for the period was 602 FTE with 79 FTE vacancies.

Of those vacancies many are covered by agency or contract staff in anticipation of LGR.

Month	Starters	Leavers	Turnover
July	4	7	1.16%
August	6	6	1.00%
September	5	6	1.00%

##### Sickness Absence

The level of reported sickness absence during the quarter was 5.83% compared to 3.24% in the previous quarter:

Personal and work-related stress continues to account for the largest amount of absence, making up 16.19% of all sickness ( a 0.98% rise from the previous quarter) closely followed by Covid at 11.70%.

Following sessions with MIND, Wellness action plans have been rolled out and we have re-engaged MIND for further support.

##### Service Development - People, Projects & Key Achievements

- Not surprisingly the main focus for the team is on work supporting LGR. With members of the HR team engaged in all the key people workstreams. This includes TUPE, Tier 2 and 3 consultation and appointments, managing the consultation machinery with our Trade Unions, Policy Development, Equalities, Payroll Transfer, single Learning Management System etc

##### Organisational Development & Learning Update

###### Current Focus

- Training requests are being processed on a weekly basis to speed up applications and we have introduced an Assistant Director Panel to support decision-making, the apprenticeship levy is being utilised wherever possible

and we are promoting any low-cost or free training that we are aware of through our partner organisations.

- Two new e-learning modules launched: Health & Safety Policy and Anti-Terrorism.
- Additional in-house training packs are being developed, aimed primarily at managers.

### **New Projects**

- We are working on agreed plans and messaging for the autumn to support our people and the organisation to navigate through increases in COVID cases and the cost-of-living crisis.
- All members of the team are involved in various People LGR workstreams. Key areas of focus coming up are the Dynamic Working Strategy, cultural workshops and culture navigators, LMS system migration, and manager and employee change support, T2/3 consultation and recruitment support.

### **Key Achievements**

- 50 managers completed the Leadership Development Programme.
- Significantly improved data reporting for learning and development. Now closer working with Health & Safety Team to continue to improve this data and ensure it is utilised effectively.
- Significant improvement in percentage completion of mandatory corporate e-learning modules.

### **ICT Team Update**

#### **Infrastructure Team**

Primary focus of ICT has been supporting the various LGR sub-workstreams, especially the move to a single platform scheduled for Jan 2023.

Annual IT Health check has recently been carried and remediation work is underway to resolve any issues identified.

#### **Service Desk Team**

Mainly focusing on BAU tasks and working on the laptop refresh project.

#### **Applications Team**

- Housing system support
- MS Dynamics workstream
- Removing legacy systems in readiness for the move to the single platform

### **Governance Team Update**

- Work continues to balance the pressures of staff retention (against LGR and SCC opportunities), continued commitment to supporting the committee cycle, LGR workstreams and working towards the implementation phase of the CGR project.
- The Taunton Shadow Town Council has been set up and the first meeting took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> November and will take place monthly.
- The Elections Team are finishing off the Annual Canvass, with the Electoral Register to be published in December 2022.
- A review of Polling Stations and Polling Places has been published for consultation before going before Council for approval in December.
- The Elections Team are preparing for the Taunton Town Council elections in May 2023, which will include the introduction of voter identification at polling stations.
- The team are also working on member safety initiatives alongside H&S team.

## **Change & Digital Team Update**

Current projects and achievements

### **Single Platform Cut Over**

- SWT will be moving across to the Somerset Council IT environment over a weekend in January – 5pm Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> to 8am Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>. This will require a full IT outage to enable user accounts, devices and data to be migrated. A project team is set up and working closely with the LGR programme and IT Teams to ensure a smooth transition for staff and Members. A full briefing for Members is taking place Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November at 6pm.

### **Academy Replacement Project**

- Since going live the project team have continued to support the business with their learning and knowledge development of OPENHousing, providing further training and user guides.
- Work continues on the implementation for the additional modules (Tenant Portal, SMS, PCOL and TotalMobile)

### **Assure Health & Safety System**

- The Incident module is live and enables operational staff performing high risk activities to log accidents, incidents and near misses via a mobile app for the Health & Safety Team and managers to review/action. Work on the Risk and Contractor modules is progressing well.

### **Information Management Team Update**

- Information Management Member's briefing completed on 1<sup>st</sup> November and follow up actions underway
- Paper Records Project – store management system and process under LGR is being adopted and implementation/on boarding has started
- Retention and Disposal Schedule – work to align all schedules under LGR is progressing, SWT leading from a district perspective
- Work continuing under LGR Information Governance and Records Management sub workstreams
- SWAP Records Management audit (across all 5 Councils) in progress

### **Business Analyst Team Update**

Throughout the last 3 months the Business Analysis team have taken the lead and supported the delivery of the following solutions:

- Customer Experience programme including Website improvements, general inquiry analysis, data analysis of calls and review of gas and electrical compliance processes
- LGR project, change of circumstances workshops held with Sedgemoor District Council
- LGR project, revenues and benefits processes
- Conversion of PDF forms on the website to Firmstep forms for planning and street naming and numbering
- Upgraded repairs online tool
- Upgraded new supplier process

### **Health & Safety Team Update**

- During the period between reports the H&S Lead for the organisation has officially departed and the team is currently being lead by Sean Papworth & Dan Webb.

- The work to complete the Health & Safety Improvement programme continues with most workstreams nearing an end. The follow up Audit from SWAP indicated vast improvements in all areas and we will review closing the programme in due course.
- The Assure H&S system has been launched with the incident module being released. A few incidents have now been tracked fully using the system. The next module to be released will be 'Risk' which will give operatives the capability to complete dynamic risk assessments in the field.
- We continue to work alongside SCC and district partners to develop the SC H&S sub workstream products.

### **Business Intelligence Team update**

#### **Recent achievements:**

- Q1 performance report taken to Executive and Scrutiny, and Q2 performance report written.
- Ongoing work to support a number of LGR workstreams including Corporate Performance, Business Intelligence, PMO and Risk Management.
- Developed new user-friendly risk management tool.

#### **Priorities for coming period:**

- Continue to support LGR process especially regarding:
- the work to produce a single gazetteer and address record (Local Land and Property Gazetteer) for the whole of Somerset.
- the BI requirements for the new Dynamics finance system
- a new tool to provide a climate change risk and impact assessment toolkit utilising powerapps and Power BI.
- Continue to provide spatial data and Geographical Information Systems support for the Taunton Community Governance Review.

We also have one of the original Internal Operations programmes sitting within the team which I also wish to update on.

### **Service Improvement and Efficiency Programme Update**

The current projects within the programme are;

- Revenues Enforcement Project – this project continues to deliver well above the initial forecast. The project has delivered an additional retained income of 371K over a 7-month period against a 12-month forecast of 367K.
- Excellence Framework Project – Individual team support continue to be provided on demand. The opportunity to deploy the tool across the new council will now be explored
- Change and Improvement Capabilities Project: A team of Excellence Champions continue to develop their expertise by working, organisation wide, on varying improvement opportunities. They now have the knowledge, as a group, to support teams towards excellence.

### **Customer Experience Improvement Project:**

- Aims to improve customer experience by understanding and learning from their reasons for complaining.
- A customer complaint deep dive has provided an insight on the reasons for complains in select service areas and has led to multiple actions which are at varying stages of delivery (Ongoing housing process change, recruitment of a

dedicated complain case manager in Revs & Bens, complain answer training...) In Parallel, the complaint tool has been improved with the aim of capturing and monitoring the complaint causes providing a sustainable approach to learning from the customer complaints.

- This project also improves customer experience and efficiency by reducing the number of avoidable contacts thanks to better customer channelling. The website 'contact us' page has been re-designed to promote and ease self-service and reduce the number of unnecessary requests coming through calls or general enquiries. A how-to video is now available from the website home page and will soon be shared via socials. Early data are showing a 12% hit increase on the next web page which suggests that customers are finding the service they require and may then be using the online tools as opposed to calling.

## **FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT**

As with my last report to Council, the finance and procurement service continues to work tirelessly maintaining our 'business as usual' services for Somerset West and Taunton as well as helping to take forward the huge effort required delivering preparations for the implementation of the new unitary authority in April.

One of our major milestones for this year has to all intents and purposes been completed – the finalisation and audit of the annual Statement of Accounts. Our external auditor, Grant Thornton LLP, presented the Audit Findings Report to the Audit and Governance Committee on 7 November, which indicates the auditor's conclusion that the accounts present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and performance for 2021/22 financial year.

As such the auditor plans to issue an unqualified Opinion, which is good news, however this will be slightly delayed. The regulatory deadline for publishing the audited accounts is 30 November, which we will or would achieve subject to one issue affecting virtually all local authorities. The issue relates to the accounting treatment of infrastructure assets (such as footpaths, coastal defences, etc) which is awaiting a 'statutory override' to be issued (possibly in December) which may require minor disclosure adjustments. As such the Audit and Governance Committee has approved the 2021/22 accounts in principle and delegated authority to the Chair and S151 Officer to formally approve the accounts subject to any reporting changes required for this group of assets.

The Auditor also plans to issue his value for money conclusion through the Auditor's Annual Report to Audit and Governance Committee in December. At the time of writing this report to Council no adverse issues have been raised by the Auditor.

In terms of the current year's finances, the mid-year forecast against budget is reported to Community Scrutiny 30 November for the HRA and Corporate Scrutiny 7 December for the General Fund. Although the challenges and risks related to the economic situation remain significant, I am pleased to report that the projected outturn position has improved with the General Fund now projecting an underspend plus planned increases in general reserves, and with the HRA projected overspend reducing by around half compared to the Q1 forecast. This reflects the Council's

effective management of resources, and the details are set out in the respective reports.

Looking forward to next year, the County Council's Executive received a budget update report on 16 November which highlights the scale of the financial challenge for next year and the medium term. We are playing our part in supporting the budget challenge by holding a decent level of reserves that will transfer to the unitary council on 1 April and support its financial strategy for its first year and beyond.

The Government published its Autumn Statement 2022 on 17 November, setting out its fiscal plans. This is of extreme importance for the new Somerset Council for its 2023/24 budget and medium financial planning. Some of the headlines include:

- The Autumn Statement provides little detail about grant funding beyond stating that departmental budgets will be protected in cash terms in 2023-24 and 2024-25 and then will grow by 1% per year in real terms in the following three years.
- The Council Tax referendum limit will be 3% per year, with adult social care precept also able to be increased by 2% per year.
- There are several changes to the business rates regime, for example the multiplier will be frozen and support for eligible retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses is being extended and increased from 50% to 75% business rates relief up to £110,000 per business in 2023-24. From a funding perspective there is an explicit commitment that local authorities will be fully compensated for the loss of income because of all business rates measures announced in the Autumn Statement and will receive new burdens funding for administrative and IT costs.
- Rents for social housing will be capped at 7% in 2023-24. This is higher than the 5% cap on which the government consulted in the summer but is lower than the current arrangement for rents to rise by CPI +1%.

Overall, the Autumn Statement indicates that the combined impact of measures and latest inflation forecasts will mean budget gaps will continue to rise and place significant financial pressures for local authorities to manage, which will be extremely challenging.

## **CUSTOMER**

All of the services within Customer continue to be heavily engaged with the preparation to transition to the new Somerset Council and are working within all of the six Local Government Review workstreams.

In addition, we continue to focus on maintaining 'business as usual' service delivery including, since the last Full Council update, the following:

- Ongoing administration of the 'thank you' payments to Ukrainian refugee hosts, which we are also administering on behalf of Mendip District Council.

- We had a dip in performance on Housing Benefits processing times earlier in the year due to resource constraints and system issues. These problems have been resolved and we are now processing within target again.
- Customer Services are continuing to receive high volumes of calls, but are taking actions to improve our ability to answer them. For example we have ring-fenced a number staff to focus on the repairs call handling service and, as a consequence, performance has dramatically improved. We are also working closely with the staff to improve the number of calls they are able to deal with on a daily basis.
- We are continuing to manage & monitor complaints across the authority as a whole and implementing further training. There are still response issues in some areas.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) response rates are now performing really well across the organisation as a whole and we are seeing performance well in excess of the target.
- Recovery activity for Council Tax & Business Rates has now recommenced (NB. we had to suspend activity for technical reasons during the Spring & Summer to enable us to make the Fuel Rebate payments). Collection rates remain on target.
- Work continues on the arrears enforcement project. To date this has resulted in our collecting in excess of £2m in Council Tax and Business Rate arrears for previous years, of which we retain circa £0.5m.
- A recent audit report of our Debtors function provided 'substantial assurance'. This represents a significant improvement given that two years ago the audit flagged a number of key risks and only provide a partial assurance.
- The Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) scheme payments have largely been completed, although we are still awaiting contact from a small number of qualifying businesses.
- Members of our Income Team have been heavily involved in the project to launch the new Open Housing system, which has now successfully gone live. We have subsequently completed the migration of all of the former tenant debts to the new system in order that all of these debts are held in the same place. The automated debt collection 'prompts' are now set up and working within the system.
- We are commencing planning for the annual year-end / new year billing processes for Council Tax, Business Rates, Benefits and Rents. This will include this year a revaluation of all business rate assessments, which requires us to undertake a fair amount of preparatory work that will commence in December.





# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Community.

### One Teams

#### Halcon:

- The Chill and Chat support group is going well with our volunteer Amy recently completing the Freedom programme which qualifies to deliver work to individuals.
- The Halcon Skateboard club is going from strength to strength with additional funding secured through the Taunton Unparished fund, which will support the running of sessions over the next few years.
- The Lane Estate Tenants and Residents Association (LETRA) group are being supported to develop the garden at Newton Road community hall and Rich Shadrick has secured the support of the Taunton Midweek gardening group to help in the New Year.

#### North Taunton:

Youth violence and anti-social behaviour continues to be a concern, police, YOT and Children's Social Care are working with known young people and there are regular multi agency peer group mapping meetings. The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), police and the one team held an engagement day for young people and their families in half term to signpost to services, clubs and activities. It was well attended by many partner organisations but not by as many young people as we would have liked to have seen unfortunately. We have sent out consultation letters to Priorswood Place businesses, surrounding organisations and ward councillors as the VRU is proposing installing a knife amnesty box in Priorswood and the town centre.



Equans who are the main contractor delivering the NTWP continue to deliver on their community value targets which directly benefit the area. For example they have replaced all the boards around the perimeter of the artificial football pitch at the youth club in Selworthy Road, are providing gifts for a xmas charity who give presents to local

children including tenants on the NTWP estate and are regular visitors in local schools, particularly Taunton Academy.

North Taunton has benefitted from volunteers litter picking in the area. The QLPS organised a Halloween themed litter pick encouraging children and families to join in and Green Days Day Care Centre continue to support our estate walkabouts.

The Pantry Rowbarton and Priorswood Library were shortlisted for BBC Radio Make a Difference Award at a wonderful awards ceremony at the Cricket Club, although not winners they all enjoyed a wonderful evening being rewarded for the great work they do in our area.



## **Wellington**

- Pete Joint is currently working alongside the clerk at Wellington Town Council, Spark Somerset and a number of other local organisations to ensure there is enough provision such as warm banks in the Wellington area as winter approaches.
- We are proud of our role in supporting volunteers to open the Rockwell Green Food Pantry back in September.
- There will be a Xmas Wacky Wednesday for 0-5 year olds on Wednesday 14 December at Wellington Sports Centre from 10.00 – 11.30.

## **Community Employment**

SWT Community Employment Hubs continue to operate on a face to face basis and virtually.

We've secured funding to extend two posts for a further 12 months – Community employment hub support officer and Volunteer Recruitment and training officer . Established Volunteer Recruitment and Management policies for SWT and recruited 20+ volunteers to support hubs. Established employment and skills delivery at the Ukrainian Guest Welcome hub in Taunton.

- HPC drop in events x 13 to be held at the Community Employment Hub locations: Wellington/Minehead/Taunton/Stogursey - to support HPC. recruitment also across the District virtually and face-to-face jointly with Sedgemoor District Council see attached for where and when for SWT area
- Joint bi-monthly Employment and Skills Forum meetings led by SWT and SDC Employment and Skills Leads.

- Delivery of two SWT employment and Skills/community hubs 'Cost of Living crisis support events took place in Taunton (at CICCIC) and West Somerset (West Somerset House), good attendance, excellent networking for all exhibitors.
- In collaboration with SDC set up two virtual events with Community Council for Somerset/ SCC micro providers to support the recruitment of micro providers in Somerset. This is an information session for people to find out how to become a micro provider. Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022 11:30am – 12:30pm and 6:30pm – 7:30pm.

### **Skills Bootcamps:**

Bootcamps is a funded skills training programme introduced as an element of the Government Skills for Life programme. The Bootcamp is a response from the Government to support the current economic climate to enable the development of new skills for employees in the workforce, upskilling people who may be looking to change their careers or support those not in work or returning to gain relevant skills to meet business need. The Bootcamp training programme content and delivery model is not driven by qualifications, it is driven by the business need.

The counties of Somerset & Dorset are planning the Bootcamps for 2023 and some information, advise and feedback from business on their requirement, priority skills needs and express interest in the Bootcamp, with no strings attached, to inform the Bootcamp planning process.

### **CCTV**

We are currently working with suppliers to get the 11 new CCTV cameras for Taunton installed and we hope they will be ready early in the new year.

### **Hardship Fund**

Our £50,000 Harship Fund was administered by Citizens Advice as a back up to those who weren't eligible under Somerset County Council's Household Support Fund. Unfortunately, within a month (September) it was used up. Feedback was presented to Community Scrutiny and demonstrated that arrears and debt was the main cause of the fund being used up so quickly. It also showed a wide spread of people being affected showing the impact the current crisis is having on all of us. If you'd like to see the stats, please get in touch with me.

We have utilised an underspend and committed an additional £50,000 to the Somerset Community Foundation's Warm Somerset Spaces Fund which will help venues to stay open across Somerset to provide warmth. We will do our part to promote this.



# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Culture.

### Cultural Development Team – Quarterly Update

**Introduction:** The Cultural Development Team was created in November 2021 with the key objective to deliver the SWT Cultural Strategy as adopted by full Council on 7 September 2021. Since November, the team has gone from strength to strength and is already making a real difference to the communities in our District in respect of the arts and culture offering and support provided.

### News and Updates:

- **Cultural Forum Open Day Success – Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

We are proud to report the success of the first in-person Cultural Forum Open Day held at the end of September. The event was attended by over 40 valued stakeholders, and we have summarised some of the key messages coming out of the forum below:

- Strong agreement for collaborative working and partnerships (e.g., helping each other with communication and marketing approaches).
- Importance of the Cultural Forum with regards to networking opportunities
- How the sector needs to work collaboratively to continue to raise the profile of Arts and Culture so that it remains a strategic priority
- The need to proactively engage with young people with regards to the creative arts
- The growing appetite for Public Art around the district

### Comments from attendees:

- I particularly liked the informal nature of the round-table discussions - I think the fact that they were not structured or formatted encouraged more open conversation. I also really benefitted from hearing about how the Wellington Film Festival came about and has progressed.
- It was all very interesting. Great to meet up with like-minded people
- Great content and to have the chance to meet a wide range of other interested people and hear some of their views on the future of culture in Taunton and Somerset
- Hearing an update on the cultural strategy and how that relates to the incoming county strategy. Also catching up with colleagues, some not seen since before covid.
- I loved being in the company of so many passionate about Arts and Culture people! Listening to some great ideas and feeling really positive about the future with the new Council carrying forward this passion!
- A good range of topics for discussion. I enjoyed the very relaxed nature of it - no dictatorial activities for the breakout groups, just open discussion. It worked really well.

- The whole event was well organised, informative, and interesting. I particularly liked the group chats. Sandwiches were fab too 😊
- I thought it was extremely well organised and was kept to time meticulously. Thank you all very much for your hard work.
- You are doing excellent work.
- This is an excellent initiative. Thank you.
- Thank you for a great day and bringing everyone together.
- Thank you, a useful day
- Please make sure you translate ideas into actions and excellent outcomes!
- A fantastically organised, very relaxed but also informative event. Great work!

Materials for information:

Cultural Strategy Impact Assessment: [Cultural Strategy Impact Report \(September 2021 – March 2022\) - YouTube](#)

Inward Investment Video: [Inward Investment Video - YouTube](#)

Cllr Caroline Ellis's video – Celebrating Arts and Culture in SWT: [Celebrating Arts & Culture in SWT - YouTube](#)

- **Flook House** - Thanks to a Cultural Development Grant of £10,000 awarded to Creative Innovation Centre CIC (CICCIC) towards start-up costs, refurbishments, and minor renovations to modernise the rooms, the future of Flook House is looking much brighter. We are proud to have revived the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Manor House by repurposing it as a new Arts Hub for cultural and creative activities. Flook House now provides office and studio space for creative organisations and practitioners, as well as a conference-ready meeting room for community-based programmes, workshops, and vocational learning.
- **Events** – The Cultural Development team works closely with the SWT Events Co-ordinator and Town Centre Resilience and Transformation Officer to ensure the SWT events calendar links in with Cultural Strategy. We have recently created and rolled out an “Events Recce” Programme for venues and providers and more information can be found on our Culture pages on the SWT website: [Cultural Forum and News \(somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk\)](#).
  - We are pleased to have led on the cultural activity around the launch of the Coal Orchard Development alongside the Special Major Projects Team to ensure this was a successful opening event on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022.
  - New “Arcadia” art gallery opening – VIP Invitation:



Somerset West and Taunton Council has teamed up with local chainsaw artist Matthew Crabb to open a new and exciting art gallery in Taunton. Matthew Crabb the artist behind the eagerly awaited Dragon sculpture due to be installed in Taunton High Street will be opening his art gallery at the new Riverside at Coal Orchard development in Taunton on Tuesday 6th December. The gallery will consist of over 150 pieces of work by Matthew Crabb and other carefully selected artists.

Matthew Crabb, in partnership with SWT, is delighted to invite you to his VIP opening evening on Tuesday 6th December between 7pm - 10pm to view the gallery before it opens to the public.

*Cllr Caroline Ellis, Executive Member for Culture, said: "I am delighted that we are able to promote and showcase the work of Matt and other brilliant local artists in the centre of Taunton. It will offer an amazing experience that people of all ages from across the district and beyond can enjoy free of charge. I hope the exhibition will encourage and inspire talented, creative young people to fulfil their ambitions here"*

The art gallery will open to the public from Wednesday 7th December and will be open Monday to Saturday from 10am - 4pm. The gallery will also be hosting live workshops where people can meet the artists and watch them work in the studio space.

A video introducing the gallery can be found here: [Arcadia Gallery](#).

- **Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) Programme** – the SWT Strategic Lead for Culture is now engaged with the 'Culture and Universal Community Services' workstream of the county-wide LGR programme. There have been two consultations to collate resident and cultural practitioner views for the strategy which closed on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2022, and we anticipate a report to be presented to the steering group shortly with the aim for the strategy to be put before members in early January 2023.

- **Public Art Updates:**

Various Public Art Projects to be completed over the next 6 months:



(Left: Dragon Sculpture due for Taunton High Street)

- Working with Arts Taunton to commission a piece of Public Art in Castle Green, Taunton – interviews for an artist commenced 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022.
- Installation of the High Street, Taunton Public Artwork (Somerset Dragon Sculpture) - the unveiling of this has been pencilled in for 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022 to link in with half term activities and to serve as a legacy for SWT.
- Working with Cotford St Luke Parish Council to ensure £32,968 S106 funding is spent on a piece of Public Art in the community.
- Staplegrove Bridge – working with Taunton School/GoCreate to create a mural/piece of Public Art on the Railway Bridge

## Cultural Liaison and Events attended by the Portfolio Holder

### Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation News

Huge congratulations are in order to: -

- South West Heritage Trust and Contains Art on successful bids to become NPOs for the first time.
- Take Art, Somerset Film and Somerset Artworks who all play key roles in supporting culture across our district and Somerset as a whole and have thankfully held on to their NPO status.
- South Somerset District Council's whose ambitious plans to invest in redeveloping and expanding their theatre, the Octagon, were rewarded by NPO status too.

**Video Guides to Arts and Culture in SWT** I have been busy making promo videos this autumn for SWT arts and culture – monthly guides to arts and culture event highlights and an overview of all the diverse local creativity the district has to offer – you will find these on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@carolineellis9658> (plus Facebook if you are on there).

## ART

I was thrilled to visit the **Stogursey Arts Festival** in September. Helga Staddon, Mike Bradshaw, and the team had organised a smorgasbord of community events including a brilliant garden art trail around the village, artists talks, live music events and a flower festival. The floral displays in stunning St Andrews, Church were gorgeous, and villagers had devoted their gardens to an



amazing array of public art created by local artists with painted deck chairs and chrysalis bicycles in trees by Alison Jacobs, a stunning plastic flower installation suspended over St Andrews Well, yarn bombing, a rainbow bottle bird by Melanie Deegan and recycled art by Stogursey CofE Primary School in the main square. The team was rewarded with great media coverage including a segment on BBC Points West featuring the children and some of the artists.

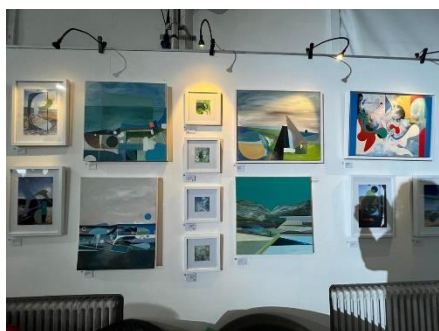
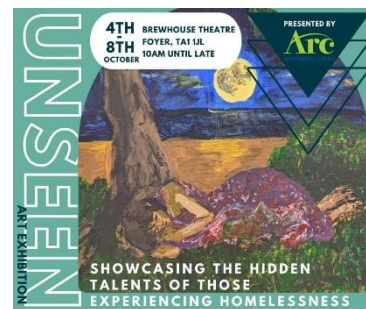


This year's **Somerset Art Weeks** were exceptionally strong. I particularly enjoyed: -

- Watching **Robert Blackborow from Washford** creating a piece for his exhibition on Minehead seafront.
- Naomi J Kendall and Lisa Takahashi's exhibition at **The Gallery - Arts Hub - Flook House** on Belvedere Road, Taunton. Stunning folded and woven paperworks by Naomi and colourful, expressive prints and paintings by Lisa complemented each other brilliantly.
- **Somerset Sight's** exhibition of prints made by visually impaired children and adults at workshops with Visually impaired artist Angela Charles and printmaker Gemma Trickey accompanied by a wonderful film by Hannah Earl of Somerset.
- Open studios at **East Quay, Watchet** where colourful cow sculptures could be found all around the centre – this also tied in with the Reveal and Conceal exhibition featuring giant cat sculptures, paintings of human-sized cats in water and watercolour and a fascinating parade of weird, part wonderful/part disturbing child/animal like creatures by Welsh artist Laura Ford.



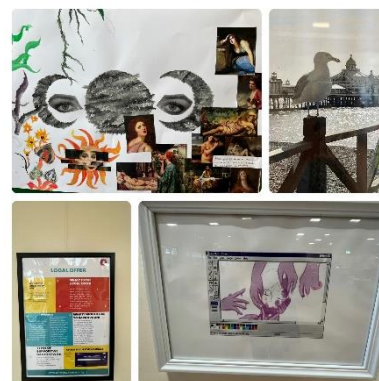
On 3 Oct I was delighted to attend **Arc's** (formerly Taunton Association for the Homeless) wonderful '**Unseen**' exhibition at Taunton Brewhouse with beautiful paintings, drawings, cross-stitch, and stories by Arc clients whose talents are hidden no more. There was great support for this event from Cllrs.



Local Artist **Keith Crocker, aka Circles Forever Artwork**, held a **solo show at CICCIC** in Sept/Oct – his fabulous abstract seascapes attracted a lot of interest and formed the perfect backdrop to CICCIC's key conference '**The Future of Arts and Culture in Somerset**'. Video with conference highlights

<https://www.facebook.com/ciccictaunton/videos/689621765685449>

**Somerset Leaving Care Service** presented an important exhibition at Somerset Libraries Taunton during **#CareLeaversweek**. Created and organised by **young care leavers**, it featured art, photography, poems on the theme of identity plus key info about Somerset's support for care leavers. They did a lovely presentation about how they put the expo together – a really inspirational group of young people.



## CARNIVALS, STREET FAIRS & FESTIVALS

Minehead Community Development Trust organised a brilliant **Minehead Bay Festival** in September with circus, street art from Aerosol Art and others, music - loads of stuff for kids (pop up skate ramps, busy arts tent by East Quay, Watchet- saw some awesome mini hobby horses emerging from it! - and forest school activities from Wild Wellies). Bravo to the organisers!!



It was fantastic to see the return of **Taunton Carnival** and **Wellington Carnival** post pandemic disruption– with great community support. I captured the whole Taunton carnival on my I phone.

This year's **Wivey Street Fair and Carnival Procession** was typically joyous and convivial and in keeping with other years as well as an array of great craft and food stalls and live music also featured a lovely art exhibition. Very exciting to hear that a new **10 Parishes Digital Creative Artist Gallery** launches 24th November to support and enhance the profile and marketing of work by local artists, grant aided by Somerset County Council.



## COMEDY

So many superb comedy shows on offer in SWT, so little time! I did manage to catch '**Marcel Lucont: Le Best of**' at **Tacchi Morris** in October – hilarious gallic condescension and funny songs are just an irresistible combo. Meanwhile Taunton Brewhouse and Taunton Comedy Club/CICCIC's offer goes from strength to strength.



## DANCE

**Coleridge Unbound** at Alfoxton Park which explored the history of Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge's life in the West Country, in particular his stance as an abolitionist, was quite something. State of Trust and partners created a mesmerising and powerful site-based performance based on dance, music, spoken word and film. It was also performed at the Unitarian Chapel in Taunton where Coleridge preached against the transatlantic slave trade.





## FILM

The inaugural **Wellington Film Festival** at the end of Sept was a huge success. Initiated by the Wellington Town Council Working Group and funded by Wellington Town Council and SWT it was delivered by talented locals working with Somerset Film. Well over 1,000 people came to 21 events over the three-day festival. Everyone got involved from local schools, students, Friends of Welly Park and Welly's awesome arts community. Highlights included a sell-out showing of *Odette* at Odette's Tearoom, Q and A with Director, Julian Temple at the Wellesley, a programme of classic children's films with animation workshops, outdoor projections, Sci-Fi Sunday in the park.

My highlights were seeing the utterly charming 1924 version of *Peter Pan* at Wellington Arts Association set to a beautiful live music score courtesy of world renowned harpist Elizabeth Jane Baldry and the heritage films screenings at St Johns Church exploring Welly history and culture, with footage of Fox Brothers Tonedale and Relyon, locals celebrating the 1936 Coronation, history of the Wellington Basins, a fab 'semi-legal' go-kart race from yesteryear, the story of how a community came together to support restoration of Wellington Monument and a look ahead at fabulous potential of Toneworks. Long live Welly Film Fest! Watch a wonderful film about the weekend here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feqWELDBrpk>

## MUSIC

In what seems like an ago now, I hugely enjoyed **Rag and Bone Man at Live in Somerset** in Vivary at the end of the summer. While it's great to have Vivary and the Cricket Ground for large concerts it is a reminder of the perennial need for a bigger indoor venue, given the huge demand for pop concerts.



Although I've missed a huge number of folk gigs (too many evening meetings!) it was great to experience live music laid on by **Taunton Brewhouse at the Coal Orchard opening** and get to know local folk bands, **Razzomo** and **3 Daft Monkeys**.

**Hullabaloo improv lunchtime Concert at CICCIC this month was great - featuring** word weaving

and sound smithery by Alice Maddicott and Tim Hill.

## PUBLIC ART

Friends of **Comeytrove Park** asked Jenny and Liz of Go Create Taunton to give the beautiful mural in the games area a face-lift in September. They did a grand job, even adding a very special Georgie canine in honour of the late Cllr Alan Wedderkopp who I think would have been delighted.





I was honoured to attend the unveiling of a unique sculpture in October in memory of **Watchet's** world famous web-footed harbour dweller. An homage to **Derek the Female Goose**, on the Esplanade, was the brainchild of Cllr Loretta Whetlor and Carron Scott and lovingly created by local artist Chris Phillingham (Creative Fusioz) Bravo to all involved for making this beautiful thing happen and congratulations on the world-wide media coverage!

With excitement building for the unveiling of



an exciting new public artwork for the town in the High Street by local chainsaw artist, **Matt Crabbe** early next year, me and Cllr Andy Sully and teams enjoyed a new exhibition put together by Matt at his workshop near Milverton showcasing his amazing creations along with several other local artists. That exhibition has now moved to a vacant unit at Coal Orchard and will open soon providing a big draw to the Independent Quarter.

I was delighted to be on the panel to select artists to deliver an amazing new **public art project for Cotford St Luke** (using S106 monies) last month. Cllr Matt Woodford of Cotford St Luke, Public Art Consultant Suzanne Heath, Chloe and me met some amazing teams but plumped for renowned duo Denman+Gould who, fresh from a site visit, had inspiring ideas. With their track record of award winning, beautifully crafted, site-specific art responding to unique locales and harnessing community creativity they are sure to deliver something amazing for the village.

Coming up imminently are interviews for the **Arts Taunton Castle Green Project** – again some amazing artists are on the shortlist for an ambitious new site-specific temporary (6 month) artwork that responds to the history of the town to delight residents and visitors alike.

### Museum of Somerset Exhibitions

The Museum of Somerset have had two amazing exhibitions over the past few months. **Myths and Monsters** (featuring amazing illustrations by top Children's book illustrators, two fabulous <sup>0001</sup> sculptures - The Boy Giant and Iron Man, and 'monsters in a jar' made by visitors) was awesome. As for **"In Fashion: How a changing world shaped what we wear"** which has just



opened well, wow! It is beautifully curated, with a fabulous array of original christening gowns and wedding dresses, dresses, suits, uniforms, and outfits from the 18th Century through to the late 20th century it's a fascinating and fun social and cultural history of clothes.

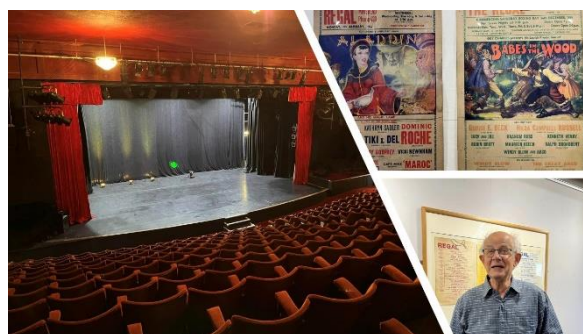
## New lease of life for Wyndham Hall

It is brilliant to see The Wyndham Hall by the Museum coming back into use thanks to **Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society** – they are busily restoring, have laid on open days and family events and I am especially excited about their independent cinema plan!



## THEATRE

I had a brilliant afternoon at **The Regal Theatre Open Day** in mid-October with behind-the-scenes tour and displays by the many wonderful companies who make up MATA. There was lots of interest from potential future volunteers eager to be part of this amazing place - the theatre's lifeblood as it is entirely volunteer lead and run. It was lovely to meet John Welch who bought the theatre back in the 70s and has been key benefactor. Alongside the fabulous Art Deco auditorium there is a brilliant cafe bar area and ground floor space with frontage to the Avenue - such a key asset for the town. I took the chance to pop into Minehead **Museum** - again massive potential for development there with so many amazing stories to tell, fingers crossed their dream of bigger premises comes to fruition in near future, they've done an amazing fundraising job so far.



## Taunton Brewhouse

Congratulations to **Vickie Hobbs** newly appointed as Executive Director of Taunton Brewhouse – formerly finance manager of the theatre, Vickie has an arts background, a real commitment to the theatre and heads up a strong team.

Taunton Brewhouse prides itself on showcasing the best touring work and contemporary performance. **Richard II** by Tangle Theatre company was an innovative take on the Shakespeare classic about the politics of power and succession— performed in South African Township style with an original score of Zimbabwean music. I found it moving and compelling. The Guardian reviewer was impressed too, especially by what she called a 'tremendous professional debut' by young actor Daniel Rock as Richard.



Quite apart from being hugely entertaining, **Taunton Thespians** latest production '**Pride and Prejudice**' which has just ended its run at Taunton Brewhouse, was notable for highlighting the talents of 9 young local actors. If ever there was an advert for the huge



of quality, committed amateur dramatics, quality performing arts education and a community theatre to showcase them in, well that was it!

**The Guardian** has billed the Brewhouse's Christmas show, awesome circus musical extravaganza, **The Little Prince, as one of the top 25 theatre shows to see in the UK this Christmas.** It will also be one of the most accessible shows with a relaxed performance, audio-described performance, BSL interpreted performance and a show with Ukrainian captions.

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/nov/09/the-best-25-stage-shows-to-see-this-christmas>

*And finally, congratulations to the **Wiveliscombe Literary Festival** (a first), **The Dulverton Exmoor Literary Festival** (another first!) and the more well-established **Taunton Literary Festival** for laying on such impressive programmes – am just sorry I haven't had time to enjoy them in person!*

# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Climate Change.

### Electric Vehicle Charge Point Update

SWT has approved grant funding for 4 more parish/town councils to the value of £5,850 to enable Electric Charge Point installation for community use.

SWT has been working with Sedgemoor District Council as part of our Climate Change Partnership on EVCP roll out in Sedgemoor. 4 x 22kw EVCPs have now gone live at the new Northgate development in Bridgwater.



SWT has been involved in the Somerset wide EV charging strategy. A report taken to SCC Environment Scrutiny on 26 October set out the challenges and opportunities in supporting the National EV infrastructure vision for 2030, exploring options to solve the issue of trailing cables to enable residents without access to off-road parking to be able to safely charge their EV.

### Self-driving vehicles visit Taunton

From 24 to 27 September, Taunton residents had the opportunity to experience cutting edge technology, riding in self-driving vehicles as part of an innovative study lead by the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles, a joint Department for Transport and Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy unit.

The self-driving pod and shuttle carried out a total of 140 trips over the two days, with a total of 447 passengers taking part. The shuttle which was based at Somerset County Cricket Club travelled an overall distance of 68.8km and the pod which was transporting passengers in Vivary Park travelled 48.5km overall.



## Extension of Taunton and Minehead E-scooter trial

Self-driving vehicle technologies could help to improve everyone's access to transport wherever they live, whatever their income level, and whether they have a disability that currently limits their ability to access transport services.

### Zipp Safety

⚡ Users must be over 16 years old & have a valid driver's licence

⚡ Do not use scooters under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

⚡ 1 person per scooter at a time.

⚡ Users must park in the designated bays.

⚡ Do not ride on pavements.

⚡ Wear a helmet.

⚡ Zipp

E-scooter trials in Minehead and Taunton are to be extended following public consultation and approval from the Department of Transport (DfT).

It was announced in June that participating Local Authorities could extend existing e-scooter trials until 31 May 2024, enabling the DfT to gather further evidence where gaps are identified and to build on the findings of the current evaluation.

SWT held a consultation to survey public opinion on safety preferences and potential future trial enhancements. The consultation was aimed towards the Minehead trial and was launched at the end of August for a period of one month.

364 responses were received in total, of which 252 (69%) of respondents were local to Minehead and 192 (53%) had experience using the trial's e-scooters. In response to opinions on the trial being extended, with the exception of two abstentions, 199 (55%) were either satisfied, more than satisfied or very satisfied, compared with 163 (45%) being partly satisfied or not satisfied.

Since launching in October 2020, Taunton's e-scooter trial has seen 121,750 rides by nearly 15,000 riders travelling over 228,500 miles, removing an estimated 31.4 tonnes of atmospheric carbon compared with fossil fuel powered vehicles. Minehead's trial has seen almost 30,000 rides by over 12,000 riders travelling over

43,000 miles, removing an equivalent 6 tonnes of carbon since launching in June 2021.

## Energy Efficient Grants for businesses

Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) and Sedgemoor District (SDC) councils have launched a new grant scheme to help small and micro businesses become greener as part of our commitment to reaching net zero emissions by 2030.

Carbon cutting grants worth up to £2,500 are available to businesses with up to nine employees to help fund energy reduction and net-zero transition projects.

The EDF fund for business support is to mitigate the impact on the local community from the development of two new nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point C. There are many ways in which businesses can reduce their carbon footprint, from reducing waste (by re-using and recycling) to limiting energy use at night and replacing fuel powered vehicles with electric cars and bikes.



Applications opened Wednesday, 16 November and will close 8 December.

### **Guidance and Support for home retrofit**

Householders wishing to make their homes more energy efficient can access information through the Somerset Retrofit Accelerator project, a joint initiative with the other Somerset councils and Somerset Independence Plus.

The Somerset Green Directory has been created to help householders find local businesses and services to help with eco retrofit projects. Using the Somerset Green Directory, you can search local businesses for your retrofit project including architects, construction companies, insulation, and renewable energy installers (there are currently over 90 listings). You can also learn about energy efficiency and low carbon retrofit through the Retrofit resources [Retrofit Resources - useful links to help your retrofit project \(retrofitsomerset.info\)](https://retrofitsomerset.info)

Find out what some Somerset homeowners have already done to retrofit their homes, along with other news, in the Retrofit Stories [Retrofit Stories - Retrofit Somerset](#)

For more information email Retrofit Somerset [website@retrofitsomerset.info](mailto:website@retrofitsomerset.info)

### **Carbon emissions baselining**

All Somerset Local Authorities are working together to produce a carbon emissions baseline for the new council. This project went out to tender and the contract has been awarded to CGI. Gathering accurate baseline data is crucial for mapping our progress on reducing carbon emissions.

### **SWT corporate carbon emissions for 2020/21**

The 20/21 Corporate Carbon Emissions Report for SWT is complete and will be published shortly.

### **Carbon Disclosure Project Feedback Report 2022**

SWT has been recognised as a leader in responding to the climate emergency by the not-for-profit charity CDP.



The Council achieved a score of A- (Leadership) for its 2022 disclosure, an improvement on last year's score of B (Management).

The disclosure identifies the ways in which SWT are working to mitigate and adapt to the projected impacts of climate change.

The score demonstrates that SWT has made progress towards its ambitious goals.

All councils in Somerset have been working collaboratively on climate related activities which is contributing to Somerset West and Taunton's recognition as a leader.

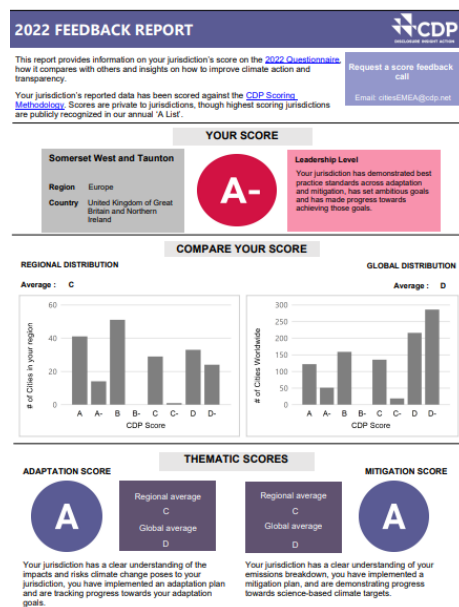
## Exmoor National Park/SWT partnership tree planting project

Assessments of potential sites for urban tree planting have been completed by the ENP tree officer. Short term and long-term opportunities have been identified; short term opportunity will offer the potential to plant this winter and/or the following years whilst long term opportunities need further thought and collaboration with partners.

SWT officers are now reviewing the winter schedule to include the short-term opportunities, working with ENP to ensure that right trees /right place ethos is implemented.

## Free tree giveaway to parish/town councils and community groups

27 parish/town councils or community groups will be collecting 581 trees (species include oak, beech, lime, hawthorn, silver birch, wild cherry, hazel, blackthorn and crab apple) from SWT Nursery to support National Tree Week.



## Employee Volunteering Scheme launched

All SWT staff can take an additional day's annual leave to carry out volunteering which will benefit Climate Change and the Environment in the County of Somerset. The scheme is optional and allows employees to choose a voluntary activity to support SWT to continue working towards making the Council and the area carbon neutral by 2030. This could include litter picks; tree planting and beach cleans.

## Climate Change Newsletter

Don't forget to subscribe to the SWT climate change newsletter, which is published monthly.

Subscribe here: [Climate change newsletter \(somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk\)](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk) where you will also find all previous editions available to download.

## Cllr Dixie Darch, Executive Member for Climate Change

# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Economic Development, Planning and Transportation.

### Planning

#### Taunton Garden Town – Governance arrangements

Proposals for a governance structure for the Garden Town were agreed by the Executive on 16 November 2022. The proposed structure seeks to ensure collaborative working and effective decision-making among public and private sector partners and stakeholders. Arrangements are now being put in place to hold the initial Delivery Board and Forum meetings early in the New Year.

#### Connecting our Garden Communities – active travel infrastructure for Taunton Garden Town

Consultation on the draft Connecting our Garden Communities plan took place from 29 July to 30 September 2022. Officers have since been reviewing these responses, and a final version of the plan (taking account of comments received) is due to be considered by Executive Committee in December 2022 and Full Council in February 2023, seeking approval as a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications. The plan is already influencing developer negotiations and funding bid preparation.

#### Mobility hubs – Taunton Garden Town

A brief has been issued to consider how the Council can support the development of mobility hubs at key locations to facilitate active and sustainable travel across the Garden Town. This will look at a network approach, typical components together with potential financial and delivery models. This complements work taking place on the Taunton bus station site and is intended to consider opportunities on a range of sites including the allocated Park and Ride sites at strategic sites in Taunton Garden Town.

#### Taunton Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan and future stewardship arrangements

Arup were commissioned in October 2021 to support the production of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan for Taunton Garden Town and the final report has recently been received. Work on taking forward stewardship proposals (a key principle to realise the Council's vision for the Garden Town) is also in the final stages following consultation with stakeholders. Stewardship options are currently being refined and will take into account the recent Taunton Community Governance Review decisions over the establishment of Taunton Town Council.

#### Neighbourhood Planning

On 25 October SWT Made the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine (WM&CF) Revised Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan now it is Made forms part of the statutory development plan and will be used in the determination of planning applications in the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Area.

We have five other parishes undertaking Neighbourhood Plans.

#### Wellington Station

The promoters, Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and Mid Devon District Council (MDDC), continue to work with Network Rail, GWR and other stakeholders through the Working Group, Steering Group and Senior Stakeholder Forum.

The current programme for delivery of the station sets out the Final Business Case to be complete by December 2023 and the station up and running by May 2025. Recent work commissioned by Network Rail has confirmed the precise location of the station at Longforth Farm.

## **Wellington Place Plan**

Somerset West and Taunton Council has commissioned consultants to prepare a Place Plan (including an SA/SEA Scoping Report) for Wellington, encompassing a Vision, Spatial Framework and Infrastructure and Implementation Plan. The Place Plan will inform decisions about the development, regeneration and conservation of the town and be a long-term strategy for the future of Wellington that will inform the future Somerset-wide Local Plan.

Consultants have now completed the Baseline Review of existing and emerging planning policy; and undertaken a visioning exercise and consultation with the community in Wellington including the Town Council. These will inform the draft Wellington Place Plan – a report is due to go to December Executive with a recommendation to agree to go out to public consultation in January/February 2023.

Following the consultation and any necessary revisions, the Place Plan is scheduled to go to Full Council in March 2023, for adoption as a material planning consideration. Once adopted, the document will be given weight in the determination of planning applications and considering regeneration activities to ensure we are creating a quality place in Wellington.

## **Firepool**

The Draft Firepool Masterplan was approved for public consultation by Executive Committee on 16 November 2022. Consultation was launched on 21 November and runs until 2 January 2023. More information can be found as part of the consultation hub at <https://firepool.commonplace.is/>.

Following the consultation period, comments will be reviewed and amendments made as considered necessary taking account of views received and work on outstanding identified issues. A final Masterplan is currently expected to be presented to Full Council in March 2023 seeking adoption as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Planning permission was granted for the “Southern Boulevard” (application 38/22/0176) via Planning Committee on 10 November 2022.

## **Transportation**

### **A358 Taunton to Southfields dualling scheme National Highways Consultation**

National Highways are working towards submitting their application for a Development Consent Order to the Secretary of State early in December (aiming for 5th). Given the procedures and protocol that come with this process, it means that if the Secretary of State decides to hold a Public Inquiry, it would likely commence late March / beginning of April (This is an estimation). This means that the Inquiry would most likely straddle the period when our Council merges into the new Unitary Authority. As a result, officers of the three affected authorities are working together to provide joint responses on all relevant matters and issues.

National Highways held a public meeting on 19 October 2022 (Community Forum meeting) at Taunton Rugby Club and all affected Parish Councils, interest groups and Members of the public where invited. It was a useful forum to update those present on progress and procedures and to hear concerns and queries from those with an interest in this project.

Council officers together with colleagues at Somerset County Council and South Somerset District Council are continuing to negotiate with National Highways and are involved in various workstreams. The next important milestone in the project will be the joint production of a ‘Statement of Common Ground’ between all of the affected Councils (Somerset County Council and South Somerset District Council). The three local authorities are currently working on this collaboratively.

## **Development Management Update**

### **Performance**

Workloads remain high due to the volume of applications, pre-application enquiries and managing the applications held in abeyance due to the advice from Natural England and the need to provide phosphate mitigation. There are ongoing vacancies and absences due to personal circumstances, resignations and some long term sickness and reduced hours across the team. Performance is also affected by delays in receiving responses from consultees in particular from the Somerset Ecology Service despite a new service level agreement, the Lead Local Flood Authority and highways. This is having an impact on performance.

### **Recruitment**

The service has a number of agency staff covering posts in development management as a result of a poor response to national advertisements for planning officer posts. This reflects the national shortage and is no doubt also affected by uncertainty of positions in the new unitary authority. The recently appointed Conservation Officer resigned to go back to her previous authority, this post has however been advertised and filled without a gap. SMT recently approved the request for an additional resource for enforcement to address the backlog and an enforcement officer will start on 28 November 2022 on a temporary contract until the end of March 2023. An additional resource has also been agreed to support the determination of applications held in abeyance due to the need for phosphate mitigation now that the Council's interim strategy has been signed off by Natural England and an officer started on 10 November 2022.

### **Major and Special Projects**

#### **Future High Street Fund (FHSF) cycling and walking schemes**

The cycling, walking and wheeling schemes are progressing well. The bridge planning application has now been submitted. The two crossings – a cycle and pedestrian-priority crossing at St James St on National Cycle Network Route 3 and a new Toucan crossing over Upper High St – are with SCC for technical review and are scheduled to be delivered in summer 2023.

The Crescent Car Park's cycle parking 'hub' is also progressing well with delivery scheduled for March 2023. Work will soon commence on additional cycling hubs in the town centre, with the former St James Bike Park the most likely next location. The hubs will provide Taunton's first such facilities, providing sheltered cycle parking with public cycle repair stands and tyre pumps. The pace of delivery remains a key consideration, with all FHSF spend required by March 2024 but the programme is progressing to schedule.

Consultation with SCC, RNIB and local cycling groups has been undertaken with further consultation to take place in the coming months.

#### **Feasibility work - Cycling schemes**

SWT are continuing to work towards feasibility studies with local cycling groups and other stakeholders on cycling infrastructure projects in the District.

- Wellington to Taunton

SCC and SWT have secured £50,000 from the Public Health active travel funding to extend the work to assess feasibility of providing an active travel route between Wellington and Taunton. Previous work was halted due to results showing a costly, highly complex and constrained conditions with 'low' or 'poor' benefit to cost. This next phase of work will consider how to provide the best value sustainable transport asset that will address the problem.

## **Heritage at Risk**

### **Tonedale Mill**

Discussions continue with the owners regarding the urgent works and the long-term plans for the site. Officers continue to work with the owners to try and secure the other buildings throughout the site. SWT are also recovering funds for works carried out in default in a S54 Urgent works Notice when the owners failed to complete the protective works to the listed buildings.

### **Toneworks**

Phase 2 targeted repairs using grant funding from Historic England, is due for completion in November 2022. A decision for Phase 3 works (funded by HE again) is awaited.

### **Sandhill Park**

SWT continues to work with the new owners of Sandhill Park towards the necessary urgent works and long-term plans for the building's future. Emergency works have been deemed to have started by the owner and the Emergency works package is underway.

## **Regen Programme**

### **Coal Orchard**

On 5 November 2022, SWT officially opened the last element of public realm at the Coal Orchard, with the Mayor, Leader of SWT and Rebecca Pow MP in attendance to celebrate this significant milestone. The event was very well attended, and feedback has been very positive on the high quality public realm that surrounds the mixed use units.

SWT have appointed a new commercial agent who will be following up on a significant list of interested parties, in addition to the four units that are under offer.

Completion of sales on the apartments has begun, with the majority of apartments now occupied. Due to the extreme weather conditions leading up to the launch date it wasn't possible to complete a small amount of surfacing, including the car club parking bays. It is anticipated that this will be completed very shortly with the car club operating before Christmas 2022

### **Bus Station**

A plan is emerging that will see the bus station site developed in phases. The first priority will be to put in place the Changing Places facility by Spring '23. The procurement process to engage a contractor for this work will begin by end of November, in Building 2 (the admin block to the west of the site). In parallel, designs are being developed ready for consultation and planning for re-developing Building 1 and the rest of the site, to deliver on the SCC led Bus Service Improvement Plan for a new transport hub in the Town Centre.

### **Firepool**

### **GWR building / cycle path**

The GWR Building continues to be used as a site office by the Innovation Centre contractor Wilmott Dixon. The temporary cycle path has now closed due to overlapping construction works, and will remain closed until it can be safely opened again, likely to be 2023.

## **Digital Innovation Centre**

SWT are continuing to work in collaboration with SCC on delivery of a 2400m<sup>2</sup> Digital Innovation centre on the Firepool site, with construction activity now in progress. Civil and decontamination works started in October 2021, with a delivery programme of circa 18 months.

### **Infrastructure, Utilities and Flood work**

Infrastructure work commenced on 7 November 2022, with a build programme of approximately 6 months.

Phase 1 of flood defence design work at Firepool Lock has been completed, in collaboration with the Environment Agency and Canals and Rivers Trust. Responses from the public consultation in late summer have been fed into the next stage of the design process, along with further discussions with stakeholders.

### **Block 3 (north of Canal Road)**

Planning permission has also been granted for the block north of Canal Road. Delivery of this element of the site will be coordinated with the works to the Innovation Centre opposite to ensure the two projects do not conflict or compete for space or access.

### **Boulevard & Public Realm**

Planning permission was granted for the Southern Boulevard (including amphitheatre) in November 2022. It is expected that Block 3 and the boulevard will be brought together as a single construction programme to commence after the infrastructure, Innovation Centre and access works have completed Spring 23.

### **Heat Network Mapping, Masterplanning and Early Feasibility**

In December 2020 the Council applied to the Government's Heat Network Delivery Unit for funding towards a mapping, masterplanning and early feasibility study to consider potential for heat network development in Taunton. In June 2021, the Council received confirmation that it had been successful in its bid. Since June 2022, the Council has been working with consultants Sustainable Energy Ltd to undertake this project looking into potential heat networks. The project looks at energy demands, heat supply opportunities, energy centre locations, and initial techno-economic feasibility. The project has involved close co-operation between officers from the major projects team and planning policy and engagement with the County Council and other potential stakeholders in order to understand constraints and opportunities. Emerging work has resulted in the Draft Firepool Masterplan identifying potential for an energy centre within the site. The consultant's report is due in the next few months at which point the findings will be reported to Members alongside any appropriate recommendations.

### **Heritage Assets**

#### **Wellington Green Space & Fox's Field**

The purchase of the Green Space in Wellington was approved at Full Council in July 2022 and is currently awaiting the S24 decision to proceed. It is intended to hand the site over (alongside Fox's Field) to Wellington Town Council for long-term lease and management working closely with the community.

### **Economic Development**

This report provides a summary of the achievements of the Economic Development function over the last 12 months and plans for the remainder of the term until vesting day of the New Somerset Council.

The achievements contribute toward the delivery of the Councils Corporate Priorities and [SWT Economic Development Strategy 2021 – 2024](#)

### **Future readiness: Strategies and Plans**

- **Development of Somerset and Somerset West and Taunton Covid Recovery & Growth Plans**
- **Facilitation of the Minehead Plan – Inspiring People and Place** – a refreshed strategy for the economic development priorities for Minehead and its community
- **Secured SWT priorities in the Somerset Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan** – the development of key objectives and intended areas of intervention around people, place and prosperity in response to a government call for a prospectus to support £7.2m of funding over the next three years
- **Developed new SWT Cultural Strategy** - supporting the development of the cultural sector and cultural themes founded on knowledge, culture, and business; A Somerset cultural strategy is now in development.
- **Input into Somerset Futures Scenarios strategy** – identifying issues and opportunities to develop a range of scenarios to inform future economic development strategic thinking and ability to focus effort in light of changing environment and societal circumstances
- **Development of the business and economy chapter of the Garden Town Prospectus**

### **Future readiness: Innovation**

- **Commissioned review of Innovation models suitable for SWT.** – a review of innovation assets, institutions, and business sectors to underpin the development of a knowledge economy for SWT as an innovation district
- **Commissioned Connected Places Catapult Phase 1 review and report** – validated the approach to establishing an innovation district in SWT, setting out the principles by which it needs to operate, governance model and a detailed short-term term action plan.
- **Launch and delivery of the first Somerset Innovation Conference** – to identify future markets, funding, network, and collaboration opportunities for businesses to support the development of an innovation ecosystem across Somerset
- **Co-developed £11m Digital Innovation Centre** – led on stakeholder and business input into the development of the business case for a Digital Innovation Centre in Taunton and co-commissioning of a service provider.

### **Inward Investment**

- **Development of new Inward Investment brand for Somerset West and Taunton** (potential to transfer to new Somerset Council)
- **Launch of new inward investment website and national marketing campaign** - promotes SWT as a business 'growth hotspot', targeting growth sectors.
- **Delivery of Switch marketing communications plan & ambassador group launch** - to develop sector propositions and delivery with stakeholder activity to market SWT as a place to invest.
- **Co-design of business rates funded LEP/Somerset inward investment programme**
- **Employment Land study** - secured the completion of a feasibility study for the use of Council owned potential employment sites in West Somerset

### **Town Centre Regeneration**



- **Delivered £950k Town Centre Covid Recovery Support Package** - to fund events, public realm improvements, marketing, and attractions to draw shoppers and visitors back to the High Streets across the District & appointment of a Taunton town centre manager
- **Supported Inward Investment and growth propositions into empty shop units in Taunton** – now below national vacant unit rate (Minehead also below national rates).
- **Delivered package of Covid Town Centre safety measures** - public realm initiatives, signage, road closures and business advice packages to ensure businesses were able to comply with social distancing and Covid safety measures and consumers were able to shop safely.
- **Delivery of Taunton Town Centre Event programmes** - to increase footfall, including Jubilee Party in the Park and Goodland's Gardens Rainbow Path
- **Established Town centre and High Streets action groups** - significantly improved engagement and communication with the businesses, town and parish councils and key organisations across the District including business focussed webinars and workshops

### **Business and Employment Retention**

- **Awarded £7m Covid Discretionary Fund Grants** - to support business retention of key employers and SMEs.
- **Established Response to Redundancy and Employee Retention Task Force** - gained partnership input into an emergency support package for businesses at risk of redundancy and support for employees.
- **Creation of a guide for employers to recruit and retain staff** – to assist with labour shortages in key sectors.

### **Sector Growth and Development: Tourism**

- **Established Service Level Agreements with Destination Management organisations** – Securing funding for Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor to deliver visitor economy services.
- **Undertook South West Tourism Research project and Somerset Visitor Survey** – on behalf of Hinkley Point Tourism Partnership.
- **Secured Tourism Innovation Grants for 14 projects in Somerset West and Taunton**
- **Developed and promoted new tourism offers, packages and itineraries for the Coastal Strip**
- **Developed and delivered the BOOST tourism toolkit** – including six business support modules, supporting 150 Tourism businesses.
- **Co-ordinated West Coast 360 programme** – supporting excellence in the hospitality, leisure and tourism sectors in West Somerset and events to inspire people to work in the sector
- **Delivery and oversight of Enterprising Minehead Projects** – including public realm improvements on the esplanade, art installations and play equipment

### **Sector Growth and Development: Food & Drink Sector**

- **Commissioned an audit of the Food, Drink and Agriculture supply chain and developed a local supply chain portal** - Successful events held to outline opportunities and resources available to the sector.

### **Skills and Employment**

- **Established and delivered Community Employment Hubs across the District** – secured funding to extend for a further 12 months. Established Volunteer Recruitment

and Management policies for SWT and recruited 20+ volunteers to support hubs. Established a hub at the Ukrainian Guest Support hub in Taunton.

- **Funded and facilitated the reopening of the vocation centre at West Somerset College** -Working with the West Somerset Opportunity Area to provide new adult learning opportunities while providing a pipeline of skilled labour for Hinkley Point C and delivered a package of IT training for parents of school-aged children.
- **Delivered an action plan to respond to labour shortages** - as a result of the EU transition and Covid 19 in specific sectors including a programme of Virtual careers fairs, meet the employer virtual events and traditional careers fairs
- **Implementation of HPC Drop In's** to support HPC recruitment. Held virtually and face-to-face jointly with Sedgemoor District Council

### **Improve use of Business and Town Centre Data**

- Commissioned Business Data and Town Centre data platforms
- Created Town centre footfall and events dashboards

### **Planned activity to vesting day of the new Somerset Council**

- **Launch a Visitor Economy and Food and Drink Sector Capacity Building/Green Grant Programme** - in autumn/winter 2022
- **Deliver Visitor Economy SMEs drop-in seminars** – Winter 2022
- **Commission a 'Deep Dive' review of SWT businesses** – to identify unique innovation offers with the aim to market these nationally.
- **Develop and implement a Social Value & Local Labour Agreement policy-** as part of a planning approach to secure local skills and employment offers in approved developments
- **Continued delivery of the Community Employment Hub model.**

### **External Operations & Assets**

#### **General**

Much of the Team's time in this period has been spent in support of LGR Workstreams, especially Property Assets Optimisation, and work to facilitate the transfer of assets to the new Taunton Town Council. There is ongoing audit of data and population of the new Technology Forge property assets database which will go live in stages over the next period. We also gave continued support to projects such as Coal Orchard and Tone Works (headed by Major Projects and Heritage) and Wellington Sports Centre decarbonisation led by Leisure and Climate Change.

In addition, active tenant management has seen completion of 16 minor leases, 7 rent reviews and 2 lease assignments.

#### **Significant Corporate Works**

Watchet Lighthouse – repainting completed.

Stogursey Church Wall – rebuild project on track to complete before Christmas.

Taunton Crematorium – electrical safety works underway and programmed to allow continued service delivery.

Taunton Green Pavilion – refurbishment works commenced.

Vivary Park Bandstand – underpinning works commenced.

Market House – power supply upgrading ordered to comply with modern standards

### **Tower Street Vaccination Centre (former bus station), Taunton: new lease to NHS**

A new lease to the NHS for the Tower Street centre should complete by the end of November 2022 and this will allow the vaccination centre to continue during the season of peak demand for Covid and Flu vaccines. The lease has mutual break clauses to allow flexibility for both parties.

### **West Somerset Railway, Bishops Lydeard: Disposal of Car Park and Toilets**

This should complete by the end of November 2022, having been delayed by solicitor's holiday.

Receipt of £50,000

### **Unit 3 Blackdown Business Park, Wellington: Sale to occupying tenant**

Delayed awaiting s24 Approval to complete sale at £230,000.

### **Blenheim Gardens Café, Minehead: refurbishment and new lease**

Planning consent for the wider scheme withdrawn by tenant on planning advice and minor refurbishment proceeding for Spring 2023 opening. Acceptable EPC received and lodged.

### **Parks Walk (closed) PCs, Minehead: Lease Interest**

Following receipt of an expression of interest to open a café in the long closed toilets on the junction of Parks Walk and Woodcombe Walk, the opportunity was advertised to see if anybody else was interested. No further applicants emerged and negotiations are underway with the original applicant for a lease following his undertaking extensive refurbishment works.

### **Former Mount Street Nursery: lease of part and management of remainder**

The proposed car park extension for the Taunton Deane Cricket Club is being discussed with the planning team, following which we will agree a new lease to include the additional area. Avon & Somerset Police is assisting in management of the ASB issues on the remainder of the site until its future as an ecological green space is determined.

### **Car Parks**

The new machines which were installed within the West Somerset area of the district have been a success. The information which can be viewed via the back-office reporting function has allowed for future decisions to be made which are based on factual data.

Cashless payments have increased from 51% in September 2021 to 61% in September 2022. This increase has been supported by the cashless payment options which are available on the new machines which were installed in April 2022. Due to the increase in cashless payments a review of the cash collection frequencies is being implemented to reduce costs.

Crescent Car Park Improvement project has now completed the tender for the works and evaluation. The works are due to start in early January. The works will be delivered in two phases to reduce disruption. Once complete a total of 19 new EV charges will be installed and the car park will include the introduction of new trees, a cycle shelter and clear pedestrian walkways.



# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Housing.

### Housing Development and Regeneration Team Housing Development and Regeneration Team

#### HRA New Homes, Housing Strategy and Housing Enabling

- SWT are close to entering North Taunton Woolaway Project (NTWP) Phase B and Ci contract which will see 51 new homes in addition to an increased number of 49 homes being built for phase A. Some phase A dwellings will shortly be ready for handovers and these homes 2050 Zero carbon ready. Visits to the properties are being arranged for members of our Tenant consultation groups, staff and elected members as well as funders. Visitors will see both the quality and size of homes but also the low carbon and ecological credentials of the homes. The development is incorporating many features such as bird and bat boxes, bee bricks and hedgehog highways.
- Piling at Seaward Way, Minehead Homes has finished, and brick work will become visible above ground over the next few weeks. The brick work is using large porotherm blocks which will allow a speedy build to first floor level. The porotherm bricks are a honeycomb construction often used in very low carbon passivhaus construction. The 54 units provide a variety of property types and will be zero carbon.
- Four applications will remain in the planning pipeline until agreed phosphate mitigation approaches are confirmed.
- Unfortunately, inflation and market conditions continue to create challenges for building and retrofitting homes. We recognise that the increased cost of building homes is no longer a risk but a reality and the HRA is addressing these challenges as it reviews its 30 year business plan.
- The service is progressing at pace a low carbon retrofit Strategy and Delivery plan. Members will consider the strategy and delivery plan in December. The Strategy seeks to place tenants at the heart of zero carbon retrofit and this has commenced with tenants influencing the strategy.
- SWT has been awarded SHDF (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund) Wave 1 funds and has made a substantial bid for Wave 2 funds. In addition, a significant Energy company obligation fund has been reserved by a large energy provider for a neighbourhood based ECO4 programme with the contract being finalised.
- The procurement of a contractor to deliver refurbishment to 37 Zero Carbon retrofit Council woolaway homes at NTWP phase E and Oake has been amended and advertised for the second time following insufficient market interest.
- Our Enabling Development team works with housing partners and our own development teams and through this we see an increasing challenge in meeting affordable housing need in the district and specialist accommodation. These challenges are significant to the impact of phosphates, the volatility in the market and although the district has experienced significant house price

inflation these matters ultimately have an impact on scheme viability making them unable to support affordable housing provision.

- Despite the volatility of the housing market in the district has seen a higher-than-average number of properties completed this financial year. The pipeline of new units is currently at its strongest in the west of the district, which is unaffected by the phosphate mitigation planning requirements.
- The Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy and delivery plan was approved by Full Council in October and Officers are supporting the delivery of new homeless bedspaces through several partners and direct council supply. The council has been awarded £750k through the government Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme to accelerate the new provision round three including the purchase of 6 homes for Home First, which is aimed at providing independent living for complex Rough Sleepers.
- The service continues to deliver the Hinkley Point C Housing Programme, working with partners to drive forward 11 key areas of work. This programme is providing new bed spaces in the district and support to vulnerable customers affected by the change in the housing market because of the uplift of workforce at HPC. The service has received circa £440k to start new projects and extend the delivery of some existing projects up to December 2023.

## **Housing Property Team**

### **Responsive Repairs and Void Repairs**

- Emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs are being undertaken.
- All emergency jobs are being delivered within our defined timescale (24 hours from logging).
- The responsive repair requests are now being taken by a cohort of specialist repair call-handlers. This has led to a significant improvement in performance (less abandoned calls, faster answering, and more accurate detailed work orders being raised).
- We have developed a detailed Repairs Action Plan (RAP) which includes a wide range of activities being progressed to further improve the customer journey and drive-in value for money. This plan includes improvements to ICT systems (e.g. job diagnosis and appointments, trades scheduling, contractor portal), review of available reporting functionality, review and implementation of an updated Disrepair Policy and monitoring system, review of imprest van stock, review of our COSHH Register and associated Risk Assessments, review of fleet requirements (including move to EV's), and continuing to develop our approach to damp and mould (working with tenants on a specific group to address the issue).
- Performance on completing void repairs to meet our Lettable Standard continues to improve, with targets being met for both minor and major voids. We are, however, continuing to require external contractor support to maintain this position.
- We have undertaken a stocktake and are reviewing our stores stock utilising a new module within our Open Contractor IT software.
- We have successfully recruited an experienced interim Maintenance Manager to lead the team.

- We are progressing with a review of our materials supply chain processes, including procurement of a framework consortium (Procurement for Housing) to partner within development of an option appraisal process.

### **Property Safety Compliance**

- All property safety compliance checks and works continue to be undertaken. These include gas safety checks (LGSR's), water risk assessments and remedial works, electrical
- inspections (EICR's), asbestos surveys and re-inspections, fire risk assessment and remedial works, fire safety checks, and lift and stair-lift checks and remedial works.
- Following a procurement exercise, a new contract has been mobilised to undertake outstanding electrical inspections (EICR's) and associated remedial works. Some additional contractor resource has been maintained, however, to facilitate prompt completion of this activity.
- Weekly compliance meetings, together with additional EICR review meetings, are being held to carefully monitor and manage all of these safety critical areas.

### **Capital Programmes**

- Progress on several capital work programmes continues on-site; including kitchen and bathroom replacements, fire safety works (replacement fire doors, fire safety flooring and emergency lighting), roofing, replacement gutters and fascias, and door entry systems. It should be noted, however, that available contractor resource remains a challenge and accordingly some programmes may not be completed by the end of this financial year.
- Procurement activities also continue, including review of required capital programme works needed to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS), as well as our Retrofit aspiration.

### **Asset Management**

- The service has identified pathways to Zero Carbon for 12 of the Council's 14 main archetypes. The service is working to integrate low carbon retrofit investment with the decent homes and capital investment programme
- New energy surveys are complementing programmes of EPC, Stock Condition and validation surveys. This data will continue to enrich the services knowledge of its stock.
- Post 'go-live' work on the Open Assets module of our Capita software system is now underway, following the Open Housing implementation.
- The service is working with colleagues to refine the start to finish capital investment process from business planning through to delivery to updating data following investment. This work has particular focus on the tenant's journey.

## **Housing and Communities Team**

### **Supported Housing (extra care and sheltered)**

- The officer team has 1 p/t staff member off sick who is planning to return 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022, so normal service has returned to tenants.
- In addition to their usual duties, staff have been completing fire safety risk assessments on tenants who may struggle to safely evacuate themselves, if there was a fire. This is mainly tenants on upper floors. In cases where this would be a risk and no suitable remedies can be put in place, tenants are being offered a move. Where requested (and possible, depending on voids) we are trying to keep tenants within the same scheme, to enable them to continue to have close access to the people and services they know and rely on.
- Our 3-month temporary member of staff has completed his contract and reduced overdue reviews to a more manageable amount. Team members are being tasked on catching up with the remaining overdue reviews but needing to balance these with the additional fire safety work (as above).
- The team continue to complete the bi-monthly estates and block checks and have been identifying suitable locations for bin storage on several schemes, with compliance and assets colleagues, in line with Fire Risk Assessments. We have also been in contact with the Hydrographic Office re: their trees being cut back where they are bordering our schemes and been assured this will be completed by Christmas.
- Budget restrictions have limited our ability to replace new furniture at Heathfield meeting hall. We have therefore re-distributed and recycled unwanted tables and chairs from other sites, to make the halls as welcoming and tidy as possible.
- We continue to manage several complex situations with tenants who have substance dependency and self-neglect and hoard. Challenges faced by Adult Social Care in recruiting sufficient capacity has meant a significant waiting list for assessment and support, leading to greater pressure on Housing in trying to manage these complex cases.
- Covid and its impact on supply chains and workforce has resulted in delays for tenants referred to Somerset Independence Project works to get adaptations works assessed and delivered. We have been working alongside colleagues in our Capital Works team to find alternative solutions for tenants where appropriate, such as offering a very low-level step-in shower, as this is easier and lower cost to fit than installing a walk-in shower.
- Plans are in place to begin practice fire drills within our extra care schemes. As many of these tenants are quite unwell and a number have additional needs, we are working with the compliance team and on-site Carers to enable this to happen with as little disruption as possible.
- Our Supported Housing Manager attended the recent Tenant Action Group meeting. She (or a colleague) can be available for future meetings where the agenda requires this.



## Lettings

- Team working well with Open Housing system;
- Staff are settled in their roles.
- 3 tenants from Wordsworth Drive have successful bid on SWT properties advertised through HFS. They will therefore decant from Wordsworth in the coming weeks.
- Home Moves Plus project is ahead of target.
- Local Lettings plan being written for North Taunton regeneration project and Seaward Way.
- Lettings policy in progress additional work required on the above two items.

## Income

- The recruitment process is currently underway for a Rent Recovery Case Manager. Following an earlier round of recruitment, the appointed officer has now started her employment and is settling into the role well.
- We are currently in the process of organising our Christmas Rent campaign. We will once again use text messages for this as we have had positive results to this in the past. The 1<sup>st</sup> text will be sent on 23<sup>rd</sup> November and the 2<sup>nd</sup> will be sent on 19<sup>th</sup> December.
- The Debt and Benefit case managers continue to work with tenants to ensure they are claiming the correct benefits. They are also working hard to apply for grant funding wherever possible to help tenants with arrears and any other debts. The team are also reviewing DHP's which are coming to an end for some tenants to see if they would be eligible for any further award

## Tenancy/Estates & ASB

- The Estate Team are now going through a period of change – we recently lost 2 of our long-term temporary staff and now attempting to recruit new staff to these positions. This has a major impact on the team due to patch areas not being covered and time involved in the induction and training of new staff. We are expecting the first new Case Manager to be in post by week ending 4 November 2022.
- The introduction of Open Housing has highlighted that the team deal with a higher volume of enquiries coming in than other departments by a considerable amount. The team must balance this work with being out on the estates.
- Complaints have remained low in both service areas.
- The team are also noticing that the number of complex mental health cases are on the rise. The knock-on effect with a drop-in vital mental health service is starting to influence the workload as tenants are turning to us for additional support,
- We are noticing that the number of low-level neighbour nuisance is still increasing but we will continue to monitor the impact of this on the team.
- ASB team have recently had success by obtaining a Suspended Possession Order. The tenant has complex needs but has agreed to the Suspended Possession Order without going through a full trial hearing; we thought that

this was a positive step as his neighbours didn't have to give evidence against him and endure a full trial.

- We are waiting to enter Court to end an introductory Tenancy for anti-social behaviour. The delay has been down to SHPAE (our legal service) having to source out this case to another solicitor.
- We have seen an increase in the number of Notices of Seeking Possessions we are serving for anti-social behaviour. We have found that this does have a positive impact on most cases and tenants will amend their behaviour rather than risk losing their home.

## **Housing Options**

- The Housing Options service remains busy with an average of 120 approaches from customers who need housing advice or at risk of losing their accommodation each month. The main cause of homelessness in the district remains family evictions.
- The team's renewed focus on early intervention and prevention continues with 56% of prevention cases having been closed successfully between April and October 2022. This is against a backdrop of increased service pressures caused by the current cost of living crisis.
- The main cause of homelessness remains eviction by family; it is anticipated that this will continue to increase as families struggle with the costs of accommodating extended families
- There has been a high turnover of staff in recent months which is partly attributed to uncertainty surrounding LGR and also to a renewed focus on performance management. Long standing vacancies are proving difficult to fill; this is reflected across the other districts and not specific to SWT.

## **Temporary accommodation**

- The recent focus on improving pathways into and out of temporary accommodation continues.
- Staff resource in this team has been increased by repurposing a vacant post from the wider structure. This has provided the capacity to provide an enhanced service to those households in temporary accommodation including regular property and welfare checks as well as building relationships with accommodation providers.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation has reduced by circa 25% since April 2022, this is due to the continual focus on improving performance and ensuring a through flow of customers in temporary accommodation.
- The biggest challenge in this area of the service moving forwards will be the availability and cost of accommodation over the festive period. Increased numbers of placements are currently having to be made out of district due to accommodation providers capping the number of placements they will accept from the Council.

## **Rough Sleeping Initiative**

- At the end of October 2022 there were 26 customers engaged with the *Rough Sleeping Pathway*. Of these, 9 customers were in *Stage 1* (initial intervention and assessment), 10 customers are in *Stage 2* (intensive support) and 7 customers are in *Stage 3* (community-based living with floating support).
- Three customers with a history of entrenched rough sleeping and complex needs are now living in their *Housing First* homes and are successfully sustaining their tenancies. These are the first *Housing First* properties delivered by the Council as part of the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funding. Three further properties have been identified in order to meet the commitment of six properties from within the Council's own stock.
- All vacant posts in the RSI team have now been recruited to. Recruitment to these posts was delayed as a result of late funding confirmation by DLUHC
- The Canonsgrove decant continues to progress well with 11 residents remaining, two of which are due to move on before the end of November. Move on plans for the remaining 9 residents are currently being finalised with the expectation that the decant will be completed ahead of the March 2023 deadline.

## **Homefinder Somerset**

- Work continues to enhance and streamline the processes in place for receiving and assessing Homefinder applications with a focus on ensuring that customers are aware of the supporting documentation required and can upload this directly to their application.
- The impact of this work has been positive with 140 applications having been made live in October 2022, an increase of 122%
- On average, 300 new households apply to join Homefinder Somerset in the Somerset West and Taunton area each month. This is anticipated to continue to rise as a result of the current cost of living crisis and a lack of affordable properties in the Private Rented Sector (less than 5% are available at Local Housing Allowance rates or below).
- The team continue to support customers to bid on appropriate properties, this work continues to provide positive outcomes and is closely linked to ensuring that customers move on efficiently from temporary accommodation.

## **Somerset Independence Plus (SIP)**

- Since the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, the Adaptations element of the service has received 361 requests for service, mainly Disabled Facilities Grants, preliminary Means Tests and requests for feasibilities. There are 90 cases waiting on the waiting list for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), down 100 cases since the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 when South Somerset District Council began purchasing the service from Somerset Independence Plus. This is as a result of the Technical Team who have been working extremely hard on the cases allocated to them. Our estimate of the waiting list reported in August was 100 by October 2022 so overall progress has been good in reducing the list.

- 45 cases have either been allocated or completed in the SW&T area since the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.
- In all the team have completed 62 cases across Somerset since the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and are working on 135 cases.
- 12 have been approved and not yet completed in the SW&T area and 58 across Somerset approved and not yet completed.
- All clients on the waiting list have been sent a letter informing them that we have received the referrals from their Occupational Therapist and an approximate date when they will receive a call from the Technical Team to visit them and begin the application process. Of the 36 cases waiting to be allocated, 56% of the cases date from July. The oldest case on the list is March 2022.
- The Independent Living Team have completed 900 home safety checks in response to requests from Public Health for the Ukrainian Resettlement programme. SIP have recruited two additional Independent Living Officers as a result of recently received funding of £100,000 from Public Health. The posts will focus on the core work of the service i.e., hoarding, home maintenance and Trusted Assessor. The team have begun threading hoarding clients into the workstream now that they are on top of the home safety inspections. They have a backlog of 30 clients waiting for initial contact, down from 70 a month ago. Quarter 1 and 2, the team received 46 new referrals for hoarding and home safety checks, 4 of them in SW&T.
- 84 properties have applied for HUGS1 funding (Home Upgrade Grant phase 1), the target was 83 properties with a capital spend of £1,458,000 to be spent by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Of the 84 properties;
- 62 eligibilities confirmed and remaining 22 awaiting evidence of income. Further applicants held on a waiting list.
- 43 Retrofit assessments completed with a further 19 in hand or booked
- 39 properties have had Retrofit Coordination activities carried out and have been allocated to an installer for their pre-install survey, designs and quotes. Estimated value of the HUG1 capital allocated to these properties is £645,000.
- 4 properties requiring Retrofit Coordination activities and allocation to installer. Estimated value of the HUG1 capital allocated to these properties is £75,000
- Recently attended the launch of the new Independent Living Centre in Mendip. Designed on the principles of the pioneering model in Wellington. The centre was formally opened by Cllr Bill Revans. There is a TEC / Sensory lounge within the building allowing practitioners and the public the opportunity to try technology that can help people make daily living easier. There was also a soft relaunch of the Wellington site following a refresh of the facilities to include new thinking.
- SIP attended several other events promoting the work we are doing to alleviate fuel poverty and retrofit people's homes including events in Taunton, Bridgwater, Burnham and Highbridge.
- SIP have been working with Public Health, the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the Village Agents to put in place the new Winter Plan. The aim of the plan is to assist the vulnerable, elderly and fuel poor households to cope with soaring fuel bills as a result of the war in Ukraine and the price cap, plus the

impending cold weather. The plan includes the distribution of the Household Support Fund, case worker support from SIP to assist with income maximisation and how to use heating controls, training with agencies in the field and promotion of the CSE energy advice line and expansion of the staff numbers in the CSE to cope with the increased calls. This is in addition to the ongoing retrofit activity by SIP and the roll out across Somerset of ECOFLEX 4 by our Retrofit Project Officer.

## **Housing Performance Team**

- We continue to support the work of the Tenants Strategic Group and Tenants' Action Group. On the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022 we will hold third joint tenant meeting with Homes in Sedgemoor, specifically to engage tenants on LGR.
- The damp and mould group for tenants continues to meet and has agreed a set of actions. The group has produced a new webpage which has been published. A report on the actions of the group will be produced after the next meeting.
- A new Low Carbon Working group for tenants has their first meeting in July and had meetings each month.
- The tenants' autumn newsletter has been posted and our Christmas newsletter is being prepared.
- We are collectively working with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams.
- The policy review work with the HQN (Housing Quality Network) continues and TSG (Tenants' Strategic Group) members will receive revised policy documents for comment prior to publication.
- Our headline Tenant Satisfaction Survey results (completed in May 2022) have been received and during November the second part of the survey sample will be completed.
- Open Housing the new housing management software went live 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022. We are now finalising the tenant portal which we hope to be live in December. The portal will give tenants direct access to rent balances, tenancy and personal details, repair history, view communication, view housing officers. It will also give links to make payments and raise repairs and other communications.
- We have published our assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (which was reported to the July meeting) on our website. Together with other councils we have ensured that the new Somerset Council draft complaint policy will cover Housing Ombudsman requirements. The policy will proceed to Executive in January 2023 for approval.

**I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff in the Housing team for their hard work and commitment to our tenants and residents in the SWT area, and wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year.**



# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Environmental Services.

It gives me great pleasure to present my report to Full Council on the varied activities of the Environmental Services Portfolio.

### Refuse and Recycling (Somerset Waste Partnership)

- Collection Service

SWP have continued working hard with their contractor, SUEZ, in order to reduce repeated collection failures. There were several collection issues through September and October. These were generally down to staffing issues which caused rounds to be dropped. Recovery of work was good with extra Saturdays implemented in order to complete the backlog.

The Transfer Station at Walford Cross, Taunton is complete, except for a permanent power supply and continues to be operated via a generator. Work continues at The Williton Depot to complete the work started on re-developing the transfer area.

### Street Scene and Fleet

- Litter Bin Replacement Programme

The roll out of the new bin infrastructure with recycling compartments has continued, with the completion of 54 more bins this year. In addition, we have fitted a further 15 bins on behalf of local parishes.

- Fleet

The first batch of 22 electrical vehicles for the Councils fleet following the 2 vehicles taken on the fleet for testing last year are due for delivery in January 2023. This date has been pushed back from October 2022 due to manufactures issues which is a market issue. These are vehicles which are due for replacement this year and the additional cost of EVs compared to fossil fuel vehicles was funded through the savings made from the new fleet contract which started in 2021.

- Environmental Improvement Team

The team which started in 2022 have been working on Street Washing in town centres since the last update. The commencement of our Street Washing was delayed slightly due to re-assignment of the staff following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. We re-commenced at the beginning of October and began the service in Minehead, covering the Sea Front and Quay Street. Work in Taunton is next before we move onto Wellington.

- Environmental Enforcement Trial

The first six months review will now take place looking at the performance, financial data, education, and promotional campaigns and how actions to date meet the requirements of the Councils litter strategy. To date the trial is showing early indication that the trial is achieving its aims and has been a success.

From April 22 – September 22 the enforcement team have issued a total of 872 FPN's for littering offences. This means that the cost of the services is being covered by income received from fines as per the original business case.

The education which has been provided through face-to-face interaction, press releases, social media and interacting with key stakeholders such as Neighbourhood Police, the Superintendent of Avon and Somerset Police, local businesses within and outside of the town's centres, National Highways and Town and Parish Councils, in addition to this the team are in the processes of purchasing 500 portable ash trays which officers will hand out to individuals who are caught disposing of cigarettes inappropriately.

To support objective five of the litter strategy "to promote the understanding of cleansing schedules for emptying bins and the use of our customer systems to address extra collections that are necessary or fewer collections needed". QR codes have been purchased and are due to be installed on the dual litter and recycling bins within the district to support members of the public to report a full or damaged bin via their smartphone.

### **Parks and Open Spaces**

The Grounds Maintenance Team have completed the summer cutting schedule and been working on bedding in all the Parks and HRA flower beds. The team have also started the winter streams clearance works due to be completed by Christmas.

The Nursery has finished production of all the winter bedding plants and deliverers have been made.

The tree team has been working with Exmoor National Park to plan the tree planting programme for 22/23. Tree planting work will begin in January.

### **Bereavement Services**

Essential electrical rewiring works began on 26/09/2022 with work being undertaken at weekends and Mondays and Tuesdays. The project is on schedule for completion by 12/12/2022.

### **Environment and Coastal**

- Blue Anchor

Rock armour is to be built at Blue Anchor to prevent further erosion to the cliffs. An order was placed for vessels to deliver 13,500 tonnes of granite to Blue Anchor in Autumn this year for the rock armour. The necessary permissions for this work are in place, however, the delivery vessels ordered were retained on a project in northern



Europe meaning they were not available to deliver the rock to Blue Anchor as scheduled and no suitable alternative vessels were available. Rail delivery options are being explored as an alternative, but this is proving extremely difficult. Therefore, a definitive date for Spring 2023 delivery via vessel is being sought. Further work to refine the designs for the upper slope works, which will be undertaken once the rock armour is in place, are also taking place to ensure the project remains within budget. Planning permission has been deferred whilst the profile of the upper slope design is finalised. Work on site is expected to start in Spring 2023. In the meantime, the emergency works installed in 2020 continue to protect the cliff at its most vulnerable point.

- North Hill Stabilisation

The design work for this project is ongoing. Designs will be shared as soon as they are available.

#### Norton Fitzwarren Playing Fields

Significant progress has been made on the project at Norton Fitzwarren to create a new playing field including a football pitch, tennis court, car parking area and multi use games area (MUGA). Planning permission was obtained in September and works have now begun on site. The first phase of work will involve the creation of a tennis court, MUGA and car parking area whilst the work to create the football pitch will take place in spring 2023.

### **Regulatory Services**

Environment Protection complaints such as noise and nuisance are beginning to drop off now we are into the winter season, and the team are focussing on the complex cases remaining from summer.

Environment Protection have also been working successfully in partnership with Musgrove Park Hospital on public health funerals. MPH have been undertaking some of the funerals for the Council, which has helped reduce the cost to the Council and spread the load.

Due to capacity with external providers, the team have brought water sampling back in house, which again has reduced the cost of the service and improved the sampling performance.

The Food Protection team are working hard to support businesses who are recording poor scores on their food hygiene inspections. We are seeing an increase in poor scores which is largely due to the financial pressures on small businesses currently, but are continue to aim to carry out re-rating visits earlier than the designated 3 month timescales to help businesses.

We are expecting three new food traders in Taunton sigh street. New electric points installed were installed to enable this, and Licensing have been working with the

Council's, who advertised for expressions of interest. Three new traders have been selected and given the green light to make street trading consent applications.

A new SW&T Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy and SW&T Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy was adopted at Full Executive on 16/11/2022. The previous policy was no longer fit for purpose and protects the authority between now and vesting day. The policies have been written in conjunction with the Environmental Health Local Government Reorganisation work-stream, with the policy envisaged to be adopted by the new authority.

I would like to give my personal thanks to all the officers in the various teams that make up the portfolio who are delivering exceptional services in challenging times.

**Councillor Andy Sully**

# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Local Government Reorganisation and Community Governance Review.

### Community Governance Review

- Both Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and Somerset County Council (SCC) held special full council meetings in late September and early October respectively to recommend (SWT) and to approve (SCC as the authority with the executive power) the creation of a new parish council for Taunton. This is likely to be known as and is already spoken of as Taunton Town Council. The councils' decisions included other changes to local governance arrangements in the affected parish councils and marked the culmination of two years of intensive work, research and consultation. Special thanks are due to the cross-party working group, which was led by Cllr Derek Perry, and to all of the officers including lawyers who assisted with, and where necessary advised upon, their deliberations throughout.
- Following the making of these council decisions the formal Decision Notice (including the reasons for the decision itself) and the Re-Organisation Order were published and sent to a number of relevant parties as laid out in the statute and guidance. These parties included the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, all Parish Councils affected by the decision, the Local Government Boundary Commission, the Office for National Statistics as well as the Ordnance Survey.
- Following the making of the decision the emphasis has now moved to implementation mode. This will involve setting up the new council over the next 5 months, so that it is able to operate from its vesting day of 1 April 2023 (which of course coincides with the vesting day of the new Somerset Council and the transfer of functions of Somerset West and Taunton to that new unitary council). The implementation process for the new Taunton Council is being overseen both by a Shadow Town Council of members and an Officer Project Group made up of Officers from both SCC and SWT working collaboratively and with technical advice provided by the Society of Local Council Clerks.
- The shadow council members group consists of 26 members including all existing Somerset County Council members for each division which falls either in total or in any part of the new Taunton Town Council boundary, all of the Charter Trustees for Taunton serving until 31 March 2023 (who represent the currently unparished area), and representatives from Comeytrove, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Staplegrove and West Monkton Parish Councils (as each of their boundaries are affected by the changes).
- This shadow council acts as an advisory body and will monitor the delivery of the Implementation Plan which has been drawn up by officers to ensure that a legal, safe and functioning new parish council authority comes into being in April 2023. The members will remain in place until the elected members can take over from the shadow council.
- The implementation plan includes work on a staffing establishment, committee structure and governance arrangements, policies and procedures, budget and precept together with decisions on what assets will transfer to the new council and what services it will wish to deliver with effect from 1 April 2023.
- At their first meeting held on 3 November 2022 the Taunton Shadow Town Council appointed Councillor Tom Deakin as Chair with Parish Councillor Brian Larcombe (of Comeytrove) as Vice Chair. This first meeting also resolved to adopt Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules which will guide councillors and allow them to operate and to carry out business efficiently. Meetings will be held at least monthly as there is much work to do.

- The Elections Team will also be involved in planning and conducting the elections to the new Taunton Town Council. These are due to take place on Thursday 4 May 2023. The new Town Council will have 20 elected Councillors split across 14 wards. Once in post the Councillors will receive a programme of induction training designed to help and guide them so that they can take up their duties of running the new council as soon as possible after their election.
- The latest process, which is now beginning, is the appointment of a Town Clerk. This role is important in the running of the council, organising of meetings and all other arrangements for its safe and legal functioning and effectiveness

### **Local Government Reorganisation**

- Members will have had the benefit of monthly briefings and updates on the progress of the setting up of the Somerset Council which are open to all district and county councillors - one of which was due on 22 November at 5.00pm. I would urge all councillors to attend these online briefings to keep up to date with progress.
- I have attended all meetings of the LGR Implementation Board and the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee meetings and have listened with interest to reports of progress. A lot of work has been carried out and it is clear that the pace of activity has picked up now that we are only 4 months away from vesting day and since the arrival of the new CEO at Somerset County Council, Duncan Sharkey in October.
- Current notable activity includes the recent start of the process for appointing the senior officers (Tier 2) and the next rung down (Tier 3) at the unitary council and members must appreciate that this is both an important and worrying time for officers who are eventually appointed to these roles as it is also for those who are unsuccessful. Many of the officers engaged in this process over the next few months will themselves be working harder than ever both to fulfil their duties at SWT as well as to satisfy the demands of the workstream to which they are assigned as part of the LGR process.
- As far as SWT is concerned, finance and other meetings are being held and business is continuing as usual. The aim will be to ensure a smooth handover on vesting day and that the public will not be disadvantaged as the changes take place. The process of moving the payroll activity to the new council platform has already started in other districts and SWT will be moving over shortly. This is to ensure that there is no disruption to staff being paid by the new authority.