

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 Minister. 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-Bellow who died suddenly on Friday 28 October. Cllr Trollope Bellow 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.