

## SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON COUNCIL

### CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WRITTEN ANSWERS TRACKER 2021/22

| Date of Cttee | Scrutiny Cttee Request for information   | Decision Maker /Directorate Responsible | Response to request for information   | Date response of | Scrutiny Officer Comments/Update   |
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| 07/07/21      | Q) <i>Outturn Report - Can the Finance team provide a comparison with this year's outturn and last years on debts written off?</i>             | Cllr Ross Henley/Finance                |   |                  | Understood this information can be provided.   |
| 07/07/21      | Q) <i>Performance Report – Extensions to Planning applications due to phosphates – further detail on how many had had multiple extensions?</i> | Cllr Mike Rigby / Planning              | We don't hold that information and I am not clear of the relevance of whether they have had multiple extensions. The more pertinent information is the number of applications which are currently held in abeyance due to the need to provide measures to mitigate the impact of development on the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site. As Rebecca reported to Planning Committee we currently have approximately 100 applications equating to approximately | 01/09/21         | A verbal update was given to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee by Alison Blom-Cooper during the committee meeting on 3/11/21. |

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|          |   |   | 2,300 dwellings and 13 sites awaiting the discharge of conditions equating to approximately 450 dwellings.   |          |   |
| 01/09/21 | <i>2021/22 General Fund Financial Monitoring as at Qtr1</i><br>Q) Collation of parking income was requested along with the projected shortfall with comparison to pre pandemic levels.  | Cllr R Henley & Cllr M Rigby / Finance/ Parking | Awaiting response. ( <i>Check details of Qtr2 monitoring</i> )   | 10/11/21 | Finance Business Partner currently checking with Stuart Noyce (may be a delay due to leave commitments)           |
| 01/09/21 | <i>2021/22 General Fund Financial Monitoring as at Qtr1 –</i><br>Q) Appendix A compared to the budget agreed in February was considered, with a requested for further information in comparison to the detail of the variances. | Cllr R Henley / Finance                         | Paul Maclean has asked Cllr Buller to contact him direct so that he can fully understand the query and provide a satisfactory response. - First email was 07/09/21 - To be followed up.                |          | Paul Maclean – can provide a detailed written response.<br>Email fwd on.<br><br>Emily Collacott and Paul Maclean. |
| 01/09/21 | <i>2021/22 – HRA Financial Monitoring as at Q1</i> - There had been a revenue forecast overspend of £610k, with the recommendation setting out £869k, information relating to the variance in the figures was requested.        | Cllr F Smith / Housing                          | The amount of £869k has been moved from HRA earmarked reserves to the HRA general reserves therefore increases the level of general reserves – this figure is not included in the Q1 year-end forecast | 10/11/21 | Information provided by Emily Collacott and confirmed by Kerry Prisco.<br>Email dated 10/11/21                    |

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| 3/11/21  | <p><i>Innovation District Update</i> – A request was made for the full report from the EIBC study. During the meeting Chris Hall agreed to supply a redacted version due to commercial sensitivity.</p>  | Cllr M Kravis/<br>Development &<br>Place | Chris Hall will redact the report and then make it available to members.   | 8/11/21  | The redacted version of the report was published as part of the Executive Committee report for the Executive meeting held on 17 <sup>th</sup> November. |
| 01/12/21 | <p><i>Corporate Performance Report Q2</i> –</p> <p>QA) It was questioned whether an ecologist had been appointed to work on phosphates.</p> <p>QB) It was questioned how soon it is possible for an incoming call to be answered whether the wait time for calls to be answered included the automatic messaging at the start of the call.</p> | Cllr R Henley /<br>Various Officers      | <p>We advertised and failed to fill the agreed post of Nutrient Neutrality Officer and so we have a secondee from Arup on a part-time basis on a years contract to support the phosphates project. She is an ecologist.</p> <p>We do not currently include the time taken to listen to the messages and options at the beginning of the call. The benchmarking undertaken when the team was created found that most other organisations measure answering times from the same point (as all have statements about calls being recorded, GDPR etc). For SWT, the average time spent in the call routing process is around 80 seconds but this</p> | 10/12/21 | Questions sourced as part of the Qtr 2 performance report by Malcolm Riches   |

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|  | <p>QC) It was questioned how many quality employment opportunities had the Council attracted in the last few years, in terms of productivity what was the percentage increase and in which sectors.</p> |  | <p>depends on the customer's choices on each call.</p> <p><i>Awaiting updated response from Lisa Tuck</i></p> <p>The target of 44 days was set in December 2020 for the current financial year and was based on Quarter 2 Housemark metrics that showed a median performance of 44.5 days for District Councils that held housing stock at that time. In practice, meeting this target has been an enormous challenge both for us and across the Housing sector and we are currently falling short, as are most other Housing Providers. To illustrate this, Housemark data showed that the District Council average void turnaround time had increased to 49.8 days by Quarter 4 of 2020/21 (and no doubt has continued to further</p> | <p>04/01/2021</p> | <p>Simon Lewis</p> |
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|  | <p>QD) It was questioned whether the average relet time of 44 days under homes and communities was normal.</p> |  | <p>increase this year). Key factors that have affected turnaround time in this financial year have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of trades-staff due to Covid</li><li>• Trades staff being re-prioritised onto repairs work to clear the backlog built up during Covid lockdown (when we only undertook emergency repairs to minimise the risk of transmission and in line with government guidance).</li><li>• Inability to recruit skilled trades staff, due to a very competitive market, including the impact of the Hinkley project attracting workers to EDF.</li><li>• Delays in receiving a range of materials to complete Voids works, due to Covid, Brexit and other external factors.</li></ul> |  |  |
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|  |  |  | <p>plan to improve our Voids turnaround times that focuses on a number of areas of potential improvement and we are meeting regularly to ensure that progress is made on bringing average times down.</p> <p>As a Housing Management team, we also review our performance indicators as part of a wider suite to give us a rounded view of performance with respect to letting of properties. The Pulse statistical data for September 2021 does show us in the top quartile for the indicators “Proportion of dwellings vacant, but available to let”, and only marginally outside of top quartile performance for ‘Proportion of social homes let’, so our performance overall does give us some confidence that although improvement is required, we are not significantly out of step with other Housing Providers.</p> | <p>04/01/2021</p> <p>04/01/2021</p> | <p>Malcolm Riches</p> <p>Malcolm Riches</p> |
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|  | <p>QE) It was asked whether the asset management and completion of leases earlier than expected could be elaborated upon and clarification given.</p> <p>QF) Fly tipping was raised as being a big issue and it was questioned what was being done to address this.</p> |  | <p>This relates to the General Fund monitoring report, Table 3 on p52.<br/>It is an improved position on asset management income compared to last year by c£150k. This is due to leases completing earlier than expected for units at Seaward Way and Lisieux Way.</p> <p>At the end of September, performance for the year-to-date is 81% which is exceeding the target of 80%. Fly-tipping is dealt with by an external contactor and performance has improved during the year. Following a drop in performance in the first few months of this year, partly driven by a rise in the amount of fly-tipping, we continue to work closely with the contractor to closely monitor performance and drive improvement. It is important to note that the target relates to the speed of response rather than a failure to respond.</p> | <p>04/01/2021</p> | <p>Malcolm Riches</p> <p>Chris Hall issued response in</p> |
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|  | <p>QG) Planning applications had been delayed due to phosphates, there were over 120 applications waiting to be decided so why does the report claim a high level of success. It was asked if officers could give a date for when these applications would be coming forward and say how many of the applications waiting were likely to go forward.</p> <p>QH) It was raised that a feasibility study for Employment Land in West Somerset was mentioned in the report, and it was asked why a feasibility for the whole of the district was not being undertaken. It was asked</p> | <p>Cllr Marcus Kravis</p> | <p>The national performance indicator which looks at the Council's performance in determining planning applications (major, minor and other) looks at the speed with which applications are dealt with within the statutory time period or an agreed extended period. Those applications which are held in abeyance as a result of the need to provide mitigation to ensure nutrient neutrality and ensure there is no impact on the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site have not yet been determined and so would not be included in these figures. Most of these applications have an agreed extension of time so if they are determined in line with this agreement they will meet the targets.</p> <p><i>Answer listed under Recommendation Tracker as taken to Executive on 15 December 2021</i></p> |  | <p>consultation with the PFH – Marcus Kravis</p> |
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|          | where the budget for this study was coming from and whether it was revenue or capital funds.  |                                      |  |  |  |
| 01/12/21 | <p><i>2021-22 General Fund Financial Monitoring as at Q2 - Q)</i> An update was requested on how well asset management under External Operations and Climate Change was performing compared to previous years.</p>  | Cllr R Henley / External Operations  |  |  |  |
| 5/1/22   | <p><i>Infrastructure Funding Statement</i></p> <p>Q) Officers agreed to update members after the meeting regarding what would happen to CIL funds if parish councils were taken over or split as part of a new town or parish council was formed and whether the CIL funds could be ringfenced to be spent on certain projects.</p> | Cllr M Rigby / Development and Place |  |  |  |