



Notice of Meeting of

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CLIMATE AND PLACE

Wednesday, 22 November 2023 at 10.00 am

**Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cannards
Grave Road, Shepton Mallet BA4 5BT**

To: The members of the Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place

Chair: Councillor Martin Dimery

Vice-chair: Councillor Adam Boyden

Councillor Steve Ashton

Councillor Bente Height

Councillor Henry Hobhouse

Councillor Dave Mansell

Councillor Harry Munt

Councillor Alex Wiltshire

Councillor Alan Bradford

Councillor Edric Hobbs

Councillor Marcus Kravis

Councillor Matthew Martin

Councillor Tom Power

For further information about the meeting, including how to join the meeting virtually, please contact Democratic Services democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk.

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This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A: Access to Information.

The meeting will be webcast and an audio recording made.

Issued by (the Proper Officer) on Tuesday, 14 November 2023

AGENDA

**Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place - 10.00 am Wednesday, 22 November
2023**

Public Guidance Notes contained in Agenda Annexe (Pages 5 - 6)

Click here to join the online meeting (Pages 7 - 8)

1 Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 Minutes from the Previous Meeting (Pages 9 - 16)

To approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

3 Declarations of Interest

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

(The other registrable interests of Councillors of Somerset Council, arising from membership of City, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes: [City, Town & Parish Twin Hatters - Somerset Councillors 2023](#))

4 Public Question Time

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, please see details under 'click here to join online meeting'.

5 Externally Funded Regeneration Projects (Pages 17 - 32)

6 LEP Integration (Pages 33 - 36)

7 UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund (Pages 37 - 42)

8 Decision to award a contract for the provision of the Park & Ride Service in Taunton (Pages 43 - 48)

9 Climate & Place Budget Monitoring Position Month 5 (Pages 49 - 56)

10 Action Tracker (Pages 57 - 62)

11 Forward Plan (Pages 63 - 70)

Guidance notes for the meeting

Council Public Meetings

The legislation that governs Council meetings requires that committee meetings are held face-to-face. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers (report authors and statutory officers) to attend in person, along with some provision for any public speakers. Provision will be made wherever possible for those who do not need to attend in person including the public and press who wish to view the meeting to be able to do so virtually.

Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

They can also be accessed via the council's website on [Committee structure - Modern Council \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

Members' Code of Conduct requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Code of Conduct](#)

Minutes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

Public Question Time

If you wish to speak or ask a question about any matter on the Committee's agenda please contact Democratic Services by 5pm providing 3 clear working days before the meeting. (for example, for a meeting being held on a Wednesday, the deadline will be 5pm on the Thursday prior to the meeting) Email democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

Members of public wishing to speak or ask a question will need to attend in person or if unable can submit their question or statement in writing for an officer to read out, or alternatively can attend the meeting online.

A 20-minute time slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. Each speaker will have 3 minutes to address the committee.

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish. If an item on the agenda is contentious, with many people wishing to attend the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

Meeting Etiquette for participants

Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.

Mute your microphone when you are not talking.

Switch off video if you are not speaking.

Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)

If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.

There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

Exclusion of Press & Public

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed.

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Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT, on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Martin Dimery (Chair)
Cllr Adam Boyden (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Alan Bradford
Cllr Edric Hobbs
Cllr Marcus Kravis
Cllr Harry Munt
Cllr Alex Wiltshire

Cllr Bente Height
Cllr Henry Hobhouse
Cllr Dave Mansell
Cllr Tom Power

In attendance:

Cllr Dixie Darch
Cllr Ros Wyke

Cllr Mike Rigby

Other Members present remotely:

Cllr Steve Ashton
Cllr Michael Dunk
Cllr Helen Kay
Cllr Sarah Wakefield
Cllr Gwil Wren

Cllr Matthew Martin
Cllr Norman Cavill
Cllr Mike Stanton
Cllr Richard Wilkins
Cllr Leigh Redman

20 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Cllr S Ashton and Cllr M Martin who attended virtually.

21 Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Agenda Item 2

Resolved that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place held on 19

July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

22 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

No additional declarations of interest were received.

23 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

Although a statement had been submitted, Linda Ann and Peter Travis were unable to attend and Robbie Bentley speaking on behalf of Somerset Catch the Bus Campaign raised concerns over the proposed demolition of the Bus Depot in Yeovil, currently being used by First Bus. They believed that it was a noteworthy building, part of the town's long industrial heritage, and deserved to be a listed building.

In response they were advised that either a group or an individual could seek the listing of a building and if they required any support or advice to speak to the Conservation Officer within the Planning Service.

Tony Reese also addressed the Committee. He too believed that the building should be listed and that the Committee needed to be aware of how the bus services provided by First Bus had reduced and that they were no longer providing a proper transport service.

The Executive Member for Transport and Highways, Cllr Mike Rigby, responded by confirming that he'd had a number of conversations with the speaker and his fellow campaigners and that he agreed with much of what they had said. The Council's goal had been to try and stabilise the bus service in Somerset and that he was attending a meeting with First Bus today where he would raise the speakers' concerns.

24 Work Programme and Action Tracker - Agenda Item 5

The Scrutiny Officer presented the action tracker and explained that the work programme was currently being developed.

In response to questions it was confirmed that it would not be officer driven and that the Committee and individual members would have the opportunity to feed into it. Also, that the starting of the Highways Responsiveness Task & Finish Group had been delayed due to staff sickness..

25 Somerset Energy Plan - Task and Finish Group - Agenda Item 6

The Committee considered the request to set up a Somerset Energy Plan task and finish group which would be taking a fairly high level approach to the subject.

Members agreed that the task and finish group should be set up and after discussing the optimum membership sought volunteers from the Committee.

Resolved

To set up the Somerset Energy Plan Task and Finish Group with the following membership:

- Cllr Ashton
- Cllr Boyden
- Cllr Bradford
- Cllr H Hobhouse
- Cllr M Kravis
- Cllr D Mansell
- Cllr H Munt
- Cllr T Power

26 Award of contracts for highways services - Agenda Item 7

A Mr Redgewell had requested to speak on this item but unfortunately, when called to speak, he was unable to do so virtually. Having provides no details of his statement or question he was requested to send them in and a written response would be given.

The Committee considered a report setting out the details for five highways related contracts.

Members praised the work of their Emergency Duty Teams and in response to questions it was explained that:

- If there were any changes to contact details, once the contracts had been awarded, members would be informed and the appropriate contact numbers advertised.
- Whilst the contract for maintenance would be outsourced as there was no guaranteed workload. They would be looking at their ability to deliver the services in-house e.g. grass cutting where appropriate in terms of service delivery and financial efficiency.
- A written response would be given regarding how long, under the contracts, a pot-hole repair would be guaranteed for.
- They would be starting a project to look at decarbonising maintenance of the highways. There was the potential to reduce carbon emissions, with an estimated 60% of carbon in highways maintenance being moving people,

equipment and materials around, by considering:

- Concentrating works in certain areas of the county.
- Having mobile recycling plants

This was a three year project and at the end of it they would report their findings back to the Committee.

- Regarding vehicles, they referred to 'alternative fuels' as it was up to the contractors to say how they were going to meet the targeted reduction of 50% in carbon emissions e.g. electric or hydrogen vehicles. But they would not be accepting the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil as a fuel, because this was usually transported around using diesel trucks.
- With five separate contracts there would be less outsourced decision making with the Council programming work over the network.
- With many hedges not under the ownership of the Council, overgrown signage was often the result of farmers not cutting them back. However, if they were reported to the Council, ideally online, they would arrange to get them cut.
- Maximizing income was an ambition and they would be working with contractors and look at obtaining revenue from the highways in a number of ways e.g. advertising on roundabouts.
- They were looking at improving the network management by:
 - Using a GIS system so that both officers and members could see the whole programme of works across the whole network listings dates and times etc.
 - Scheduling resurfacing work to tie in with developers work under S106 agreements.
- There was the potential to reduce carbon emissions, with an estimated 60% of carbon in highways maintenance being moving people, equipment and materials around, by considering:
 - Concentrating works in certain areas of the county.
 - Having mobile recycling plants
- The service levels within these contracts were similar to the previous ones and included incentives and penalties for the contractors.
- Grass verges were cut (not all of the verge) twice a year. The first between April and June and the second between August and September.
- Whilst not for general use, they still used glyphosphate weed killers, in a very limited and sparing way for noxious species such as Japanese knot weed.

The Committee then adjourned for a 5 minute break.

27 Budget Monitoring Update - Agenda Item 8

The Committee considered an update setting out the budget monitoring position up

until the end of July 2023. As part of the presentation and in response to questions it was highlighted that:

- Overall Budget - it was forecast that there would be a predicted overspend of £26.1 million, of which the majority related to the Adults and Childrens Services.
- Waste - there was a forecasted overspend of £800k. Some of which was due to an improved pay award, shared with Suez, that avoided strike action. A briefing note would be provided to members on some of the contractual elements and issues, in due course.
- Highways - there was a predicted overspend of £1.3 million mainly due to an increase in safety defects across the whole road network. There was also, included within this an amount of £200k, for dealing with the new highways' contracts, that had not been factored in because at the time the work started it had fallen under the budget of the Commissioning but now fell under Climate and Place.
- Economy & Planning - a predicted overspend of £400k due to the way Department for Work & Pensions funding could now be applied to the apprenticeship levy. Additionally, some of the issues with staff retention and agency costs would hopefully be addressed with the restructuring of the planning service.
- Some of the key risks and future issues were:
 - Contract inflation
 - Impact of the cost of living crisis
 - Staff vacancy levels
 - Climate change
- The recycling trial, involving the collection of cellophane and wrappers, taking place in Frome was part of a funded national trial and was unlikely to be rolled out across the county unless that too was funded.

28 Approach to Local Plan and Statement of Community Involvement - Agenda Item 9

Members received a presentation on the development of a Local Plan and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that was currently being developed which highlighted:

- That the SCI was a high- level document setting out how the Local Planning Authority would engage and consult with the community and stakeholders on planning matters.
- That it covered both engagement on planning policy and the determination of planning applications

- There was a need for a new SCI to replace the existing 5 District and County SCIs with a consistent approach on engaging with communities on planning matters.
- The consultation undertaken and the main changes made following that consultation.
- The Council's legal requirement to produce a Local Plan within 5 years of vesting day (by 1st April 2028).
- The Local Plan timetable and the factors that might affect it.
- That the Local Plan was produced as a separate work strand from the Minerals and Waste Plan reviews.
- The Local Plan was a key document that would help delivery the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy.
- A separate climate change Development Plan Document (DPD) had been considered but was not being recommended because:
 - It would divert resources away from the Local Plan significantly impacting the Local Plan timetable and the failure to deliver a plan on time could result in Government intervention.
 - Any delay would mean there would be a longer time without an up-to-date local plan resulting in an increase of 'planning by appeal'; reduced ability to deliver on other Council aspirations; and reduced chance of success in bidding for Government funding for projects'
 - Considering climate change policies strategically within a Local Plan would ensure they were deliverable together with affordable housing and infrastructure requirements
 - A DPD may not get policies in place any sooner as it would still have to follow the same production stages as a Local Plan.
 - The setting up of a Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee of the Executive was being proposed to oversee and monitor on behalf of the Council the review of the Development Plan.

In response to questions from the Committee it was explained that:

- Whilst the statutory requirement in relation to site notices and neighbour notifications for planning applications was usually either one or the other, in practice, quite often both methods were used. Written clarification on the statutory requirements would be provided to the relevant councillor.
- The current different inherited Community Infrastructure Levy charging systems would have to be reviewed, particularly in response to national reforms.
- The new Local Plan would have a lifetime of possibly 20 years.
- That under paragraph 19 (page 68 of the agenda pack) there was a typographical error in the penultimate sentence and that 'for' should be replaced with 'beyond' to read *Given the need to bring forward a Somerset-*

wide development plan, a wider exercise beyond the East area (e.g. more housing or review of strategic policies) is neither warranted or justified.

- That the Lead Member for the Environment and Climate Change would be a member of the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee.
- The final report would clarify the rules under which the Sub-Committee would operate, the cross party engagement and how its decisions would be scrutinised.

The Committee felt that it was important to continue the current practice of serving both site notices and adjacent neighbour notifications and that 3.24 of the SCI be amended to clarify this.

Members believed that climate change policies should be a priority and that rather than waiting for 5 years for completion of the Local plan there was a need for a separate Climate Change DPD that could be come into effect before this. Particularly as lessons could be learnt from work already done by other authorities such as Bath & North East Somerset, Cornwall and Warwick.

Resolved

To recommend to the Executive:

1. That under the Pre-Applicant stage, paragraph 3.10 of the Statement of Community Involvement should be amended to encourage applicants to consult with their neighbours.
2. That the Council should continue to serve both site notices and adjacent neighbour notifications and that the wording of 3.24 of the Statement of Community Involvement be amended to reflect this. The wording of the recommendation to the Executive to be delegated to the Executive Director – Climate & Place in consultation with the Chair and circulated to the Committee.
3. That a Climate Change Development Plan Document be created to advance the Council's climate emergency objectives, in particular zero carbon energy standards, new developments and renewable energy generation siting. To be separate from the Local Plan and to an earlier time scale to reflect the climate emergency declaration.

29 Water Quality in Somerset - NOW WITHDRAWN FROM THE AGENDA (to be considered at a separate meeting, to be arranged) - Agenda Item 10

(The meeting ended at 1.42 pm)

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CHAIR

Decision Report – Scrutiny Update

Forward Plan Reference: n/a

Key Decision – no

Report Title: Externally Funded Regeneration Projects

Executive Member(s): Ros Wyke

Local Member(s) and Division: Various across the Authority

Lead Officer: Paul Hickson

Author: Joe Wharton

Contact Details: 07760 474406 / joe.wharton@somerset.gov.uk

1. Summary / Background

- a. This report seeks to update on the status of the externally funded regeneration projects that are being delivered across the Somerset Council.
- b. These projects have a combined value of over £100m, secured by teams in the previous five authorities prior to formation of the Unitary authority
- c. *Update 14.11.23 – in light of the declaration of the Financial Emergency, all of the projects are being reviewed to determine if match funding commitments are deliverable, and any significant revenue burden is being created by the delivery of the schemes.

b. These projects have a combined value of over £100m, secured by teams in the previous five authorities prior to formation of the Unitary authority.

The projects and programmes include:

- Bridgwater Towns Deal programme: £23.2m (11 projects in total)
- Glastonbury Towns Deal programme: £23.6m (11 projects in total)
- Taunton Future High Street Fund: £13.9m (3 projects)
- Yeovil Refresh Future High Street Fund: £9.7m (2 projects)
- Somerset Academy for Health and Social Care Training, Levelling Up Fund round £19.7m (1 project)

- Bridgwater Northern Corridor upgrade: Levelling Up Fund round 1* £10.06m (1 project)

*Although technically a Highways / Infrastructure upgrade, the project is listed here for completeness, and the proximity to nationally significant projects such as Gravity and Hinkley Point C.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

9. As the schemes are externally funded (except for any match funding commitments), there is no impact to the Council MTFP with regard to the recommendation within.

10. This external funding helps to deliver the Council priorities on projects that would not otherwise have been deliverable. These include:

- Active travel schemes
- Improvements to community spaces, listed buildings, and leisure facilities
- Brownfield regeneration schemes
- Highways and infrastructure schemes
- Public realm improvements

1. Appendix A: Grant funding details: schemes, funding allocations, deadlines and governance

2. Towns Deal Fund general:

- Nov 2019: Fund announced, seeking to “drive long term economic and productivity growth through investment in connectivity, land use, economic assets including cultural assets, skills and enterprise infrastructure”
- Investment plans submitted in Jan 2020
- Grant funding awarded in Nov 2021
- Business cases (taking investment plan and providing greater detail around spend, match funding, programme and stakeholder engagement) submitted in Summer 2022.
- Grant funding agreements signed March 2023
- Spend deadline March 31st 2026

Governance:

The Towns Deal prospectus detailed how investment plans should be devised and governed through a locally convened Board. The board remit was:

- Develop and agree an evidenced based Town Investment Plan
- Develop a clear programme of interventions
- Coordinate resources and influence stakeholders

The Board is chaired by an independent chair, who is a non-elected council official. The Chair, in tandem with the Senior Responsible Officer and S151 for the Lead Local Authority, is responsible for signing off the six monthly monitoring and evaluation reports.

Reports and board meeting minutes are published on the Towns Deal website.

Town Deal projects are a mixture of third-party delivery (working through grant funding agreements and partnership arrangements) and self-delivered.

3. Bridgwater Town Deal:

a. **Lead officers:** Louise Darch, Jaycee Ellis, Nathaniel Lucas, Stuart Martin, Nick Tait

[Bridgwater Towns Deal website:](#)

Schemes making up the submission:

Scheme	Value 000s	Delivery Lead
Tidal Barrier (Active Travel element)	£2,000,000	EA
Dunball Junction	£400,000	SC (Highways)
Town Wardens	£1,000,000	SC
Celebration Mile (works)	£8,500,000	SC
Town Events	£500,000	SC
Bridgwater Step Up	£500,000	SC
Docks Regeneration	£4,200,000	SC
Walking and Cycling	£1,000,000	SC
Bridgwater Carnival	£3,000,000	External
Town Hall Theatre	£900,000	External
Arts Centre	£700,000	External
Engine Room	£500,000	External

4. Glastonbury Towns Deal:

a. Lead Officer: Jane Sharp

[Glastonbury Towns Deal website:](#)

Schemes making up the submission:

Scheme	Value 000s	Delivery Lead
Baily's Buildings	6,310	External
Glastonbury Enterprise & Innovation Hub	1,170	SC
The Life Factory	2,890	External
Glastonbury Clean Energy	2,800	External
St Brigid's Chapel & Field	670	External
Glastonbury Food & Regenerative Farming	1,130	External
Enabling Project	1,460	SC
St Dunstan's Community Health & Wellbeing Centre	1,390	External
Glastonbury Abbey Piazza	930	External
Glastonbury Sports & Leisure Hub	2,090	SC
Robert Richards Initiative (3x projects)	2,800	SC
Total	23,640,000	

5. Future High Street Fund general

- a. Dec 2018 Prospectus published
- b. The Future High Streets Fund was run in two stages:
 - Initial Expression of Interest stage, closing March 2019
 - Shortlisting of 101 places to continue to full application, for which a small amount of capacity support was provided
 - Of those 101 places, 72 were successful; of those, 15 received the full amount of funding they had requested, and 57 received a smaller proportion of their request
- c. Funding confirmation Dec 2020
- d. Funding award profiled over 3 years, based on mandated monitoring and evaluation reporting submitted six monthly.
- e. Initial spend deadline of March 31st 2024 (potential for deadline to be extended to Sept 30th 2024 subject to confirmation from DLUHC). Both Taunton and Yeovil FHSF schemes will be applying for extensions.

Governance

There were no stipulated governance requirements outside of existing Local Authority governance processes. Each monitoring and evaluation report is signed off by a Senior Responsible Officer in conjunction with S151.

Grant funding agreements outlined the M&E requirements for the schemes, including the process for requesting changes to any of the approved schemes if required.

6. Yeovil Future High Street fund:

a. Lead Officers: Natalie Fortt, Ian Timms

[Yeovil Refresh Website](#)

Schemes making up the original submission:

Projects	Values
Cattle Market	£3,000,000
Glovers Walk	£1,192,519
72/74 Middle Street	£780,000
Middle Street West	£1,534,695
Borough and High Street	£1,303,346
Triangle	£1,946,337
Total	£9,756,897

Of the schemes originally submitted, due to viability issues it was not possible to deliver the Cattle Market, Glovers and 72/74 Middle Street after the funding was approved. A Project Adjustment Request has been submitted to DHLUC via the Future High Street Funds team to divert the £4.972m from those schemes into a fund to deliver commercial to residential conversions in the town centre, focused on specific properties of note. At time of writing that PAR is under review with other potential options for use of the funding put forward after consultation with the community in Autumn 23.

Of the other schemes, it is expected that the full allocation will be spent. To date £8.453m has been received, of which £4.135m will be spent by the original spend deadline of March 31st 2024.

Works to the Borough and High Street and Triangle schemes are underway, with Middle Street West starting w/c 10th July.

Projects	Totals
Middle Street West	£1,534,695
Borough and High Street	£1,303,346
Triangle	£1,946,337
Revised schemes	
Under review	
Under review	
Total	£9,756,897

7. Taunton Future High Street fund:

a. Lead Officers: Robert Downes, Joe Wharton

There isn't a website for the full Taunton FHSF bid, although separate documents outlining of the larger project elements are available online:

[Coal Orchard](#)

[Firepool](#)

Schemes making up the original submission:

Projects	Values
Coal Orchard	£1,000,000
Firepool including Amphitheatre	£10,705,583
Active Travel (5x interventions)	£2,257,398
Totals	£13,962,981

Coal Orchard:

Of the schemes originally submitted, the Coal Orchard project is now completed, with a total of £1.25m coming from the FHSF (this was approved via a Project Adjustment Request in Q1 2022 when the main contractor on the scheme went into administration resulting in significant delay to the project completion).

Firepool:

To enable the full scope of the Firepool site to be realised, a revised masterplan has been devised and approved (see link above) to bring the planning policy context up to date. Alongside the masterplan, separate detailed applications have been brought forward in parallel to enable the spend deadlines to be met, and other elements of the site funded by other mechanisms to be delivered (including the Trenchard Way / GWR car park junction and access)

The main elements of the FHSF spend on the site include:

Infrastructure (drainage and levels) circa £3m – now complete

Boulevard and amphitheatre: circa £6m

Utility upgrades (water, drainage, electrical substations) circa £1.9m - underway

At time of writing, the tenders back from the market indicate that the budget for the boulevard and amphitheatre do not cover the full cost of the scheme, which has been impacted by the inflationary pressure on the construction market as every other scheme in the authority has. An exercise to review procurement routes and any value engineering potential without significantly reducing the quality of the scheme is underway, with an appointment for the contractor to deliver the revised scheme starting in early 2024.

To date £10m has been received and a total of £4.08m has been spent.

Active Travel schemes:

£2.257m was allocated to active travel schemes in the original submission, the purpose of which was to create a cycling and walking “corridor” from Taunton Station, through Firepool, along the riverside and through the town centre to Vivary Park. This vision aligned with the re-orientation of Taunton railway station to provide a newly provided drop off and pick up

facility on the south side of the station including a much-improved public realm and a multi-storey car park. The FHSF budget is supported by £1.5m of match funding (primarily CiL)

Projects	Values
Coal Orchard	£1,250,000
Firepool	
Infrastructure (drainage and levels)	£2.8m
Boulevard and amphitheatre	£5.5m
Active Travel	£2,257,398
Bridge	
Cycle storage	
Mobility Hubs	
Transforming Taunton programme	
Vivary Park crossing	
Totals	£13,962,981

8. Levelling Up Fund general

- a. Announced late 2020, with prospectus released in March 2021;
- b. Three categories:
 - i. Transport investment,
 - ii. regeneration and town centre investment
 - iii. cultural investment
- c. Projects upto £20m, with £50m on large scale projects where justified.
- d. Bids based on parliamentary boundaries – MP support is strongly encouraged but not absolutely mandatory.
- e. LA's categorized into areas of need (1. Greatest need to 3. Least need). Additional revenue support to area 1 LA's to support bids
- f. First round announced alongside Autumn Budget 2021 (Bridgwater Northern corridor successful)
- g. Second round ran May – Dec 22, results announced Jan 23 (three months late). SDC Somerset Academy bid successful; three other district bids not successful.

9. Somerset Training Academy for Health and Social Care

[Link to website:](#)

- a. Project Leads: Nathaniel Lucas, Joe Wharton, with support from Corporate Property, Adults / Childrens Services. Working in partnership with senior colleagues in the ICB, and Somerset Foundation NHS Trust
- b. Project Definition:

The creation of a training academy specifically for the health and social care sector, with a focus on real world, accredited training in this vital sector to support our vulnerable customers and underpin an undervalued workforce. This will be done in a refurbished and repurposed building in Bridgwater (the former infirmary site on Salmon Parade). This will include a library, café and creche, and key worker accommodation, with links into the Somerset Council Innovation network.

The project will also create an outreach site in Minehead that will provide the same services in that community.

Total capital project cost is estimated at £22.4m with £19.7m (88%) awarded through Levelling Up Fund (LUF) from government. This includes contributions to the Tidal Barrier, Public Realm improvements delivered through the Bridgwater Town Deal and site acquisition costs.

The significant level of LUF funding brings particular governance requirements on publicity and notices to be erected on sites including reference to government funding.

Somerset Council, as Accountable Body, is required to submit quarterly monitoring reports to Government setting out committed expenditure, forecasts and risk management.

The total build and fit-out cost estimates and allowances are shown here:

	Bridgwater	Minehead
Contributions to other schemes:	£2.7m	
Delivery	£16,515,900	£500,000

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Somerset Council
Scrutiny Committee
– 22 November 2023



LEP Integration

Lead Officer: Paul Hickson

Author: Melanie Roberts

Contact Details: melanie.roberts@somerset.gov.uk

Executive Lead Member: Ros Wyke

Division / Local Member: All

1. Summary

- 1.1. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have played an important role in supporting local economic growth since 2011. Somerset has been part of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) LEP along with Devon, Plymouth and Torbay since its formation. The Levelling Up White Paper, published February 2022, set out Governments commitment to extending devolution across England, empowering local leaders, and integrating LEP functions into local democratic institutions.
- 1.2. The move away from LEPs has already begun with Levelling Up and UK Shared Prosperity Funding being managed by Local Authorities. Government expect investment decisions to have local democratic accountability which wasn't possible via the LEP governance model and therefore didn't align with devolution intentions.
- 1.3. The Spring Budget 2023 set out Governments intentions to withdraw support for LEPs from April 2024 and to transfer LEP functions to local authorities. Following further review during the spring the Government confirmed these intentions and have requested that each LEP area prepare an Integration Plan setting out Local Authority intentions to deliver the LEP functions of:
 - Business representation
 - Strategic economic planning
 - Responsibility for delivery of specific government programmes

As Accountable Body for the HotSW LEP, Somerset Council, are leading on the development of the Plan with representatives from each of the upper tier authorities across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. The LEP and Government representatives are also engaged in the process. The Plan must be submitted by 30 November 2023.

- 1.4. The HotSW LEP aims to guide and shape economic growth, job generation, and

prosperity in the Heart of the South West region. Their economic strategy highlights transformative opportunities that aim to attract investments, foster the creation of high-quality jobs, and promote prosperity and resilience through sustainable and inclusive growth. Despite the transfer functions to Somerset Council, the commitment to these objectives persists. The essential role in economic growth, job creation, and prosperity will contribute to reinforcing the Council's vision of a flourishing and resilient Somerset, characterised by fairness and ambition. Furthermore, the activities related to clean and inclusive growth will actively contribute to the realisation of a more environmentally friendly and sustainable Somerset.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** Scrutiny Committee Members are asked to note the details within this report ahead of further Governance processes early in 2024. Our intention is to seek approval from the Executive Committee in February to transfer the functions, as per the Integration Plan, into Somerset Council.
- 2.2.** As the Accountable Body, Somerset Council hold assets on behalf of the HotSW LEP, the Executive Committee will also be asked to approve the transfer of relevant assets and novation of associated legal agreements to other upper tier authorities as agreed through ongoing discussions.

3. Background

- 3.1.** Government has confirmed that Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) core functions – namely, business representation, local economic planning, and the delivery of Government programmes where directed – from April 2024 should be delivered by Local Authorities to ensure local democratic accountability.
- 3.2.** Initial LEP Integration Guidance was published in March 2022 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-enterprise-partnerships-integration-of-lep-functions-into-local-democratic-institutions/guidance-for-local-enterprise-partnerships-leps-and-local-and-combined-authorities-integration-of-lep-functions-into-local-democratic-institutions>) aimed at areas progressing devolution discussions. Government has since issued an updated Integration Plan template for submission by 30 November. The template is intended to aid the process of integration and will inform the direction of any future government funding. It will set out our (the 4 upper tier Local Authority's) indicative intentions for integration which will then be subject to further discussions, confirmation of funding from Government and internal governance processes across Somerset Council and the other upper tier authorities.

Proposed Approach

- 3.3.** Our aim is integrate functions into the upper tier authorities from 1 April 2024. It is unlikely that the transfer of assets (including contract novations) will be completed by this date and will progress in the weeks following.
- 3.4.** The current role of LEPs as funded by government are set out below. These are the key functions under review, although there are some local activities which may also continue, subject to funding. Somerset Council will need to set out how it intends to deliver these functions from April 2024.
- a. Embed a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice into local democratic institutions.
 - b. Carry out strategic economic planning in partnership with local leaders that clearly articulates their area’s economic priorities and sectoral strengths. This should involve building and maintaining a robust local evidence base that identifies local strengths and challenges, future opportunities and the actions needed to support priority sectors, aligned to the relevant levelling up missions.
 - c. Continue to deliver a number of functions on behalf of government departments, shaped by the local business voice where relevant. This includes the delivery of Growth Hubs on behalf of the Department for Business and Trade, and Careers Hubs on behalf of the Department for Education.
 - d. Where appropriate, help broker and support new or deeper devolution deals, where requested by local partners.
- 3.5.** To ensure we can embed a local business voice we will establish an economic growth board. The board will oversee the development, and implementation, of a post-LEP economic strategy. Government have indicated further guidance on their expectations for these functions will be released in January 2024. We will therefore refine our intentions at this time.
- 3.6.** In undertaking LEP functions there will be a requirement for Somerset Council to lead on local commissioning of continued functions, for example the Growth Hub (business support function). This brings opportunity in respect of ensuring service provision fully meets local need, but also challenges in the current financial climate. Confirming of Government funding and allocation of LEP legacy funding will be key to ensure continuity of functions.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** Consultations, led by Somerset Council as the Accountable Body, are currently

taking place across the HotSW LEP upper tier authorities, the LEP and Government representatives to establish the principles and legality of the transition arrangements. The LEP Board will be consulted on the Integration Plan before submission to Government.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** Financial – there will be financial implications as a result of integrating LEP functions. Government has confirmed it will provide some revenue funding to local authorities in 2024/25 to support delivery of the functions currently delivered by LEPs. Details of this support will be confirmed in due course. Core funding for LEPs has been £500k per annum in previous years and £250k in this current year, we are therefore not expecting a significant amount of short-term capacity funding. Funding beyond 2024/25 will be subject to future Spending Review decisions.
- 5.2.** Legal – there will be legal implications as a result of transferring assets and liabilities to upper tier authorities. We are working with external legal advisors, Ashfords, who are providing advice to Somerset Council on the legality of proposals. We are not expecting any significant challenges, but it will be a time consuming process once we have agreed on the transfer of assets which will involve movement of funding (between local authorities) and novation of legal agreements (primarily grant and loan funding agreements with both public and private sector) from Somerset Council to the receiving local authority.
- 5.3.** HR – there will be staffing implications as a result of the transfer of functions. The specific details will not be known until agreement is reached on continuity arrangements. The main impact will be on the LEP core team who are employed by University of Plymouth; as the Accountable Body, Somerset Council will ensure that provision is made for severance costs as part of the financial wind down.
- 5.4.** Equality and Due Regard – an Equality Impact Assessment will need to be prepared once continuity arrangements are confirmed, however, we are not expecting any negative impacts on protected groups.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** None

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author



Somerset Council
Scrutiny for Policies - Climate and Place Committee
– Wednesday 22nd November

UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund
Lead Officer: Paul Hickson, Service Director – Economy, Employment and Planning
Author: Samantha Seddon, Service Manager – Economy
Contact Details: samantha.seddon@somerset.gov.uk
Executive Lead Member: Cllr Ros Wyke, Executive Lead Member - Economic
Development, Planning & Assets
Division / Local Member: All

1. Summary

- 1.1.** The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) are central pillars of Government's levelling up agenda. The overarching aim of the funds is to build pride in place and increase life chances through investments to improve the places people live in, and to support businesses and individuals. UKSPF was introduced by Government as a successor to the EU Structural Funds programmes following the UK's departure from the EU.
- 1.2.** UKSPF funding is allocated via formula to identified Lead Authorities in each local area, with Lead Authorities in rural areas also receiving a REPF allocation. Lead Authorities are then tasked with management and administration of funds in line with set national frameworks and locally-developed investment plans.
- 1.3.** This report provides background on Somerset Council's role as Lead Authority, for UKSPF and REPF in Somerset and a presentation to Scrutiny for Policies - Climate and Place Committee on 22nd November will provide the latest commissioning position for the funds.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on arrangements for UKSPF and REPF implementation in Somerset.

3. Background

3.1. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

In April 2022, Government launched UKSPF, as a central pillar of the levelling up agenda. The overarching aim of the UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances. Underneath this overarching aim, there are three investment priorities:

- Community and Place;
- Supporting Local Business; and
- People and Skills..

Underneath each investment priority are then nationally-defined supporting interventions as well as output and outcome indicators.

- 3.2.** UKSPF funding is allocated via formula to identified Lead Authorities in each local area, with Lead Authorities required to develop, in consultation with key stakeholders, a local investment plan for UKSPF monies to unlock allocated funding.
- 3.3.** The then Somerset County Council (SCC), as the continuing authority for Somerset in the Local Government Review process, was identified by Government as the initial UKSPF Lead Authority for Somerset, pending the creation of Somerset Council. In this Lead Authority capacity, the then SCC, in consultation with local stakeholders, developed and then submitted a local investment plan for UKSPF monies to the Government in July 2022. This submission was made following a non key decision made in consultation with relevant executive members. In line with Government requirements, the Somerset UKSPF investment plan identifies, within the set national UKPSF framework, expected local priorities, thematic allocations and deliverables. Key priorities are:

Community and Place:

- Improving health and wellbeing including by expanding active travel networks and access to natural assets, which will also encourage community-driven place marketing
- Improving access to services in rural and coastal communities including by strengthening public transport infrastructure
- Promote social cohesiveness and place loyalty by developing stronger community links by providing support for and creating, new social networks.

Local Business:

- Providing support to bedrock and growth sectors through new or existing advice networks
- Fostering the necessary business environment to attract inward investment with a focus on opportunity and growth sectors
- Supporting innovation and fostering R&D growth, including in rural and coastal communities, with a focus on climate change and net-zero initiatives

People and Skills:

- Improving social mobility to address social inequalities in Somerset in respect of access to skills training and employment, plus life opportunities
- Enhancing future prospects for young people to improve opportunities and life chances, plus retain talent in Somerset
- Reducing barriers to adult learning to improve upskilling across the workforce

- 3.4.** In December 2022, the Somerset UKSPF Investment Plan was accepted by Government and the then SCC received and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government for up to £7,263,760 of UKSPF monies. Funding comprises both capital and revenue and is split as £2,644,573 for 2022/23 and 2023/24 and £4,619,187 for 2024/25. Funds are paid under annual grant determinations and, in November 2023, Government set out that Lead Authorities will be able to retain any 2023/24 underspends and access their full 2024/25 allocation. Payment arrangements for 2024/25 can include a mixture of payments upfront and in arrears, dependent on performance against spend targets as at end of 2023/24.
- 3.5.** Somerset Council has adopted a commissioning approach to UKSPF implementation, inviting proposals on a thematic basis in line with the Somerset UKSPF investment plan. Activity is being commissioned through three mechanisms – in house, procurement and open call – and decisions on investments are taken through Somerset Council’s governance processes, following consultation with a Somerset UKSPF Partnership Group, as described in paragraph 4.2
- 3.6.** A presentation to the Scrutiny for Policies - Climate and Place Committee on 22nd November will provide the latest commissioning position.
- 3.7.** Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)
In September 2022, Government announced REPF as a rural ‘top up’ to UKSPF allocations for Lead Authorities in rural areas. REPF specifically provides capital grant funding to support businesses and communities in rural areas. Rural areas are defined by Government as:
- towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside; or
 - market or ‘hub towns’ with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services.

In Somerset, this definition, therefore, excludes Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil.

- 3.8.** The then SCC, as the continuing authority under Local Government Reorganisation arrangements in Somerset, was tasked with producing, in consultation with local stakeholders, a ‘rural addendum’ to the local UKSPF Investment Plan to unlock a formula-based allocation of up to £3,426,745 of REPF monies. The rural addendum for Somerset was, submitted in November 2022, following officer non-key decision approval, and notably set out the intention to utilise REPF monies to contribute to the costs of capital infrastructure projects which align with the following Government-defined priorities for REPF:
- Support start-up and growth of micro and small enterprises;
 - Support farm diversification;
 - Grow the local social economy and support innovation;
 - Develop the visitor economy, including active tourism enhancements;

- Enhance digital connectivity for community facilities;
- Create and improve rural green spaces
- Develop or refurbish local natural, cultural and heritage assets and sites;
- Enhance active travel provision;
- Support the circular economy; and/or
- Support local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.

- 3.9.** The addendum was approved by Government in April 2023 and in June 2023, Somerset Council received and, in line with Officer Key Decision approvals, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government for up to £3,426,745 of REPF monies. Under the MoU, funding is split as £856,686 for 2023/24 and up to £2,570,059 for 2024/25. Funds are paid under annual grant determinations and, in November 2023, Government set out that Lead Authorities will be able to retain any 2023/24 underspends and access their full 2024/25 allocation. Payment arrangements for 2024/25 can include a mixture of payments upfront and in arrears, dependent on performance against spend targets as at end of 2023/24.
- 3.10.** In July 2023, Somerset Council launched a call for REPF grant funding applications seeking to allocate the initial 2023/24 tranche of £856,686 of funding. Under this call, grants of between £5,000 and £100,000 were available to businesses and legally-constituted organisations in rural areas for eligible capital infrastructure projects. Applicants were required to demonstrate that projects could be delivered by end of March 2024 and that match-funding contributions were available. There was a two-stage application process comprising:
- Submission of an expression of interest form to check eligibility; and
 - For eligible proposals, submission of a full application form.
- 3.11.** The call closed on 15th September 2023. 28 full applications were received with a total REPF request of £947,850. Applications have been appraised and investment decisions are currently being considered through Somerset Council's governance processes. Eventual selected projects will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement with Somerset Council and grant monies will be paid in arrears on completion of milestones.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** A significant amount of stakeholder engagement was undertaken during development of Somerset's UKSPF Investment Plan and its rural addendum, including workshops, webinars and a community questionnaire.
- 4.2.** In line with Government requirements for how Lead Authorities manage and administer funds, a Somerset UKSPF Partnership Group has been established to advise Somerset Council on implementation of UKSPF and REPF in Somerset. The Group includes public, private and Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector representation and notably advises on commissioning arrangements to take forward agreed investment plans and the strategic fit, deliverability and value for money of proposals received. Decisions on investments are taken by Somerset Council, following engagement with the Somerset UKSPF Partnership Group.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** There are no implications arising from the recommendation in this report. All UKSPF and REPF activity must comply with all relevant legislation (e.g. procurement, Subsidy Control and equalities legislation) and also consider environmental sustainability.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** None

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

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Somerset Council
Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee
– 22nd November 2023



Decision to award a contract for the provision of the Park & Ride Service in Taunton

Lead Officer: David Carter, Service Director – Infrastructure and Transport
Author: Mike O’Dowd-Jones, Strategic Manager – Highways and Transport
Commissioning / Natasha Bates, Service Manager – Transport Commissioning
Contact Details: mike.odowdjones@somerset.gov.uk 01823 356238
natasha.bates@somerset.gov.uk or 01823 357199

Executive Lead Member: Cllr Mike Rigby – Lead Member for Transport and Digital Division / Local Member: Cllr John Hunt and Cllr Caroline Ellis – Bishops Hull & Taunton West, Cllr Ross Henley and Cllr Sarah Wakefield – Blackdown & Neroche

1. Summary

- 1.1.** The current operator of the Taunton Park and Ride service has given notice on the contract as it is no longer financially viable for them to continue with the current contract. A new contract is required from 12th February 2024 to ensure we can continue to deliver a Park and Ride service within the town.
- 1.2.** An open tender was advertised through the Southwest Supplier Portal, with support from the Commercial and Procurement Team. The tender included Lots for two different options related to service delivery as follows:
 - Lot 1: Monday to Friday with frequency every 15 minutes and Saturday frequency every 20 minutes (4 single decker vehicles)
 - Lot 2: Monday to Friday and Saturday with frequency every 20 minutes (3 double decker vehicles)
- 1.3.** The contract has been tendered to operate from both the Silks Mills and Gateway sites, serving the town centre and Musgrove Park Hospital, as well as a number of other designated stops along the route. The £1 single fare currently funded through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) will continue to apply on the service until the end of the BSIP funding period of March 2025.
- 1.4.** Following evaluation of the bid submissions, the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) has been identified. A report relating to the award of the contract will be considered at Executive on 6th December 2023.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. Scrutiny is asked to note and consider the recommendation being put to Executive on 6th December 2023, to award a contract on a 3+2+2 year basis for the delivery of the Taunton Park & Ride service, subject to sufficient funding being confirmed through Executive’s consideration of the financial position also on 6th December 2023.**

3. Background

- 3.1.** The current Park and Ride contract has been let as a ‘cost contract’ and as such all revenue taken on the service is retained by Somerset Council. The cost contract enables the Authority to have more control over fares. This has been particularly beneficial when implementing free fares for a period of time between August 2021 and August 2022 during the significant roadworks that took place along Toneway. The free fares initiative was designed to mitigate congestion and potential delays caused by the road works by encouraging people to use the Park and Ride service rather than driving into the town centre.
- 3.2.** During the period of free fares, there was a dramatic increase in patronage, as the graph at Appendix A shows. In order to retain passengers who had commenced travelling during the free fare period a bid was submitted to government as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to subsidise fares and reinstate tickets for fare paying passengers at £1 for a single, £2 for a return and a 50% concession for children. Concessionary pass holders travel free of charge after 9.30am.
- 3.3.** The result of the £1 fare, which was introduced in September 2022, was that a significant proportion of passengers were retained on the service and they have made approx 40,000 journeys a month since the introduction of the fare. However, since June 2023 each month has seen in excess of 40,000 passenger journeys, as shown in Appendix A. Therefore, the contract has been retendered as a ‘cost contract’ to enable us to manage the fares and continue offering the £1 single fare/£2 return.
- 3.4.** Following the rising fuel prices, cost of inflation and the knock-on effect on operating costs, the contract was no longer financially viable for the current operator, and they gave notice on the contract. This resulted in the need to re-tender the contract. This has been done for a 3-year contract initially with the option to extend for two further periods of 2 years each.
- 3.5.** The tender specification included the two different Lots set out at paragraph 1.2, which has enabled us to test the market for both options and consider the affordability of each option.
- 3.6.** The option to deliver the service in-house has also been explored and discounted on the basis that it does not offer any financial benefit compared to the contract and would expose the Council to additional risk.
- 3.7.** The council has an option not to award this contract and discontinue the service in order to achieve financial savings in light of the financial emergency.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** Legal Services were consulted in relation to the contract terms and conditions prior to the tender being let.
- 4.2.** Commercial and Procurement colleagues were consulted in relation to the procurement exercise, they supported the process to ensure we followed a compliant route to market.
- 4.3.** Finance colleagues were consulted in relation to the funding implications set out in section 5 below and also when exploring the viability of an in-house option.
- 4.4.** The Lead Member for Transport and Digital has been consulted throughout the procurement process and is supportive of the recommendation being taken to Executive on 6th December 2023.

5. Implications

Financial Implications

- 5.1.** Income is generated through fares revenue taken on the Park and Ride service and also through the rental of car parking spaces at the Gateway Park and Ride site to EDF (for staff at Hinkley Point using their bespoke Park and Ride Service). The forecast income currently generated through these revenue streams is sufficient to fund the cost of running the Park and Ride service without a revenue funding contribution from the Council, although the rental of parking space is a general income stream not necessarily tied to the operation of the Park and Ride service. As the construction at Hinkley Point moves towards completion over the next few years, the rental income will reduce in line with reduced demand from EDF personnel needing to access the site.
- 5.2.** The creation of the Unitary Authority provides the opportunity to implement a more integrated parking policy which reduces demand for town centre parking and encourages use of the park and ride in Taunton through managing parking charges. This would have the benefit of reducing congestion and carbon emissions in the town centre whilst ensuring operating costs can be covered by fare income and parking income. The contract allows the Authority to give 12 months' notice to terminate the contract without cause should the funding model become unsustainable in the future.

Equalities Implications

- 5.3.** Prior to commencing the procurement exercise, an Equalities Impact Assessment was completed for both frequency options to ensure all impacts were considered and mitigating action factored into the procurement process where appropriate.
- 5.4.** The implications highlighted related to accessibility, capacity for wheelchairs and also the impact for certain protected groups if timetables and information displays are not provided correctly. The tender specification addressed the issues around accessibility, policy for wheelchair users and the need for compliance with the reasonable adjustment element of the Equalities Act 2010.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

- 5.5.** The award of the contract will ensure the continued provision of an alternative parking option for car users not wishing to travel into the town. Signage on the main routes into the town will continue to promote the use of the Park and Ride sites. This aims to reduce the number of cars travelling into the town centre and reduce congestion as well as carbon emissions.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 5.6.** The continued provision of a Park & Ride service facilitates access to essential employment, retail, leisure, social and health services which helps people remain independent, healthy and active. It is the only regular bus route serving Musgrove Park Hospital throughout the day. The service also provides an affordable all-day parking option for many people working within the town centre.

6. Background papers

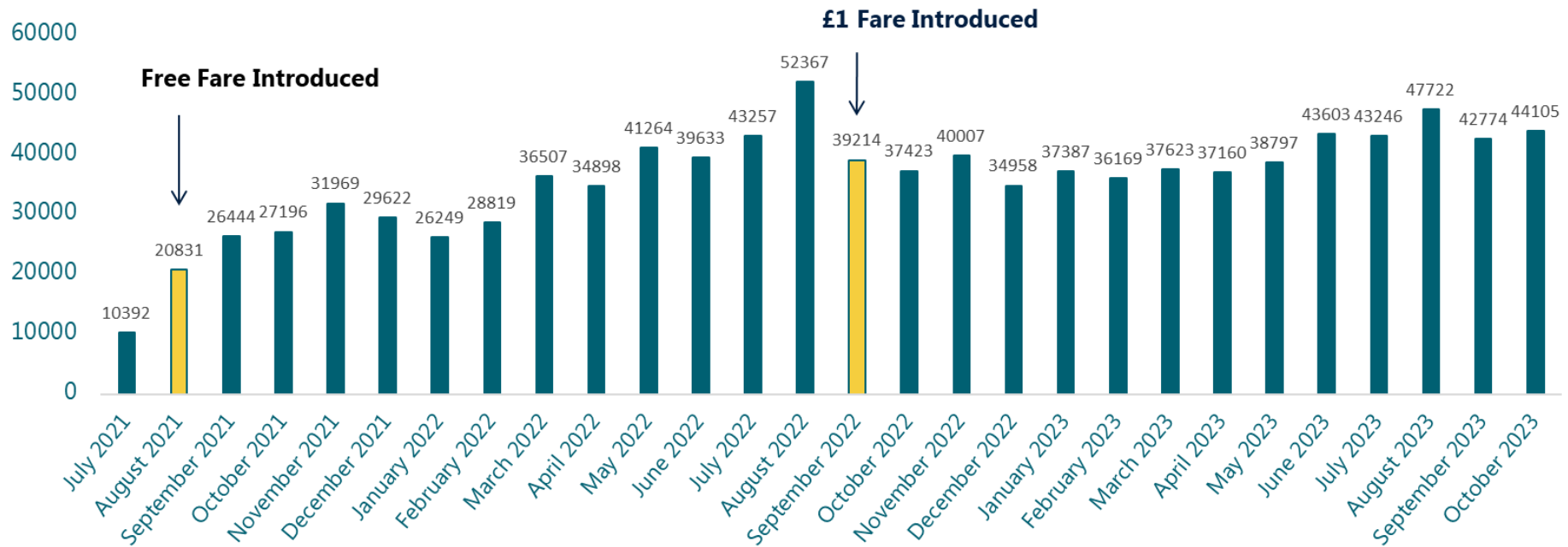
- 6.1. NKD authorising the commencement of a procurement exercise – 14th July 2023**

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

Appendix A

Park & Ride Passenger Journeys - Monthly Total

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Somerset Council
Climate & Place Scrutiny Committee
– 22nd November 2023

Climate & Place Budget Monitoring Position Month 5

Executive Director: Mickey Green

Lead Officer: Jason Vaughan, Executive Director, Resources and Corporate (S151)

Author: Christian Evans – Head of Finance Business Partnering

Contact Details: christian.evans@somerset.gov.uk

Executive Lead Member: Transport & Digital, Cllr Mike Rigby. Economic Development, Cllr Ros Wyke. Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Dixie Darch

1. Summary

- 1.1.** The Executive considered the month 5 budget monitoring update report at its meeting on 8th November 2023. Extracts of the report will be presented to each of the scrutiny committees to allow for scrutiny of them.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** Scrutiny is asked to consider: -
1. If there are any general comments or observations that they would wish to make to the Executive on the reports.
 2. If the actions set out in the report are appropriate and if there were any further actions, they would wish to see included.

3. Background

- 3.1.** The 2023/24 Budget is the first for the new Somerset Council and it brought together the budgets of the five predecessor councils adjusted for new assumptions and identified savings. It is well documented that there are significant delays in the auditing of local authority accounts and this national issue means that there are a number of statement of accounts from the predecessor councils for prior years that are still outstanding. This brings an amount of uncertainty, as well resourcing implications, and in practical terms means that some of the information for Somerset Council such as the 2022/23 outturn, reserves position, and capital position are still being finalised
- 3.2.** Full Council approved the 2023/24 budget in February 2023. Budget Monitoring is delegated to Executive and Scrutiny and revenue service reports will be presented monthly with a full overview of revenue, capital, and reserves quarterly. This report outlines the forecast year-end position of services against the 2023/24 budget of £493.4m as at the end of July 2023.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1. The information in this report is an extract of the budget monitoring report submitted to the 8th November Executive Committee. The information was also submitted to the 9th November Corporate and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

5. Summary

5. Month 5 Position

- Table 1** provides a summary of budget, projections, and variances on a service-by-service basis as at the end of August with further detail and mitigations being taken by the responsible director outlined in the body of the report. After taking into account all service expenditure and contingencies the projected outturn position is £520.7m against a net budget of £493.4m. This gives a £27.3m adverse variance which represents a variance of 5.5%.
- This report details the month 5 position as at the end of August and is shown below in **Table 1**. This shows the position has deteriorated by £1.2m compared to Month 4, with the projected outturn being forecast to be £27.3m

Table 1: 2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report as at the end of August 2023 (Month 5)

Service Area	Original Budget	Current Budget	Full Year Projection	Month 5 Variance	A/(F)	Movement	Direction From Month 4
	£m	£m				From Month 4	
Adult Services	186.6	185.5	200.4	14.9	A	2.8	↓
Children & Family Services	123.1	123.1	134.9	11.8	A	3.0	↓
Public Health	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.0	-	0.0	→
Community Services	35.2	34.9	34.9	0.0	-	0.0	→
Climate & Place	87.1	87.6	89.9	2.3	A	(0.4)	↑
Strategy, Workforce & Localities	20.2	20.2	21.5	1.3	A	(0.2)	↑
Resources & Corporate Services	20.5	21.8	22.1	0.3	A	(1.0)	↑
Accountable Bodies	3.7	3.7	3.7	0.0	-	0.0	→
Non-Service	9.8	9.8	6.3	(3.5)	(F)	(3.0)	↑
Traded Services	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	A	0.0	→
Total Service Position	487.4	487.7	515.0	27.3	A	1.2	↓
Corporate Contingency	6.0	5.7	5.7	0.0	-	0.0	→
Total after Contingencies	493.4	493.4	520.7	27.3	A	1.2	↓
Reserves	(19.9)	(19.9)	(19.9)	0.0	-	0.0	→
Council Tax	(345.4)	(345.4)	(345.4)	0.0	-	0.0	→
Business Rates	(116.1)	(116.1)	(116.1)	0.0	-	0.0	→
Revenue Support Grant	(7.9)	(7.9)	(7.9)	0.0	-	0.0	→
Flexible Use of Capital Receipts	(4.0)	(4.0)	(4.0)	0.0	-	0.0	→
Total Month 5 Position	0.0	0.0	27.3	27.3	A	1.2	↓

- The 2023/24 net budget £87.7m, projected adverse variance £2.3m, favourable movement £0.4m

Table 2: 2023/24 Climate & Place as at the end of August 2023 (Month 5)

Service Area	Current Budget	Full Year Projection	Month 5 Variance	A/(F)	Movement From Month 4	Direction From Month 4
Climate, Environment & Sustainability						
Civil Contingencies	0.4	0.4	0.0	-	0.0	→
ECI Management	0.4	0.4	0.0	-	0.0	→
Business Support	1.3	1.3	0.0	-	0.0	→
Waste Services	49.4	50.2	0.8	A	0.0	→
Drainage Board Levy	2.3	2.3	0.0	-	0.0	→
Climate Change Costs	0.8	0.8	0.0	-	0.0	→
Infrastructure & Transport						
Highways and Transport Commissioning	1.8	1.8	0.0	-	0.0	→
Community Infrastructure	0.6	0.6	0.0	-	0.0	→
Infrastructure Programmes Group	0.4	0.6	0.2	A	0.0	→
Highways	16.4	17.7	1.3	A	0.0	→
Traffic Management	1.0	1.0	0.0	-	0.0	→
Transporting Somerset	9.3	9.3	0.0	-	0.0	→
Car Parks	(7.3)	(7.3)	0.0	-	0.0	→
Fleet Management	0.3	0.3	0.0	-	0.0	→
Economy, Employment & Planning						
Economy and Planning	2.2	2.2	0.0	-	(0.4)	↑
Commissioning Development	0.1	0.1	0.0	-	0.0	→
Building Control	0.5	0.5	0.0	-	0.0	→
Development Control	1.5	1.5	0.0	-	0.0	→
Planning Policy	3.5	3.5	0.0	-	0.0	→
Economic Development	2.8	2.8	0.0	-	0.0	→
Climate & Place Total	87.7	90.0	2.3		(0.4)	↑

Climate & Place - key explanations, actions, & mitigating controls

Climate and Place is currently forecasting an outturn variance of £2.3m. The forecasted overspends are due to the following:

Climate, Environment and Sustainability

- Waste Services is forecasting an overspend of £0.8m at outturn. This can be explained by the following:
 - An increase in residual waste has been seen at both the kerbside and recycling centres. The budgeted increase was estimated to be 0.7%, however figures at the end of Quarter 1 shows that the actual increase for this period is 4.2%. Based on this increase the forecasts have been amended to reflect the higher costs. The increase in tonnages is currently being investigated by the service to understand what has caused this significant increase.
 - The additional bank holiday for the King's coronation, meant that there was

an impact on waste collections and was not anticipated in budgets.

- An anticipated change of legislation due in January 2024 regarding DIY waste (removing charges at recycling centres) adds further pressures to the waste budget.
- Waste services have been able to negotiate an improved pay award shared with Suez, however this has provided a further unbudgeted pressure within the service. This however has avoided any strike action which would have caused disrupted waste collections across the County and resulted in significant costs.

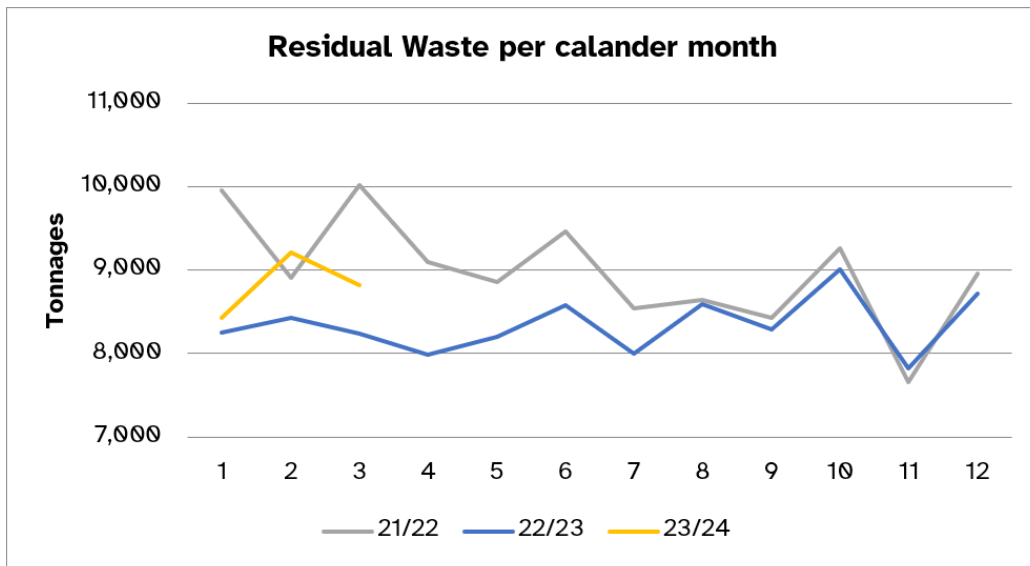
Infrastructure and Transport

- Highways is forecasting an overspend of £1.3m at year end. As many authorities are finding this is due to an increase in Safety defects across the road network. The service continues to work hard to successfully complete the investigation and repair works. This pressure is a continuation of the situation that Somerset County Council reported in 2022/23.
- Infrastructure Programmes Group have highlighted pressures of £0.2m. This is due to being unable to allocate salary costs to capital schemes, the service is currently supporting revenue funded projects as well as Capital works.

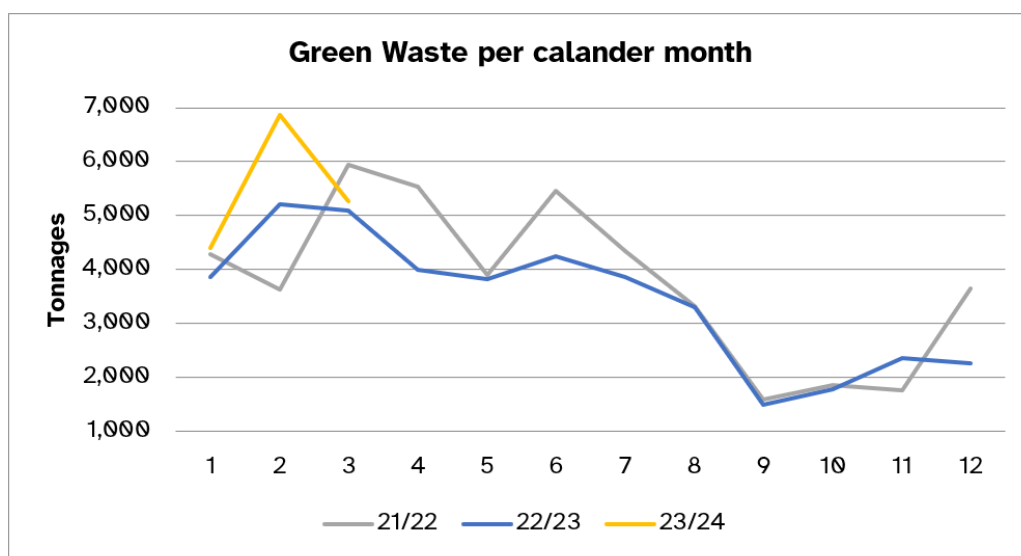
Economy, Employment and Planning

- A one-off pressure of £0.4m had been identified in this area due to a change in how funding from DWP can be applied. The Service have been able to identify savings within the service to mitigate this pressure and are now forecasting to be on budget.

Climate & Place - key performance cost drivers



The above graph shows the residual waste (per tonnage) per month. The residual waste includes Kerbside collected waste and waste deposited at the recycling centre. The graph currently shows the reduction of waste in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, however this highlights the unexpected increase in tonnages for 2023/24. An additional bank holiday collection due to the Kings Coronation in May and a subsequent alteration to waste collection days (that lead to a temporary relaxation inside waste policy), increased tonnage, and pressure on the Recycling Centres. Further pressures on the residual waste service during May and June arose from the disposal of flood damaged materials. Residual Waste during July & August have reduced and are tracking marginally above 2022 levels.



The above graph shows the green waste (per tonnage) per month. It is expected to see a downwards trend between month 6-12 (September to April) due to the seasonality of garden waste. The graph currently highlights a higher tonnage of green waste compared to 2021/22 and 2022/23, to date Garden Waste arisings have been

significantly higher than in both 21/22 and 22/23, this has been driven by the unusually mild, damp, weather this year propagating plant growth and increasing the moisture content of the material.

Climate & Place - key risks, future issues & opportunities

Due to the current economic climate, there are several key risks and future issues that need to be taken into consideration:

- **Contract inflation** is applied at various times throughout the year, as the increase in contract could be led by RPI or CPI it is currently difficult to predict accurately what the impact for each contract might be. In addition, there are a number of contractual disputes which are being worked through. It is anticipated that these can be resolved in a timely matter, but in resolution may see increased costs agreed.
- **Impact of cost-of-living crisis.** As costs continue to rise, spending habits may change therefore it is possible that services across Economic and Community Infrastructure will see a decrease in income budgets.
- **Staff vacancy levels.** Difficulties in recruiting permanent staff across Climate and Place continue to impact on the ability to deliver services, where possible agencies have been used to fill critical roles. However, this has a financial impact as generally the cost of these staff is higher than budgeted for.

Risks can be identified due to the change in climate. It is almost difficult to be able to identify financially what the impact of climate change will be year on year, but risks with a potential financial impact include:

- Icy conditions will see a high demand on the Highways service to grit primary and secondary routes.
- An increase in rainfall raises the risk of flooding across the County. This will require input from the Emergency Planning department, Highways and Traffic Management to help ensure residents can safely navigate around the affected areas.
- The extreme changes in weather will impact the road surfaces which continues to increase the safety defects reported and increases the costs of investigation and corrective action for potholes.

Climate and Place are working with finance colleagues to ensure pressures within budgets are highlighted and that income has been received as anticipated. There is a risk that further pressures will be identified as this work continues.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** The information in this report is an extract of the budget monitoring report submitted to the November 8th Executive Committee.

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

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**Scrutiny Committee – Climate & Place - Outcome Tracker
2023 - 2024**

Agenda items	Lead / Owner	Agreed Outcome	RAG Status
17 May 2023			
Infrastructure and Transport: Highways Service Responsiveness update	David Carter	A task and finish group to review the Highways and Transport Services communication interfaces and service responsiveness with the following membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cllr Bente Height ➤ Cllr Henry Hobhouse ➤ Cllr Marcus Kravis ➤ Cllr Dave Mansell ➤ Cllr Tom Power Timescale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference to be agreed in June. Detailed proposal to be developed from the above. ▪ Research and Interviews during June/July. ▪ Draft report to be available in early September. ▪ Task and Finish Group to meet fortnightly through the working period. 	On-going
19 July 2023			
Future Transport	Mike O’Dowd-Jones	The Committee was advised that with the Council had to have a new Local Plan and Local Transport Plan in place by 2025. A presentation was given highlighting the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Transport Plan process • Guiding principles adopted by the Executive • Placemaking & Movement principles • New ‘vision led’ approach to local transport plans which 	On going

**Scrutiny Committee – Climate & Place - Outcome Tracker
2023 - 2024**

		<p>focused on outcomes and local priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon reduction and the Local Transport Plan • County’s carbon emission data • The proposed next stepsLocal Plan process <p>Agreed that a Local Transport Plan Task & Finish Group be set up.</p>	
Climate, Sustainability and Environment – Next Steps	Kirsty Larkins	<p>Members received a report setting out the next steps of the Council’s strategic approach to Climate, Environment and Sustainability, to ensure that the Council was committed to reducing carbon emissions, achieving Net Zero and supporting nature’s recovery.</p> <p>Agreed that a Climate Strategy Refresh Task & Finish Group be set up</p>	On-going
20 September 2023			
Public Question Time	Jamie Jackson	Robbie Bently and Tony Reece addressed the committee over their concerns over bus services and the future of the Bus depot in Yeovil.	Completed
Work Programme and Action Tracker	Jamie Jackson	It was explained that the work programme was currently being developed.	
Somerset Energy Plan - Task and Finish Group	Jacob Hall	<p>The Committee agreed to the setting up of the Somerset Energy Plan - Task and Finish Group which would report back its findings in Spring 2024.</p> <p>The Task Group has met on: 24 October 2023</p>	On-going
Award of Contracts for	Mike O’Dowd-Jones	Members received details of the following 5 highways contracts	On-going

**Scrutiny Committee – Climate & Place - Outcome Tracker
2023 - 2024**

<p>highway services</p>		<p>that were to be considered by the Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An NEC4 Surfacing Term Service Contract for a period of 4 years with the option to extend for a fixed 4-year period. The anticipated contract spend for the full duration is £50m. • An NEC4 Surface Treatments Term Service Contract for a period of 4 years with the option to extend for a fixed 4-year period. The anticipated contract spend for the full duration is £50m. • An NEC4 New Assets Framework Contract for a period of 4 years. The anticipated contract spend for the duration is £20m to £40m. • An NEC4 Term Service Contract for Highway Maintenance for a period of 8 years with the option to extend for a fixed 4-year period. The anticipated contract spend for the full duration is £225m. • An NEC4 Term Service Contract for Highway Lighting, Illuminated & Electrical Assets for a period of 8 years with the option to extend for a fixed 4-year period. The anticipated contract spend for the full duration is £15m to £30m or £60m to £75m depending on the Highway Lighting Assets previously owned by the four District Councils. <p>A written response would be given on how long, under the contracts, a pot-hole repair would be guaranteed for.</p>	
<p>Budget Monitoring Update</p>	<p>Christian Evans</p>	<p>The Committee considered an update setting out the budget monitoring position and highlighted:</p>	<p>Completed</p>

**Scrutiny Committee – Climate & Place – Outcome Tracker
2023 – 2024**

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overall Budget - a predicted overspend of £26.1 million, of which the majority related to the Adults and Childrens Services. ➤ Waste - a predicted overspend of £800k. ➤ Highways - there was a predicted overspend of £1.3 million ➤ Economy & Planning - a predicted overspend of £400k ➤ Some of the key risks and future issues 	
<p>Approach to Local Plan and Statement of Community Involvement</p>	<p>Paul Hickson</p>	<p>Members received a presentation on the development of a Local Plan and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that was currently being developed and made the following recommendations to the Executive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That under the Pre-Applicant stage, paragraph 3.10 of the Statement of Community Involvement should be amended to encourage applicants to consult with their neighbours. 2. That the Council should continue to serve both site notices and adjacent neighbour notifications and that the wording of 3.24 of the Statement of Community Involvement be amended to reflect this. The wording of the recommendation to the Executive to be delegated to the Executive Director – Climate & Place in consultation with the Chair and circulated to the Committee. 3. That a Climate Change Development Plan Document be created to advance the Council’s climate emergency objectives, in particular zero carbon energy standards, new developments and renewable energy generation siting. To be separate from the Local Plan and to an earlier time 	<p>Completed</p>

**Scrutiny Committee – Climate & Place – Outcome Tracker
2023 – 2024**

		scale to reflect the climate emergency declaration.	
Water Quality in Somerset	Kirsty Larkins	This item was withdrawn from the agenda and will be considered at a separate meeting, to be arranged.	On-going

Completed	Action complete and will be removed from tracker for next meeting
Pending	Action on-going or plans in place to address.
Incomplete	No action currently in place with a minimum of 3 months since action agreed.

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Somerset Council
Scrutiny Committee
– 22nd November 2023

Climate and Place Directorate Project Forward Plan

Lead Officer: Sunita Mills

Executive Director: Mickey Green

Author: Nichola Bown

Contact Details: Sunita.Mills@somerset.gov.uk

Executive Lead Member:

Division / Local Member:

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Climate and Place Directorate leadership team recognises the value that a robust Project Forward Plan will add to both Members and Officers in terms of project management and transparency.
- 1.2. The intention is to create a Project Forward Plan for the 3 service areas within the Climate and Place Directorate to be shared and discussed with Scrutiny Committee members on a regular frequency.

2. Issues for Consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. Scrutiny Committee is asked to note that the Climate and Place Directorate Project Forward Plan is not a democratic Forward Plan but will be used to highlight key issues, risks, hot topics and timeframes for upcoming required democratic decisions.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Climate and Place Leadership Team is keen to discuss and agree the contents of a Project Forward Plan with Portfolio Members and publish it to provide information for Scrutiny Committee Members.
- 3.2. The Project Forward Plan is still emerging, reflecting the work on the financial emergency. However, meetings are being held with each of the Service Directors to capture the relevant information as a matter of priority.
- 3.3. Examples of projects to be detailed include Tree Risk Management Policy, Highway Lighting and Electrical Assets Strategy, development of new Local Transport Plan and Local Plan, Future Transport, large regeneration schemes and Gravity site.
- 3.4. The use of the Project Forward Plan will assist Officers in scheduling Executive Decision reports and therefore provide timely updates for Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.5. Involving the Scrutiny Committee in development plan matters will be incorporated into the forward plan of the committee. This will include the Scrutiny Committee being consulted as part of the process of developing the

local plan and other development plan documents (including the Somerset minerals and waste plans) at Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 stages in the plan making process. These are statutory requirements for formal consultation on the local plan and there will be opportunity for Scrutiny Committee to feed in views during this period. In addition, there will be informal engagement with all members in developing the vision and during the plan preparation.

4. Consultations Undertaken

4.1. None required at this stage.

5. Implications

5.1. At this stage there are no associated financial, equalities, health and wellbeing, climate change and sustainability or HR implications.

6. Background papers

6.1. None

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

Climate and Place Project Forward Plan

Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place
22nd November 2023

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Somerset
Council

Objectives

- Provide clarity and transparency around key projects
- Clarify delivery plans, key milestones and deadlines
- Ensure decisions are made in a planned and timely manner

Climate, Environment and Sustainability

Examples of key projects:

- Refresh of Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy
- Implement requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain legislation
- Land Use Strategy
- Somerset Adaptation Strategy
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Climate, Environment and Sustainability

- Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Local Area Energy Plan
- AONB Strategy Management Plan development
- Green Assets Strategy
- Somerset Rivers Authority

Economy, Employment and Planning

- Trading Standards progress
- Broadband / Connecting Devon and Somerset

Infrastructure and Transport

- Future Transport
- Fleet rationalisation and decarbonisation
- New Local Transport Plan
- Deliver BSIP 2021 Plan
- Park and Ride service in Taunton
- Review and rationalisation of car park services