

Public Agenda Pack



Minutes of a Meeting of the Full Council held in the County Room - Somerset County Cricket Club, on Tuesday, 18 June 2024 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Mike Best (Chair)

Cllr Lee Baker (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Steve Ashton

Cllr Alan Bradford

Cllr Simon Carswell

Cllr Norman Cavill

Cllr Mandy Chilcott

Cllr Peter Clayton

Cllr John Cook-Woodman

Cllr Dixie Darch

Cllr Tom Deakin

Cllr Ben Ferguson

Cllr David Fothergill

Cllr Tony Grimes

Cllr Mark Healey

Cllr Edric Hobbs

Cllr John Hunt

Cllr Jenny Kenton

Cllr Christine Lawrence

Cllr Tony Lock

Cllr Dave Mansell

Cllr Kevin Messenger

Cllr Tessa Munt

Cllr Tom Power

Cllr Wes Read

Cllr Bill Revans

Cllr Tony Robbins

Cllr Peter Seib

Cllr Gill Slocombe

Cllr Fran Smith

Cllr Sarah Wakefield

Cllr Jason Baker

Cllr Theo Butt Philip

Cllr Mike Caswell

Cllr Nicola Clark

Cllr Barry Clarke

Cllr Simon Coles

Cllr Nick Cottle

Cllr Hugh Davies

Cllr Habib Farbahi

Cllr Bob Filmer

Cllr Andrew Govier

Cllr Pauline Ham

Cllr Bente Height

Cllr Henry Hobhouse

Cllr Dawn Johnson

Cllr Tim Kerley

Cllr Liz Leyshon

Cllr Martin Lovell

Cllr Matthew Martin

Cllr Harry Munt

Cllr Kathy Pearce

Cllr Steven Pugsley

Cllr Leigh Redman

Cllr Mike Rigby

Cllr Jo Roundell Greene

Cllr Heather Shearer

Cllr Brian Smedley

Cllr Claire Sully

Cllr Martin Wale

Cllr Richard Wilkins
Cllr Rosemary Woods

Cllr David Woan
Cllr Gwil Wren

Other Members present remotely:

Cllr Suria Aujla
Cllr Hilary Bruce
Cllr Val Keitch
Cllr Emily Pearlstone

Cllr John Bailey
Cllr Dawn Denton
Cllr Andy Kendall

18 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Councillors Suria Aujla, John Bailey, Brian Bolt, Adam Boyden, Hilary Bruce, Adam Dance, Dawn Denton, Martin Dimery, Andy Dingwall, Lance Duddridge, Michael Dunk, Sarah Dyke, Caroline Ellis, Andy Hadley, Philip Ham, Susannah Hart, Alastair Hendry, Ross Henley, Mike Hewitson, Helen Key, Val Keitch, Andy Kendall, Marcus Kravis, Mike Murphy, Frances Nicholson, Graham Oakes, Sue Osborne, Stephen Page, Oliver Patrick, Connor Payne, Emily Pearlstone, Derek Perry, Evie Potts-Jones, Faye Purbrick, Rob Reed, Diogo Rodrigues, Federica Smith-Roberts, Jeny Snell, Andy Soughton, Mike Stanton, Andy Sully, Lucy Trimnell and Ros Wyke.

Although apologies had been received, Councillors Aujla, Bailey, Bruce, Denton, Keitch, Kendall and Pearlstone attended the meeting online.

19 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

Councillors present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor of a Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

SOMERSET COUNCILLOR	CITY, TOWN AND/OR PARISH COUNCIL
Steve Ashton	Crewkerne Town Council / Hinton St George Parish Council / West and Middle Chinnock Parish Council
Lee Baker	Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council
Marcus Barr	Wellington Town Council
Mike Best	Crewkerne Town Council
Alan Bradford	North Petherton Town Council
Theo Butt Philip	Wells City Council
Simon Carswell	Street Parish Council

Norman Cavill	West Monkton Parish Council
Peter Clayton	Burnham Highbridge Town Council
Nick Cottle	Glastonbury Town Council / St Edmunds Parish Council
Tom Deakin	Taunton Town Council
Ben Ferguson	Axbridge Town Council
Bob Filmer	Brent Knoll Parish Council
Andrew Govier	Wellington Town Council
Pauline Ham	Axbridge Town Council
Edric Hobbs	Shepton Mallet Town Council
John Hunt	Bishop's Hull Parish Council
Jenny Kenton	Chard Town Council
Tim Kerley	Somerton Town Council
Tony Lock	Yeovil Town Council
Martin Lovell	Shepton Mallet Town Council
Kathy Pearce	Bridgwater Town Council
Tom Power	Wincanton Town Council
Wes Read	Yeovil Town Council
Leigh Redman	Bridgwater Town Council
Mike Rigby	Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council
Tony Robbins	Wells City Council
Peter Seib	Brympton Parish Council / Chilthorne Domer Parish Council
Heather Shearer	Street Parish Council
Gill Slocombe	Bridgwater Town Council
Brian Smedley	Bridgwater Town Council
Richard Wilkins	Curry Rivel Parish Council
Dave Woan	Yeovil Town Council

20 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 3

Public questions were received from:-

- David Redgewell – Public Transport

The questions and responses provided are attached to the minutes in Annex A.

21 Implementation of the Gravity Enterprise Zone via Gravity Locality Investment Plan - Agenda Item 4

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bill Revans, introduced the report on the

Implementation of the Gravity Enterprise Zone which the Executive considered and endorsed at its meeting on 5 June 2024.

The Executive Director for Climate and Place, Mickey Green, highlighted the main focus of the report which was the approach to delivery of the Gravity Enterprise Zone through the proposed investment in the site and the Council's approach to managing and minimising risks associated with the project. The report also looked at how the Council, through the Gravity Locality Investment Plan, would ensure the project delivered transformation for the county, specifically around movement, skills and business opportunities.

The Service Director for Economy, Employment and Planning, Paul Hickson, detailed how the Plan set out the vision, rationale and benefits from the investment for the site, the immediate locality and wider Somerset. The Plan also focused on the investment needed to deliver an advanced manufacturing facility, as proposed by Agratas and the long-lasting benefits from the investment that would also attract further investment onto the wider Gravity site.

The Executive Director for Resources and Corporate Services, Jason Vaughan, detailed the changes needed to be made to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy to accommodate the proposed investment for members to consider alongside the Gravity Locality Investment Plan. The report also detailed the Council's approach to financing the investment through borrowing and it set out the timing and funding needed to deliver the Plan in a way that was cost neutral to the Council.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried what the status was on the £55m grant and investment plan.

The Executive Director for Resources and Performance advised that there had been a long dialogue with certain departments within Government and that it had started off as a loan and was then changed to a grant which had been signed off yesterday, he further highlighted that there were set conditions for the use of the grant money.

- Councillors supported the project and that it was a good development for the area.
- Concern was raised on the transport infrastructure in and around the Bridgwater area and the lack of adequate public transport links.

The Service Director for Economy, Employment and Planning advised that the Local Development Order (LDO) focused on the impact and investment at the site and that they were working with Agratas on the plan. He further advised that other plans would include site access and improvement to the transport

infrastructure, as he wanted to minimise the impact that the workforce traffic would have on the area.

- Councillors were pleased to see progression on the project as it would help to improve the education prospects and opportunities to learn and reskill, which would hopefully encourage younger residents to remain in the area.
- Councillors requested clarification on what would happen to the grant if a Section 114 notice was issued.

The Executive Director for Resources and Corporate Services advised that if a Section 114 notice was issued, the Council would need to meet within 21 days. The notice would stop all non-essential spending within the Council and because of this, the project would not be impacted.

- Councillors requested further detail on the transport provisions, active travel, rail links, motorway links and other transportation.

The Executive Director for Climate and Place advised that those details were not contained within the report as the report was a high-level document. The LDO detailed the targets set in the report and work would need to be carried out with Agratas and would be reported to the Gravity Sub-Committee.

- Concern was raised on the negative impact on the housing in the area and councillors queried whether there would be any mitigations put in place to minimise the risk.

The Service Director for Economy, Employment and Planning agreed that this was an important point to raise and that it would be tracked as part of the workforce profile. He further highlighted that the LDO had included a provision for 750 homes and that they would need to work with Homes England on this. The Executive Director for Resources and Corporate Services also advised that the Audit Committee reviewed the Risk Register and as this would be a project risk, it would be reported to the Audit Committee and the Gravity Sub-Committee.

- Councillors wanted to ensure the Gravity Sub-Committee included councillors with local knowledge of the site and its history.
- Councillors queried how the officers would measure the positive and negative impacts the projects would produce.

The Service Director for Economy, Employment and Planning advised that it would be monitored as part of the targets set by the investment plan and by the Gravity Sub-Committee.

- Councillors were concerned by the lack of doctor and dentist provisions in the Bridgwater area and queried whether Somerset Council would have any role in ensuring that services were provided in the area.

The Chief Executive advised that work would be carried out between the Planning Department and the Integrated Care Partnership to ensure that those health services were provided.

- Councillors queried what the strategy was for accommodation and

highlighting capacity and what the timeline was for implementation.

The Service Director for Economy, Employment and Planning advised that this would be part of the development and housing need and reminded councillors that this was a high-level report and that the detail would be reported at a later stage.

- Councillors highlighted the concern raised on the M5 and the increased traffic during the summer months. They further debated the provision of an extra motorway exit and that it would not improve the motorway links. *The Executive Director for Climate and Place agreed and advised that conversations were needed between Agratas and the Department for Transport.*
- Councillors agreed that lessons needed to be learned from the impacts of the Hinkley Point project.
- Councillors thanked all officers and councillors that had been involved in getting the project to this stage.

Councillor Bill Revans proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor David Fothergill.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- a) Note the Gravity Locality Investment Plan as set out in Appendix A and associated investment priorities for the plan as outlined in para 16.6 of the report;
- b) Add the Gravity Scheme to the capital programme and to agree that the Council's Treasury Management Strategy was updated for this as outlined in Appendix B, including adopting the Prudential Treasury Indicators included in table 3 of that Appendix.

(The meeting ended at 3.15 pm)

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CHAIR

Special Full Council – 18 June 2024 – Public Questions

Annexe A – Public Questions	
Name of person submitting	Question
<p>David Redgewell</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 7</p>	<p>Question 1a –</p> <p>Whist we welcome the Transport plan for the £4 Billion giga factory at Bridgwater Somerset at Gravity site near Puriton and Woolavington funding by the UK government departments for levelling up £74 million pounds on a motorway junction to m5</p> <p>Whist this may be a useful resource for 4000 new jobs into Somerset councils Unity council area North Somerset council Banes west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and the wider Region</p> <p>What discussion are going on with the Department for transport on the allocation of money for the following part of the Transport plan.</p> <p>Network Rail Western route for freight facilities grant for a part follow to BMW in the west Midlands at Solihull</p> <p>Most Automotive companies tend to move the parts and car flows by rail.</p> <p>The mini factory at Swindon and Oxford use rail freight as does the port of Bristol in the North of county at Portbury Dock</p> <p>Has the Somerset unity council discussed this Transport plan with Western Gateway Transport Board peninsula Transport Board or the other Somerset County Authority's North Somerset council Banes and West of England mayoral combined transport Authority And National Highways.</p> <p>Rail freight operators DB the German state Railway that run Britain freight trains . Freightliner limited or colus rail</p> <p>The extra traffic and co emissions and traffic congestion will be added to m5 corridor and the Bristol box</p> <p>So as well as the motorway junction the bus service plan for 4000 people is needs more than a new bus improvement to Burnham on sea and Highbridge Railway station and Burnham on sea and Bridgwater bus and coach station and Railway station</p> <p>The west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council who fund local passengers rail services partly from Taunton, Bridgwater Highbridge and Burnham Weston super mare , Worle parkway Yatton for clevedon Nalisea and Backwell Parson street Bedminster Bristol Temple meads station and on to Bristol Lawrence hill Bristol Stapleton Road and station to Clifton Down Avonmouth Dock and seven Beach.</p>

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The mayor of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council is very keen on train services improvement to Weston Super Mare, Highbridge and Burnham on Sea, Bridgwater and Taunton. Wellington Cullompton Exeter St Davids and bus link from South Bristol and Weston Super Mare in the way there is to Hinkley Point power station site. Run by First Group plc South Buses Division Somerset passengers solutions. From across the Region.

So in the Green Travel plans what discussion have taken place with First Group plc about bus and coach Depot facilities in Bridgwater Somerset including reopening Bridgwater bus Depot for electrification of the works and Town bus and coach Network Improvement to Bridgwater railway station for bus and coach interchange Cafe toilets facilities lift bridge as a metro west Railway Network gateway with Highbridge and Burnham on Sea station. Improvement to Bridgwater bus and coach station. Why is 374 Bridgwater bus and coach station to Woolverton and villages to Walton Street Glastonbury Wells bus and coach station Chewton Mendip Farrington Gurney Clutton pensf whitchurch Hengrove Bristol Temple meads Bristol bus and coach station Not being enhanced for staff to get to work at Purton.

This route could run x74 service on the route from key towns from Bristol through Somerset via Wells, Glastonbury and street.

Please can Somerset unity council explain in view both this project being UK government funded project

If discussion on this Transport plan has been discussed with the Department for Transport Network Rail Western route National Highways. Rail freight operators bus and coach companies especially First Group plc South Buses and Wales and West Buses

Divisions First Group plc Greater Western Trains company limited GWR Stagecoach West and South West National Express coaches limited Scottish City Link Megabus Falcon coaches.

But especially Region and Somerset councils. Like North Somerset Council and Banes were some of the workforce will come from Bristol City Council West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority Mayor Dan Norris South Gloucestershire County Council Western Gateway Transport Board and Peninsula Transport Board.

Question 1b –

Will a report on the proposal for the Bus and coach services improvement plans to site and to bus and coach stations at Bridgwater and Highbridge and Burnham on Sea.

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<p>Page</p>	<p>To the Somerset bus Advisory board Somerset bus users and stakeholders forum Bridgwater Town Council public transport Forum to Highbridge and Burnham on sea Town Council public transport committee. North Somerset council and west of England mayoral combined transport Authority bus service improvement plan panel and Board.</p> <p>Question 1c Will the Battery's factory Green travel plan and sustainable transport plan on cycling walking and wheeling routes To Burnham on sea and Bridgwater Town centres and Railway stations Will their changing room facilities with showers and changing places toilets including for staff and visitors and E bike and scooter hire facilities as part of the plan to Have a safe cycling walking routes to Woolavington villages and Puriton Will Somerset unity council carry out Public consultation on the plan David Redgewell South west transport Network and Railfuture Severnside</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Digital, Councillor Richard Wilkins</p>
<p>Full written response to be distributed within 5 working days</p>	<p>Question 1a. Thank you for your question David. I am pleased as ever that you are engaged with us on bus related matters. I would encourage you to raise this sort of detailed technical issue through the Bus Advisory Board of which you are a member, as this is a more direct route for myself and relevant officers to engage with you on such detailed points.</p> <p>Turning to this month's question: The development is an important investment locally and nationally, and regular discussions are ongoing with the Department for Transport, National Highways and Network Rail regarding the access strategy. The local investment plan related to the site provides resource for local active travel and bus access, and detailed proposals will emerge as the workforce strategy develops and it becomes clearer where the workforce will live. Any public investment decisions regarding a new motorway junction and rail freight facilities are a matter for the Department for Transport and Network Rail but we continue to have close dialogue with them and the developer on these issues.</p>

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Question 1b. When details of any publicly accessible bus services funded through the local investment plan are finalised, we will be happy to bring a report on these to Somerset’s Bus Advisory Board and BUS group. Other stakeholders you have mentioned will be able to attend those meetings to receive an update on these matters.

Question 1c: The Agratas Occupier Specific site Travel Plan relating to the first of the three planned battery cell manufacturing facility buildings is currently being developed by the site promoter as part of the preparation for the submission of a Local Development Order (LDO) compliance application. The application documents The Gravity Community Forum and members briefings will collectively allow the public, stakeholders and members the opportunity to raise questions and to provide comments relating to the approach to public transport and active travel across the Gravity site relating to future stages of the development.