

Council Meeting – 2 October 2018

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Planning Policy and Transport Strategy

1. Planning Policy

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 1.1 Given the current position with establishing the new Somerset West and Taunton Council, the proposal to establish an Infrastructure Delivery Board to consider CIL allocations will now be postponed until the new Council is in place.
- 1.2 As an interim measure, the recent report to Scrutiny seeks member approval for proposed CIL allocations for the period 2019/2020-2022/2023 (totalling £15,500,000). The proposed CIL allocations are for infrastructure categories associated with the delivery of infrastructure projects for the Taunton Garden Town and approval for the CIL allocations is sought mainly so they can be committed to support the joint Housing Infrastructure Forward Fund bid in time for the 3 December 2018 submission date, which is being developed in partnership with Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council.
- 1.3 Approval of these CIL allocations is yet to be considered by the Shadow Executive and Council and is sought so we can support future infrastructure funding programmes and bids going forward should the need arise.

Land at Bagley Road, Wellington – Planning Appeal

- 1.4 Members will be aware that I was accompanied by Tim Burton to a special meeting of the Wellington Town Council to brief members on the issues surrounding the planning appeal decision for the proposed Bagley Road development and to address concerns that relevant planning policies could be affected by the Planning Inspector's decision. It was very much appreciated that Anne Elder attended the meeting in her independent advisors' role.
- 1.5 It must be stressed that over the years a policy had been challenged on a number of occasions at planning appeals and had always held firm however, on the Bagley Road appeal the Inspector over-ruled the policy as it related to this appeal. Our planning officers are as confident as they can be that other appeals by the developer will not be detrimental to the Council given different reasons for the initial planning applications being refused.
- 1.6 I have suggested to Members of Wellington Town Council that it would be prudent to continue formulating a Neighbourhood Plan thus enabling them to have some more control over development in the future.

- 1.7 A review of the Council's planning policies is due to be completed by the New Council which I advise should be a priority for that authority.
- 1.8 As of 1 October 2018 the responsibility for planning policy will sit with the Strategy function. There will be resource beyond our Strategy Team which ultimately will be within the Customer Area's specialist pool.

2. Taunton Urban Realm

- 2.1 Further high-level meetings have taken place with our Somerset County Council (SCC) colleagues to finalise plans for the permanent pedestrianisation of St James Street and a trial period of the pedestrianisation of Hammet Street.
- 2.2 It had been hoped that work would commence in October 2018 but to ensure that the Christmas shopping period is not disrupted by any unforeseen delays work is now planned to commence in January 2019.
- 2.3 The planning for the pedestrianisation of East Street is still being finalised.

3. Car Parking

Park and Ride

- 3.1 Members will be aware from recent publicity that the Administration stepped in to assist in the rescue of this much valued essential service from closure.
- 3.2 We have worked with our partners SCC and First Bus to provide a temporary reprieve for the service whilst high level planning is evolved for a viable permanent solution.

Variable Message Signage (VMS) and Car Park Pay on Foot

- 3.3 The visible side of the project, installation of kerbing and islands, entry and exit barriers, pay stations and cabling is almost completed. Everything is now being tested to ensure all the behind the scenes IT and electrical systems are working properly. We are also training up all the staff involved in day to day delivery and support for our customers. The present aim is to go live in early November 2018.
- 3.4 This means motorists will be able to take advantage of the new arrangements in the busy Christmas period in the Orchard, High Street, Tangier, Canon Street, Wood Street, Castle Street and Enfield Car Parks in Taunton.
- 3.5 At the same time we will introduce the restructured Short and Long Stay Car Park designations. This will give users a clear understanding of where

parking is available and for how long they can stay there. There are small increases for some car parks. Other car parks will remain static in their charging for short stays, while for longer stays in the majority of car parks, it will be cheaper for most people.

- 3.6 The VMS complementing these changes is already in position at key locations such as Priorswood Road, Cross Keys, Toneway, East Reach, Silk Mills and Wellington Road.
- 3.7 These will inform drivers how many spaces are available in the Long Stay Car Parks and direct them towards these. It will also avoid them having to drive around to find a suitable space and should ease queuing and reduce congestion whilst contributing to the reduction of air pollution.
- 3.8 A draft report that seeks to make no changes pro tem to the fees and charges structure for car parks located within the current Taunton Deane or West Somerset areas is currently being prepared. Work to review future charges should be linked to a combined Parking Strategy, to be undertaken in the future by the New Council.
- 3.9 By maintaining current charges it is hoped to support traffic management by seeking to influence driver behaviour with the following outcomes:-
- Providing incentive for commuters to use car parks away from the main tourist sites, freeing up space for tourist and visitors to the area;
 - Continued investment in parking assets; and
 - Providing support to residents and businesses by encouraging the use of the permits that offer a discount over pay by the meter pricing.
- 3.10 When work is due to commence on the development of Coal Orchard there will be a reduction in car parking spaces which has caused some concern with members of the public. To mitigate some of this loss, officers are planning to make better use of the nearby Canon Street Car Park by creating more parking bays by way of an effective redesign of part of the existing space.

4. Employment, Leisure and Retail Study

- 4.1 We will shortly publish our new Employment, Leisure and Retail Study which has been completed as a joint commission between Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils. The findings have been presented to Members of the Employment Land Task and Finish Group and will be published on our website.

5. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

- 5.1 A new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been commissioned jointly With West Somerset Council and South Somerset District Council as has the Taunton Deane Design Guide. These two commissions as well as the

Employment, Leisure and Retail Study are important parts of the evidence base to inform the forthcoming Local Plan review.

- 5.2 The position on the formal plan review has not changed and it remains the intention to prepare a new Local Development Scheme outlining a timeline for preparing a new local plan for the new Council area in due course.

6. Housing Infrastructure Fund

- 6.1 Officers are working on our submission to the Housing Infrastructure Fund: Forward Fund with partners SCC and Sedgemoor District Council.
- 6.2 If successful, this bid will bring in considerable infrastructure funding to unlock growth.

7. Garden Town Plan

- 7.1 In respect of the Garden Town Plan we are commissioning consultants Hyas to assist us in finalising this document, taking the helpful outputs from the Visioning Event in the Spring and internal officer work as its starting point.

Councillor Richard Parrish

