

Members: Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair), Simon Coles (Vice-Chair), Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Paul Bolton, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, Martin Hill, John Hunt, Marcus Kravis, Andy Milne, Richard Lees, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Chris Morgan, Simon Nicholls, Craig Palmer, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Peter Pilkington, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Phil Stone, Andrew Sully, Nick Thwaites, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Terry Venner, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Agenda

10. General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2020/21 (fees and charges)

(Pages 5 - 14)

This matter is the responsibility of the Executive Councillor for Corporate Resources, Councillor Ross Henley.

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information required for Full Council to approve the proposed revenue budget estimates and capital programme for 2020/21, and to approve its proposed Council Tax rate for 2020/21.

An amendment will be proposed by Councillor Dave Mansell and seconded by Councillor Gwil Wren.

Note - A recorded vote on these recommendations and amendments will be required as per the legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Hasset", written in a cursive style.

JAMES HASSETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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The meeting room, including the Council Chamber at The Deane House are on the first floor and are fully accessible. Lift access to The John Meikle Room, is available from the main ground floor entrance at The Deane House. The Council Chamber at West Somerset House is on the ground floor and is fully accessible via a public entrance door. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are available across both locations. An induction loop operates at both The Deane House and West Somerset House to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

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Somerset West and Taunton Council

Full Council - 19 February 2020

Budget Amendments - Energy and Climate Protection Projects

Proposed by Councillor Dave Mansell

Seconded by Councillor Gwil Wren

Supported by Councillors Ian Aldridge, Mark Blaker, Sue Buller, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis, John Hunt, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Andy Milne, Andy Pritchard, Nick Thwaites, Brenda Weston and Loretta Whetlor

BACKGROUND

Somerset West and Taunton Shadow Council unanimously resolved to declare a climate emergency on 21 February 2019. Good progress has been made in developing new policies, projects and strategies, including in the Corporate Plan and Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document. Work is also progressing on a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan for Somerset West and Taunton and jointly on a Somerset Climate Emergency Framework.

However, more capacity is required to deliver climate protection projects that involve and engage with the community and to identify and prepare energy projects within the council's estate, as well as by working with the community and private sectors.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE PROTECTION PROJECTS

This budget amendment will allow the appointment of a new specialist officer for community climate protection projects. It will also allow studies to be commissioned to assess and plan energy projects, including for renewable energy, battery storage and the retrofit of home insulation and low-carbon heating systems.

Initially, the new officer appointment would be on 2-year contract (starting part-way through 2020/21 – preferably by early summer), with an option to make the post permanent subject to future funding, including from savings achieved.

Grant funding would be sought to support, enhance and extend this work. Funding sources for climate protection initiatives are increasing and applications would benefit from the support of a specialist officer, so helping to attract more external funding to Somerset West and Taunton.

The post-holder will need to be able to work on their own initiative, to provide direction and assistance for some projects to be delivered by others, and to work positively with others as a team. They will need relevant experience and proven abilities relevant to the post.

Potential project areas are listed below. It may not be possible for projects in all these areas to be launched in two years, so assessing the best options and preparing realistic work programmes will be important early tasks. Some flexibility should be retained to respond to funding and other opportunities. Early projects should include pilots for the installation of effective home insulation and low carbon heating systems, with a view to their further development and implementation. The aim should be to develop pilots into larger programmes that are rolled out throughout the district, possibly in phases.

The post would be supported by a budget to cover communications, research and administration support, as needed.

Community Engagement Projects

A new specialist officer would be a catalyst and promoter of community projects related to climate change. In some cases, these projects will be time-limited or need minimal on-going support. In other cases, the specialist would help to initiate and establish projects but not provide on-going management, so ensuring these projects can be transferred to community organisations (new or existing), service providers or volunteers. This approach has been successfully demonstrated by the Resilience Manager employed by [Frome Town Council](#).

Potential community projects throughout the district include:

- Home energy and insulation projects, as outlined below.
- E-Car Clubs for shared use (and maybe shared e-bikes too).
- Share Shops (as established in [Frome](#)).
- Repair Cafes (several established already in SWT which may benefit from networking).
- Food reuse, especially from retail outlets, and Community Fridges.
- School and work-place active travel promotion.
- Low-carbon diets.
- Tree and wild flower planting and re-wilding projects.
- E-newsletter (with communications team).
- Guides and directories to low and zero carbon living.
- Many more possibilities

These projects would also involve: SWT Locality Engagement Leads and Champions

Home Energy and Insulation Projects

To contribute to effective reduction in carbon emissions, it will be important to promote home energy and insulation projects, with early pilots launched. These could include:

- a) Home solar PV panels and battery storage installation.
- b) Home insulation and low carbon heating, such as heat pumps and heat networks.

Features of these energy projects should include:

- Aiming to encourage installations that achieve or move towards zero carbon homes.
- Where possible, offering discounted bulk buy promotions* (with quality suppliers selected through procurement processes).

Projects should focus on the following to achieve maximum benefits and impact, especially initially:

- Cover most housing types in small areas (groups of streets, villages, small neighbourhoods, etc).
- Target house movers (via new council tax registrations or estate agents etc) and those replacing boilers, who are more likely to consider retrofitting energy efficiency measures and renewable energy installations.
- Target those with higher value homes, who are more likely to both have high energy use and be able to afford retrofit works.

Studies for Council Energy Projects

Potential projects for assessment and planning include:

- Solar PV panels (roof and ground) and batteries on council properties, especially where realisable savings or paying users for power.
- Utility scale battery storage (investment opportunity).
- Small/medium wind turbines on council estate in acceptable locations (possibly large on right sites).
- Energy saving measures (including smart controls and possibly demand management) and insulation retrofit in council buildings.
- The development of advice on domestic private sector insulation retrofit and heating systems (for owner occupiers and private renters and landlords).
- Joint working with the community energy sector, including the Centre for Sustainable Energy, as well as, where appropriate, with private sector companies.

Some of these projects would also involve: SWT Asset Management

* Successfully demonstrated by [Wivey Solar Club](#) in 2014 and Frome [Solar Streets](#) in 2019. Also, on a less local level, by [Solar Together](#), who have worked with over [20 local authorities](#).

New energy projects on council properties have potential to make savings and generate income for the council.

BUDGET COSTS AND FUNDING

Costs for the proposals in this report together with budget amendments to provide the funding are shown in the following table.

TABLE 1 - Budget Amendments

COSTS	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
Energy Projects Study	10,000	30,000	15,000
Community Engagement Specialist (2-year post)	30,000	40,000	15,000
Communications and support costs	20,000	20,000	10,000
TOTAL COSTS	60,000	90,000	40,000
FUNDING			
Use part of Environment Strategy £75k proposed budget	-	30,000	-
Business Rates Funding / Reserve	60,000	60,000	40,000
TOTAL FUNDING	60,000	90,000	40,000

RECOMMENDATION FOR BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Full Council resolves to make the budget amendments shown in Table 1 for implementation of climate protection and energy projects as outlined in this report.

S151 Officer Comment – Robustness of the Budget and Adequacy of Reserves

Having reviewed the proposed amendment, if supported, my opinion is the additional costs and funding option will not fundamentally change my conclusions with regard to the robustness of the budget estimates or adequacy of reserves, as set out in sections 22 to 24 in the main General Fund Budget report (Item 10). If costs are initially established as fixed term as proposed this will align with the principle of using one-off business rates funding without creating an ongoing strain on resources or increase to the projected medium term budget gap.

Adjustments to Item 10 Main Budget Report

Table 6: Total Spending on Services in 2020/21 increased by £60,000 to £17,289,828; Transfer to Earmarked Reserves reduced by £60,000 to £3,534,525

Table 7: Energy and Climate Protection Projects £60k added; Transfer to Business Rates Smoothing Reserve reduced by £60k to £1,974k

Table 8: Extract highlighting amended figures:

	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Services Costs	14,752,279	17,289,828	15,476,966	14,991,256	15,521,686	16,218,479
Earmarked Reserves-Other	2,834,631	621,236	-1,060,000	-40,000	0	0

Table 11: Net Contribution to Business Rates Smoothing Reserve reduced by £60k to £1,974k and Total reduced by £60k to £3,474k.

Climate Change Budget Information

Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) declared a Climate Emergency in February 2019 and reinforced its commitment by appointing a Portfolio Holder for Climate Change. The Council is working towards achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030. It has also declared its authority boundaries as a fracking free zone.

There are lots of projects in the pipeline of which we have included £75K in the 2020/2021 budget to move these forward, on top of the £25K from the 2019/2020 budget.

As the Climate emergency is being embedded into all that we do, there are many projects that are taking shape. We are proposing to spend this year alone, in excess of **£10m** on infrastructure projects including:

- £6m for flood alleviation and mitigation schemes, funded through a combination of New Homes Bonus (NHB), Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 contributions
- £1.5m contribution to J25 of the M5 improvements and potentially another £1m towards Toneway improvements, which will reduce congestion, ease traffic flow, reduce emissions and improve air quality
- £0.5m match funding support to Housing Infrastructure Fund bid to provide rapid bus link
- £1.5m contribution to cycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements encouraging better health and wellbeing as well as alternatives to other transport modes
- £2m contribution to public transport infrastructure improvements funded by CIL

Major Improvement Projects:

- Planned investment in Firepool – Members have seen the design concepts with an extra £8m+ included in indicative costings to address environmental factors
- £45m regeneration in North Taunton replacing poor performing housing stock with new, energy efficient properties
- Housing stock – investing £6m plus each year on major works and improvements to maintain decent homes standards. This includes significant investment in things like replacement of doors, windows that will improve thermal efficiency and help reduce fuel poverty
- The Coal Orchard project will have more town centre living accommodation with less parking, encouraging reduction in car usage and more footfall in town centre
- Garden Town – The Garden Town Vision was specifically bolstered to refer to the climate emergency and ambition to reach carbon neutrality. The TGT Design Charter & Checklist set out what we expect from new development in relation to sustainability and environmental standards, within the context of existing planning policies. The district-wide Design Guide builds on this to spread these expectations to the district as a whole.

Reducing the Council's Carbon Footprint:

- We plan to switch to a renewable energy provider for Council buildings as soon as possible resulting in a minimal additional energy cost
- Taunton Swimming Pool, Blackbrook Swimming Pool and Blackbrook Tennis centre have all had solar PV installations
- Deane House was refitted in 2018/19 with significantly improved energy efficiency through new Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning and solar PV installation
- Opportunities are being explored for the Council vehicle fleet to be replaced with Electric Vehicles when new fleet is acquired being mindful of infrastructure limitations and ensuring that the business case stacks up financially
- Use of technology by officers and members means that we have reduced paper use massively by no longer printing 1000s of pages of committee papers that quickly become waste material

What we have already achieved:

- Using council tax powers together with other Somerset councils to help generate £2.8m per year for the Somerset Rivers Authority to progress the countywide 20-Year flood action plan
- Investment of £1.2m in variable messaging and pay on exit facilities in car parks, which helps direct traffic to park and ride and available off street parking, all aimed at reducing congestion and thus emissions as well as providing a better service for customers
- Installation of solar PV panels on 247 council houses in 2015/16 at a cost of around £1.5m. The panels now provide renewable electricity, and generate an income for the Council through Feed in Tariff receipts. Initial projections suggest that the panels might save in the region of 11,015 tonnes of carbon over a 20 year period
- In 2016, through Wellington Warmer Homes we retrofitted 111 non-traditional homes in Wellington (plus 20 further non-traditional homes in Taunton at no extra cost) bringing them up from Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of E/F up to C. Total project cost £1.4m and resulted in approximately £14k coming back to us in ECO payments
- Loan to Bridgwater YMCA to enable them to transform a long term derelict building into boutique hotel offering social benefits etc. Great Western Hotel estimate that locating the hotel next to the station and customers avoiding taxi journeys has avoided 44,640 miles of pollution saved (journeys to hotel rooms alone!) and 8,000,000 grams of CO2 prevented since opening last year

Future projects include:

- Continuing to subsidise Park & Ride in Taunton with funding of £235k in 2020/2021
- Undertake a strategic review of parking provision with the aim of encouraging more use of the Park & Ride, and actively working with Somerset County Council (SCC) and bus operators to improve uptake
- The Local Plan Review Issues & Options document focuses on carbon neutrality as a primary objective and sets out the issues and options for how we will tackle it through the new Local Plan

- Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) will be rolling out the recycle more scheme across Somerset in the next two years and information can be found on the website <https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more/>
- Identifying strategies for the creation of green wedges and land acquisitions to plant more trees across the District for carbon offsetting
- Tree planting has taken place at Nerrols Country park more tree planting is planned
- We submitted a bid to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund which was unfortunately unsuccessful, but has helped us to move things forward and now in process of identifying deliverable urban tree planting projects in Taunton and Wellington ready for future funding bids

