

SWT Full Council Addendum

Tuesday, 7th February, 2023,
6.15 pm

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

Addendum

14. To consider reports from Executive Councillors

- a) Councillor Benet Allen – Corporate Resources
- b) Councillor Caroline Ellis – Culture

(Pages 3 - 14)



ANDREW PRITCHARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Full Council Meeting – 7 February 2023

Portfolio Holder Report for Communications and Corporate Resources – Cllr Benet Allen

CORPORATE SERVICES

Please find below the relevant updates relating to each of the Corporate Teams providing the main support functions to the council.

HR Team Update

- Due to the switch in HR systems data for the period is incomplete. The Team have been facilitating the switch to SAP and training has been held in early January to assist this.
- The team continue to be heavily involved in Unitary work and continuing to deliver to the directorates.

Organisational Development & Learning Update

- Supporting with Tier 2/3 recruitment and onboarding.
- 50 managers completed the Leadership Development Programme during the first part of the year with impressive feedback. Evaluation report is available.
- Significant improvement in percentage completion of mandatory corporate e-learning modules.
- Successful migration to new e-learning platform ahead of LGR.
- On-going organisation training request process.

ICT Team Update

- Primary focus of ICT has been supporting the various LGR sub-workstreams, especially the move to a single platform.
- This is a complex and substantial piece of work, and the team will all be required to assist during the cut over weekend from the 19th January.

Governance Team Update

- Work continues to balance the pressures of staff retention (against LGR and SCC opportunities), continued commitment to supporting the committee cycle, LGR workstreams and working towards the implementation phase of the CGR project.
- The Elections Team are preparing for the Taunton Town Council elections in May 2023, which will include the introduction of voter identification at polling stations.
- Recruitment for the new Taunton Town Council clerk has been undertaken in the period.

Change & Digital Team Update

Single Platform Cut Over

- SWT has moved across to the Somerset Council IT environment over the weekend of Thursday 19th to 8am Monday 23rd. This required a full IT outage to

enable user accounts, devices and data to be migrated. A project team was set up and worked closely with the LGR programme and IT Teams to ensure a smooth transition for staff and Members.

- This has included multiple briefings, communications, checklists, Q&A's and working to build a core group of Business Change Champions to help establish the services in the days following the cut-over.

Information Management Team Update

- Training held to update staff on the incoming sensitivity labelling that will be in place following the switch to the Somerset Council Microsoft environment.

Business Analyst Team Update

- The BA team have been busy working on numerous Unitary projects including mapping around benefits and revenues.
- Support has also been provided to the cut-over project, specifically associated with the shared mailboxes that exist within the council.

Health & Safety Team Update

- The work to complete the Health & Safety Improvement programme continues with most workstreams nearing an end. The follow up Audit from SWAP indicated vast improvements in all areas and we will review closing the programme in due course.
- Assure Health & Safety System – we are close to releasing the final module of the system with a noticeable increase in the reporting providing the teams with valuable opportunities to improve safety.
- We continue to work alongside SCC and district partners to develop the SC H&S sub workstream products.

Business Intelligence Team update

- Q2/ performance report taken to Executive and Scrutiny, and Q3 performance report written.
- Ongoing work to support a number of LGR workstreams including Corporate Performance, Business Intelligence, PMO and Risk Management.
- Developed new user-friendly risk management tool.
- Ongoing support to Taunton Town Council development.
- Continue to support LGR process especially regarding
 - the work to produce a single gazetteer and address record (Local Land and Property Gazetteer) for the whole of Somerset.
 - the BI requirements for the new Dynamics finance system

We also have one of the original Internal Operations programmes sitting within the team, Service Improvement & Efficiency, within which the key project still running is:

Customer Experience Improvement Project:

- Sophie Morvany presented the early deliverables of the project to SMT.
- This project improves customer experience and efficiency by reducing the number of avoidable contacts thanks to better customer channelling. The website 'contact us' page has been re-designed to promote and ease self-service and reduce the number of unnecessary requests coming through calls or general enquiries.
- Early data is showing a 12% hit increase in customers moving past the 'Contact Us' page, intimating that they have found the service required and can utilise online forms.

- Early signs show a reduced volume of calls being received which again is a positive trend representative of numerous marginal changes delivered through the project (alongside improvements delivered by the housing directorate).

FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT

Our teams continue to focus on delivering our 'business as usual' services for Somerset West and Taunton as well as undertaking significant work progressing the implementation of the new unitary authority in April. Activities are progressing well with staff working tirelessly to maintain service delivery.

The good news is that we remain on track with our procurement activities, and our financial position remains under control with good performance against budget and a healthy reserves position. Ultimately our performance for the financial year will be reported after the year end to the new Somerset Council but we will receive the Quarter 3 updates on the February/March committee cycle giving a good indication of the overall picture.

There will be some key aspects related to the closedown of SWT that we will need to ensure are completed before 1 April, and I encourage Members' support in areas such as the "related parties" returns we need to provide each year. With SWT dissolving on 31 March these will need to be completed by then.

CUSTOMER

The key focus for the Customer AD area has been on preparations for a smooth transition into the new council on 1 Apr 2023 and in maintaining business as usual service delivery.

Good progress is being made with preparations for the transition to the new council, but there is still a significant amount of work to do. There are no significant business as usual issues, but we are continuing to maintain a close focus on customer call volumes and response times during a busy time of the year.

Full Council Meeting – 7 February 2023

Portfolio Holder Report for Culture – Cllr Caroline Ellis

Cultural Development Team – Quarterly Update

Introduction: The Cultural Development Team was created in November 2021 with the key objective to deliver the SWT Cultural Strategy as adopted by full Council on 7 September 2021. Since November, the team has gone from strength to strength and is already making a real difference to the communities in our District in respect of the arts and culture offering and support provided.

News and Updates:

The team are pleased to present the annual Cultural Impact Assessment report from September 2021 – September 2022 which evidences how far the team and strategy have come in just one year: [SWT Cultural Strategy 2021 - 2022](#). The report also includes important data on how our Cultural Development team have benefited the local economy, our communities and the cultural sector. Main achievements are:

- For every £1 spent by SWT we raised £5.41 in the local economy.
- Organisations that SWT funded have generated £949,692 in income or match funding from other agencies
- For every £1 generated by the arts and culture industry an additional £1.14 of GVA is supported in the wider economy meaning that an additional £1,082,648 was generated in SWT district.



- **Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) Programme** – Thank you to everyone who got involved with the County-wide Cultural Strategy stakeholder events and fed into the development of the new Cultural Strategy for Somerset. We have received an initial draft of the strategy and the Officer Steering group is collating comments and responses before a final version goes to Members for adoption in February.
- **Events** – The Cultural Development team works closely with the SWT Events Co-ordinator and Town Centre Resilience and Transformation Officer to ensure the SWT events calendar links in with Cultural Strategy.
 - Cultural Forum – 26th January 2023
 - Taunton Dragon unveiling – 11th February 2023
 - Titan Arcadia Gallery opened at Coal Orchard – 6th December 2022
 - West Somerset Arts & Culture Meet-up:

15TH FEB 2023 1PM-3.30PM

West SOMERSET MEET-UP

Arts & Culture Meet-up
The SWT Council cultural development team invite arts and culture providers and practitioners in West Somerset to an informal social and networking event. A light lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Key Discussion?
We will ask you to share your thoughts on the challenges and opportunities in West Somerset.

TO BOOK VISIT:
www.eventbrite.com
& search for **West Somerset Meetup**

Or email:
CULTURALDEVELOPMENT@SOMERSETWESTANDTAUNTON.GOV.UK

Cllr Caroline Ellis
Culture Portfolio Holder
Will discuss developments in the SWT area

At Regal Theatre
Minehead
10-16 The Avenue,
Minehead, Somerset, TA24 5AY

The Somerset West & Taunton Council (SWT) cultural development team invite arts and culture providers and practitioners in West Somerset to an informal social and networking event on Weds 15th February 2023 at 1pm-to 3.30pm. A light finger lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Culture portfolio holder Cllr Caroline Ellis will briefly speak about developments in the SWT area, and we will ask you to share your thoughts on the challenges and opportunities in West Somerset.

There will be opportunities to network and meet other creatives and organisations plus ask our culture team questions in an informal setting.

To register for your free place please visit: [West Somerset Arts & Culture Meet-up Tickets, Wed 15 Feb 2023 at 13:00 | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com)

- **Public Art Updates:**

- Installation of the High Street, Taunton Public Artwork (Taunton Dragon Dragon Sculpture). Unveiling confirmed 11th February 2022 at 3pm linking in with half term and to serve as a lasting legacy of SWT.



Left: Dragon Sculpture due for Taunton High Street

- Working with Arts Taunton to commission a piece of Public Art in Castle Green, Taunton – artist Emma Smith commissioned for project.
- SWT managing Cotford St Luke Public Art project to ensure £32,968 S106 funding is spent on a piece of Public Art in the community. Artists Denman and Gould commissioned (in progress)
- Staplegrove Bridge – working with Taunton School/GoCreate to create a mural/piece of Public Art on the Railway Bridge (in progress)

Culture Portfolio - Cllr Caroline Ellis

Portfolio Holder Activities

Art

Me and colleagues were thrilled to attend **Titan Arcadia Gallery Taunton's** launch event on Wed 6 December. This is a fabulous new pop up at The Quay, Coal Orchard - the brainchild of Matthew Crabb Sculpture Studio supported by his colleague Simon O'Rourke - Tree Carving (who created the amazing somerset tree at The Museum of Somerset) in partnership with Somerset West and Taunton, featuring work by oodles of super talented sculptors and artists



including GoCreate Taunton / Arts Hub Taunton talents Circles forever artwork, Georgina Peters Abstract Artist and Janet GlynnSmith and Leo Davey. It is free to visit. Keep an eye out for news on artists residencies and events - they are super keen to enable all sections of community to fully experience this wonderful collection. They are also hosting sessions to advise young artists on starting out and making a living. There are stunning pieces for sale in the gallery too. This is a bit of a game-changer for Taunton and we are looking to support them to continue a presence in the town centre.



I took a gaggle of young people along with family to **Hestercombe Illuminations** this year. A truly magical event for the district! Note that Hestercombe has become a 'warm space' and people taking advantage of that (available Mon-Weds to end March) will be able to visit the art gallery and bookshop for free. Hurrah!

Public Art

Arts Taunton's project for **Public Art on Castle Green**, which SWT is supporting, has moved a step closer with the appointment of leading visual artist, Emma Smith who has an international reputation for her innovative, socially-driven art installations (recently she



engaged with residents of West Penwith to create 85 wooden sculptures along the Penzance to Marazion coastal path as well as creating amazing installations for 10 host cities of the UEFA Women's EURO 2022). This follows interviews with a stunning shortlist of artists before Christmas involving Tom Mayberry MBE, of SW Heritage Trust, public art consultant Suzanne Heath, me and Craig Stone, our Town Centre Resilience and

Transformation Lead. The aim of this project is to engage the community in the creation of a temporary public artwork/installation for Castle Green, inspired by the history of Castle Green and by the story of Taunton people, past and present, building a stronger sense of Taunton's identity and bringing more people to the town. SWT has co-funded the scoping phase of this project. Arts Taunton has now begun raising funds for the final artwork which is expected to be in place by the summer of 2024.

Music

I was thrilled to do a reading at **VOCE Chamber Choir's** festive celebration of winter in words and music in St George's Church, Wilton on 4th December.

NSPCC Carols by Candlelight on 15th December was a beautiful Carol concert in perfect setting of Taunton Minster in aid of NSPCC - bravo to the **Collegium Singers and Stagecoach Performing Arts Taunton**.

Carols around the bandstand on 12th December was as warm and wonderful as ever despite sub-zero temperatures and the tree lighting added huge charm and pzazz. Fabulously cheesy Christmas jokes and hearty singing in aid of Taunton Mayor's Charity, Cancer Research UK, drew a huge crowd. Bravo and thanks to Somerset West and Taunton staff for organising another memorable community event and to Taunton Concert Band Taunton Deane Male Voice Choir, Let's Sing, The West Somerset Singers, Rock Choir Clevedon, Weston super Mare, Burnham on Sea, Bridgwater & Taunton, Taunton Street Pastors and sea cadets.

Young musicians had the chance to take part in a **masterclass with Philippe Scharz the principal trumpet of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales** in December. Organised by the pioneering **Luís Martelo**, this was followed by a very special concert at Taunton Minster on 20th December. Some of the performers had only just started learning the trumpet, others had been playing for a while - they had the chance to make music with two of the most talented trumpeters in the UK.



Theatre

Taunton Brewhouse's magical circus, musical Christmas Production with Meta Theatre had a great run – the talented cast received standing ovations at each of the performances I attended. A notable feature of TTA's Christmas shows is always the local youth ensemble from Taunton and the surrounding areas which brings the talents of children aged between nine and 17 into the spotlight, giving them the opportunity to work and perform with professionals.



Taunton Theatre Association AGM on 13 Jan was an opportunity to reflect on a tough year but also celebrate the achievements of the Brewhouse team in providing so many amazing theatre, comedy, music and community events and workshops. Audience numbers continue to increase post Covid and new Executive Director Vickie Hobbs inspires great confidence with her cultural awareness and focus on increasing accessibility while also improving commerciality, with new corporate sponsors lined up to support what is shaping up to be an amazing spring season. Tickets for the 2023 Christmas Show – a joint production of a Christmas Carol with the acclaimed **Pleasuredome Theatre Company** are selling already!

Post the AGM I popped in to the Brewhouse Studio to take part in one of the creative public workshops organised by the **The Bluebirds Theatre Company** as part of their **Knickerline Project** (with funding from Somerset Community Foundation, Somerset Skills and Learning and SWT). The Bluebirds are developing a brand new music theatre show and exhibition for International Women's Day based on real women's lives and our dealings with knickers among other things!. Stories (through spoken word, song and visual art) are being gathered from women and those who identify as women of all ages and backgrounds in partnership with Taunton Brewhouse, Go Create, and The Princess Theatre, Burnham-on-Sea.



Also Known As (aKa) Dance Theatre (a company in residence at Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre and founded by local talents Jen Grant and Joe Garbett) who specialise in super engaging and accessible dance theatre shows has been touring primary schools with their brilliantly bonkers show, A Real Fiction. I booked a slot for Taunton Home Education and it was quite something, inspiring kids to devise their own shows. Free shows, funded through the Arts Council have all been booked up but I would thoroughly recommend this delightful show for any school, children's/youth group or community group.



Many congratulations to the **Regal Theatre, Minehead** and **Wayfarers** on their hugely successful pantos this season. I am very much looking forward to attending **Wellington Arts Association's** Once upon a Time in Pantoland at the Wellesley on 27 Jan.

