

SWT Full Council - 3 December 2019

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Simon Coles, Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Dixie Darch, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Marcus Kravis, Andy Milne, Richard Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Craig Palmer, Martin Peters, Peter Pilkington, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Nick Thwaites, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: James Barrahan, Lesley Dolan, Simon Doyle, Paul Fitzgerald, Paul Harding, James Hassett, Robert Hillier, Simon Lewis, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Ann Rhodes, Amy Tregellas, Fiona Webb, Jane Windebank and Rich Wiseman

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

71. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors P Bolton, H Davies, H Farbahi, M Hill, S Lees, C Morgan, S Nicholls, D Perry, P Stone and T Venner.

72. Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council

(Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 8 October 2019 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of Full Council held on 8 October 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

73. Declarations of Interest

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

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr M Barr	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Blaker	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC & Bishop's Hull	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Milne	All Items	Porlock	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Palmer	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Peters	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Wedderkopp	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
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74. **Public Participation**

Karuna Tharmananthar (Extinction Rebellion) made the following statement in relation to Agenda Item 11, Garden Town Charter and Checklist:-
The Council had declared a climate emergency almost nine months ago and quite a lot had happened since then, but not all was good news. The most significant factor was that the risk of the temperature exceeding 1.5 degrees had increased and the World Meteorological Organisation had published findings that forecast an increase of 3 degrees, which would have a huge impact in terms of security, flooding and wellbeing. However, there was still an opportunity to take action. Dealing with climate not only dealt with the climate disaster effects, but it also brought some co-benefits in terms of health, wellbeing, sustainability and so on. Later on in the agenda, discussions would be had on the Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town, which was one area he would like to focus on, specifically building new homes. New homes had a legacy for carbon footprints, from when they were built, but more importantly throughout their lifespan and it was really important that the Council addressed the standard of homes that were built in the town. He gave an example of some new homes that had been built in Norwich which had met the carbon neutral standards and offered social and community benefits, which showed that it could be achieved. The design and construction techniques were available to deliver that within the area. The Standard that was mentioned in the Guide was adopted in 2012 in collaboration with Government. Since then, over 1.4 million homes had been built and only 104 had met the carbon neutral standards. He asked what the Council hoped to achieve by adopting a Standard that had failed to deliver homes for the future. He asked Councillors to challenge what they were being presented with and asked them to think of their constituents and their future generations to ensure that officers came up with a Standard that delivered carbon neutral homes for the future and gave a clear message to Developers that the Council would not allow homes that did not contribute positively to the Council's target towards carbon neutrality.

Alan Debenham asked the following questions:-

Question 1

It's bad enough calling the new merged council Somerset West and Taunton instead of what was tacitly agreed at a full Council meeting in October 2018 should have been Taunton Deane and West Somerset. Now we have the added stupidity of calling it the awkward to say "SWTC" instead of "SWAT", just as Bath and North East Somerset Council calls itself "BANES". Please could the Council be helpful to everyone in recognising and calling its name by adopting SWAT as it's easily said and remembered name??

Question 2

Its good news to see the North Taunton Woolaway Project progressed with 86 net gain in rented dwellings. After spending some £45 million of public funds to finance this whole project where do the public stand regarding future tenants' 'Right to Buy' at previous big discounts thereby putting the new properties into probable private purchase with no rented replacements, with new private ownership sales speculation for private profit as happened on a large scale at the

onset of the Thatcher Council House big discounted, non-replaced 'giveaways' back in 1980??

Question 5

In terms of atmospheric CO2 concentrations and climate records, nothing higher than 280 ppm (parts per million) existed for the whole of human existence until the industrial revolution. Very latest news puts ever increasing CO2 levels at over 415 ppm, now more than likely to accelerate into a 3 degrees rise in global temperatures by 2100 – double the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement –with sea levels rising probably 15 feet or more which, for example, exceeds the Hinkley C designed sea-wall defence height of some 13 feet, supposedly protecting a high-level radioactive on-site storage facility.

Given that the Government, as well as SWAT, have declared "Climate Emergencies", surely Planning Committee must now make climate change mitigation an immediate material consideration in all planning and building regulation matters?

AND with all existing planning and development permissions no longer fit for purpose, surely these MUST be reviewed ASAP for large uplifted sea level rises?

The Leader would provide a written answer to all of Alan Debenham's questions.

Pip Sheard (Cycle Network) made the following statement in relation to a petition submitted to Full Council:-

The petition that was being presented, was to go to both Somerset West and Taunton Council and Somerset County Council (SCC) and it called for funding bids from Government to achieve a transformational improvement to Taunton's cycling and walking network. It had been signed by 1788 residents and was supported by 8 Parish Councils, along with 40 doctors, mainly consultants from Musgrove Park Hospital. SCC had failed to gain funding for schemes from bids to the Department of Transport and recently over £15 million had been spent on road schemes. The petition asked for the next bid to be for Taunton cycling projects. Taunton had massive potential for more cycling and walking journeys as an alternative to short car trips, which was highlighted in the Garden Town Vision. 50% of car journeys within the town were under 2 miles. An increase of cycling and walking would give multiple benefits, which included a reduction in pollution and congestion, improved health and even more reliable journey times. It also meant that residents saved money and it gave freedom and independence to those who did not have access to a car and needed to get a bus. An efficient transport system supported the economy and crucially what they were doing supported the Council's Garden Town Vision and Draft Climate Change Strategy. Cycling to work in Taunton was already double the national average but there had not been a vast amount of investment over the last 15 years, so with investment they believed that Taunton could become a beacon cycling town as well as a Garden Town with good links to the surrounding towns and villages. They looked forward to the Council's receipt of the petition.

Steve Altria (Creech St Michael Parish Council) made the following statement in relation to Agenda Item 12, Creech St Michael Neighbourhood Development Plan:-

Many of the surrounding villages had been involved in the consultation on the Development Plan and he wanted to commend the Plan to the Council and

thanked the officers for their support in getting the Plan to this stage and he looked forward to working with the Council in the delivery of the Plan, in particular dealing with the road safety issues in Creech St Michael.

75. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

The Chair started the meeting with a minutes silence for those affected by the London terror attacks.

She then advised all Councillors about the upcoming Full Council meeting dates and reminded them that the rules of purdah were to be adhered to during this meeting of Full Council.

76. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

The Leader advised Full Council that Councillor Alan Wedderkopp had resigned from the Executive and thanked him for all his work on his Portfolio.

She also reminded Councillors of the upcoming Mayor's Christmas Carol Service being held in Vivary Park on 16 December 2019 and that the ice rink on Castle Green was due to open on 9 December 2019 and hoped that many people would visit and use the facility over the festive period.

77. **To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

Councillor Marcus Barr asked the following question:-

With reference to Wellington Christmas Tree Lights, why was Wellington having to pay £24,000 to put up Christmas tree lights this year. When back in 2015 they were only charged £12,000.

The Leader responded with the following:-

There were a couple of reasons for the difference in cost, those were:-

- The specification between now and 2015 was different. E.g. there were more lights, and more people were required to do the lights.
- The Council hadn't charged what the job actually cost. Last year the Council charged Wellington Town Council £21,000, which still wasn't a true cost.
- And finally, although the Council had originally quoted a lower figure, it was not an attempt to make any money and the Clerk had been advised that any underspend would be returned to them.

78. **Adoption of the international definition of Anti-Semitism**

Resolved that Full Council adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition on Anti-Semitism, including the examples.

79. **Financial Monitoring - 2019/20 as at 30 September 2019**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried how the figures for Members Allowances had been underestimated.
The Section 151 Officer advised that the figures had been set prior to officers knowing how many councillors and executive members there would be.
- Councillors requested clarification on the figures reported to Scrutiny and why they differed to the figure within the Full Council report.
The Section 151 Officer advised that the figures were often updated between the time they were reported to Scrutiny and Full Council.

The following questions would be provided with a written answer from officers:-

- Councillors queried why the East Quay Loan was still included in the Capital Programme.
- Councillors queried who was responsible for Operation Clean Sweep.
- Councillors requested figures on bed and breakfast/homelessness costs to show how they had exceeded the budget.
- Councillors queried who had decided not to have an 'in-house' pest control service.
- Councillors queried how the Community Grant had been exceeded.
- Councillors queried how officers had saved £408,000 on the insurance premiums.
- Councillors highlighted that the car park income was under budget and requested a breakdown of the figures for each car park to show a comparison on the income generated by the pay on exit car parks.
- Councillors queried what plans had been put in place to direct traffic towards the car parks.
- Councillors queried whether there were any health implications with falling behind in the private water sampling.

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 1) Noted the Council's forecast financial performance for 2019/20 financial year as at 30 September 2019;
- 2) Approved a Supplementary Budget of £747,000 in the General Fund Revenue Budget for transitional and service resilience costs in 2019/20, funded from the New Homes Bonus / Growth earmarked reserve;
- 3) Noted that the Executive approved a virement within the HRA Revenue Budget of £339,000, from in year underspend and managed savings to transitional and service resilience costs in 2019/20; and
- 4) Noted the risk to funding of future growth programme priorities, and committed to reviewing future options through the budget setting process.

80. **Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried the score given for the potential growth on the risk matrix and what the driver for that was.

Officers advised that it was easier to claim and therefore could lead to an increase in claims submitted.

- Councillors queried whether Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment was disregarded in the calculations.
Officers confirmed that they were both disregarded.
- Councillors requested clarification on whether the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) submitted in the previous year, would still be valid.
Officers confirmed that because there had been no changes to the Scheme, it meant that the EIA could still be used.

Resolved that Full Council approved that the current CTS scheme for working age customers was retained for 2020/21.

81. **Garden Town Charter and Checklist**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors welcomed the document and it was a useful tool for the Planning Committee to use and suggested some training to be carried out with the Committee Members.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation agreed that a training session would be advisable and supported officers in the arrangement of that.
- Concern was raised that the document had been pushed through and that it would not carry any weight, especially with the introduction of the full Design Guide.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that this document was only for the Garden Town area and would be used for planning decisions until the Design Guide was brought to Full Council in the New Year.
- Councillors queried whether it incorporated zero carbon emissions.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that the Local Plan Options document was due to go out for consultation and would include the priorities for new homes.
- Councillors requested a more joined up process to include schools.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation agreed with the inclusion of schools within the document.
- Councillors queried the possibility of the introduction of a district heating system.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation agreed and advised if the opportunity arose, he would be happy to investigate.
- Councillors requested improved communications between the Planning and Building Regulations Departments.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation agreed and wanted building regulations specifications to be as high as possible.

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 1) Formally adopted the Taunton Garden Town Charter and Checklist as Council policy and technical guidance for development control purposes to help the Local Planning Authority assess the quality of proposed

- developments and to clearly set out the standard expected for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods in the Garden Town area; and
- 2) Authorised the Head of Strategy in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder to make any necessary minor editorial corrections and minor amendments to the document, and to agree the final publication style.

82. **Creech St. Michael Neighbourhood Development Plan**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Ward Councillors for Creech St Michael both supported the document and thanked everyone that had been involved in the work.
- Concern was raised that in other areas that had adopted a Neighbourhood Plan, attention was not given to Section 106 part of the plan.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation agreed with the point made and advised that Planning would need to pay attention and give weight to the Neighbourhood Plan especially the Section 106 part.

Resolved that Full Council considered the Creech St Michael Neighbourhood Development Plan and that it be formally made as a Somerset West and Taunton Development Plan Document.

83. **North Taunton Woolaway Project - Phase A Update and Home Owner Acquisition Budget**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Concern was raised on the stress and disruption to the community caused by the Project.
- Councillors agreed with the delegation of decisions to the Director of Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to speed up the process, but wanted assurance that the decisions would be communicated to the Ward Councillors so they could assist with any queries raised by residents in the North Taunton area.
The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that she could be contacted at any time and was happy to arrange update meetings with the Ward Councillors prior to any decisions coming to Full Council.
- The Shadow Portfolio Holder for Housing supported the recommendations and advised that the North Taunton units were in a worse state than those in the original report in 2013.
- Councillors commended the officers for all their hard work carried out in the community and the high level of communication maintained throughout the progression of the Project.
- Councillors queried whether the project would include passive housing.
The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that they had not intended to include any passive housing but hoped to be as close to carbon neutral as possible. Once the contract had been assigned, officers would ensure that carbon neutrality was included in the build specifications.
- Councillors queried the quality of insulation used and didn't want to miss out on the opportunity to build award winning housing with the area.

- Councillors queried whether the private home owners within the North Taunton area had been given the option to swap to other properties. *The Portfolio Holder for Housing would check and provide a written answer.*

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 1) Delegated the decisions to progress the enabling works for the remaining Phases to the Director of Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing;
- 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Housing to negotiate and agree the purchase of the 19 private owned homes within Phases B – E of the North Taunton Woolaway Project area;
- 3) Approved a supplementary budget of £5.7 million for Phases B – E of the North Taunton Woolaway Project;
- 4) Approved an additional supplementary budget of £1.5 million for Phase A of the North Taunton Woolaway Project increasing the budget for Phase A from £7.2 million to £8.7 million; and
- 5) The budgets would be funded utilising a combination of capital receipts, Social Housing Development Fund revenue contribution, and capital borrowing. Council delegated the final funding arrangement to be determined by the S151 Officer in line with the Council's capital and treasury strategies, prioritising affordability for the Housing Revenue Account set out in Table 2 in the report.

(The Meeting ended at 8.10 pm)