

## SWT Executive

Wednesday, 16th December, 2020,  
6.15 pm



Somerset West  
and Taunton

[SWT VIRTUAL MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

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**Members:** Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair), Benet Allen (Deputy Chair), Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

### Agenda

**1. Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee.

(Pages 5 - 38)

**3. Declarations of Interest**

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial or personal interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The personal interests of Councillors and Clerks of Somerset County Council, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes.)

**4. Public Participation**

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

**Temporary measures during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

Due to the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will holding meetings in a virtual manner which will be live webcast on our website. Members of the public will still be able to register to speak and ask questions, which will then be read out by the Governance and Democracy Case Manager during Public Question Time and will either be answered by the Chair of the Committee, or the relevant Portfolio Holder, or be followed up with a written response.

- 5. Executive Forward Plan** (Pages 39 - 40)

To receive items and review the Forward Plan.
- 6. Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 2, 2020-21** (Pages 41 - 56)

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

This paper provides an update on the council's performance for the first 6 months (April – September) of the 2020/21 financial year.
- 7. 2020-21 Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2020)** (Pages 57 - 78)

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

This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council for the financial year 2020/21 (as at 30 September 2020).
- 8. Review of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants** (Pages 79 - 88)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor for Community, Councillor Chris Booth.

To report on progress since February 2020 regarding the Annual Review for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants and make future spending proposal.
- 9. Extension of Public Space at Belvedere Road** (Pages 89 - 94)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor for Asset Management and Economic Development, Councillor Marcus Kravis.

The Asset Management Team are reviewing ongoing liabilities for Council owned property as part of the 30 year maintenance plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Hasset". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

**JAMES HASSETT**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected during the recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's policy. Therefore unless you are advised otherwise, by taking part in the Council Meeting during Public Participation you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of the sound recording for access via the website or for training purposes. If you have any queries regarding this please contact the officer as detailed above.

Following Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will be live webcasting our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting](#) website.

If you would like to ask a question or speak at a meeting, you will need to submit your request to a member of the Governance Team in advance of the meeting. You can request to speak at a Council meeting by emailing your full name, the agenda item and your question to the Governance Team using [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

Any requests need to be received by 4pm on the day that provides 2 clear working days before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting itself). For example, if the meeting is due to take place on a Tuesday, requests need to be received by 4pm on the Thursday prior to the meeting.

The Governance and Democracy Case Manager will take the details of your question or speech and will distribute them to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chair will then invite you to speak at the beginning of the meeting under the agenda item Public Question Time, but speaking is limited to three minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes and you can only speak to the Committee once. If there are a group of people attending to speak about a particular item then a representative should be chosen to speak on behalf of the group.

Please see below for Temporary Measures during Coronavirus Pandemic and the changes we are making to public participation:-

Due to the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will holding meetings in a virtual manner which will be live webcast on our website. Members of the public will still be able to register to speak and ask questions, which will then be read out by the Governance and Democracy Case Manager during Public Question Time and will be answered by the Portfolio Holder or followed up with a written response.

Full Council, Executive, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: [www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please email: [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

**SWT Executive - 16 September 2020**

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)  
Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: Dawn Adey, Nick Bryant, Gordon Dwyer, Paul Fitzgerald, Alison North, Sarah Povall, Andrew Pritchard, Lisa Redston, Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas and Mark Wathen

Also Present: Councillors Simon Coles, Habib Farbahi, John Hunt, Janet Lloyd, Andrew Sully, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Alan Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

18. **Apologies**

An apology was received from Councillor P Pilkington.

19. **Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive**

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 15 July 2020 circulated with the agenda)

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Executive held on 15 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

20. **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 C Booth | All Items  | Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr S Coles | All Items  | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr J Hunt  | All Items  | SCC & Bishop's Hull                    | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr R Lees  | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr L Lisgo | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr J Lloyd | All Items  | Wellington &                           | Personal | Spoke           |

|                      |           |                               |          |                 |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
|                      |           | Sampford Arundel              |          |                 |
| 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 R Tully         | All Items | West Monkton                  | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr A Wedderkopp    | All Items | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr B Weston        | All Items | Taunton Charter Trustee       | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr L Whetlor       | All Items | Watchet                       | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr G Wren          | All Items | Clerk to Milverton PC         | Personal | Spoke           |

21. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

22. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

**Resolved** that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

23. **Emergency Town Centre Recovery and back-fill of Economic Growth and Prosperity Fund Report**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Chair of Scrutiny gave an update on the discussions raised on the report at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting. He advised the Executive of the reasons why they had proposed an additional recommendation.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development advised he had spoken to members of the Taunton Chamber of Commerce and they were happy to include members of the Taunton Charter Trustees in the decision making process.*
- The Vice Chair of Scrutiny thanked the Executive for acknowledging the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee. She wanted to ensure that the Charter Trustees were included as Taunton did not have a Town Council to include in the consultation.
- The Executive agreed that the Taunton Charter Trustees should be included in the Working Group for the Taunton area.

*The Economic Development Operational Manager gave reassurance on the governance arrangements within the terms of reference for the distribution of funds. She also gave information on the composition of each working group and that she was keen to ensure each group were represented.*

- Councillors queried the wording used for the additional recommendation from the Scrutiny Committee.

*The Director for Development and Place advised that the Governance Specialist had listened back to the recording of the meeting and confirmed that the wording had been read out at the meeting and voted on by the Scrutiny Committee. She also confirmed that the report had been brought forward because the original funds had already been approved and allocated to the project but that they had been used to assist with the work carried out during the Covid Pandemic and that Councillors were being asked to approve for the budget to be backfilled to allow the Town Centre Recovery Project to carry on.*

**Resolved** that the Executive:-

- 1) Noted that £535,000 had been repurposed for Emergency Town Centre Recovery following Covid-19 Lockdown utilising the Council's Economic Growth and Prosperity Fund held in earmarked reserves;
- 2) Recommended that Full Council approved a budget allocation of £500,000, funded from General Reserves, to back-fill the Economic Growth and Prosperity fund;
- 3) Delegated authority to approve expenditure of the budget allocation of £500,000 as referred to in 2.2 to the Director of Development and Place in consultation with the Economic Development Portfolio Holder; and
- 4) The Director of Development and Place and the Economic Development Portfolio Holder consulted with councillors from the Taunton Charter Trustees alongside the Taunton Chamber of Commerce as part of the Working Group for Taunton.

#### 24. **Small Scale Industrial Space Local Development Order Report**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked the Councillors for their hard work and they were pleased to see cross party involvement.
- Councillors requested some changes to the wording in the Design Guide. *The Assistant Director for Strategic Place Planning advised that it was the Local Development Order that the permissions were binded to and that the Design Guide advised how the work should be done, hence the wording used, which would allow for flexibility. The Strategy Specialist advised that they could make changes to the document prior to the report going to Full Council.*
- Councillors thanked the officers for their hard work on the documents.

**Recommended** that Executive:-

- 1) Delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Strategic Place Planning and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation to make any minor amendments in accordance with the discussion had at the Executive

- meeting held on 16 September 2020 and any changes in legislation, prior to the report being taken to Full Council for approval; and
- 2) Approved the progress of Small Scale Industrial Space Local Development Order in the Somerset West and Taunton Area to Full Council for adoption.

25. **Delivering Regeneration - Setting up a Special Purpose Vehicle**

**Resolved** that the item be deferred until the meeting of the Executive being held on 21 October 2020.

(The Meeting ended at 7.40 pm)

Draft



## SWT Executive - 23 September 2020 held via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)  
Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Marcus Prouse, Amy Tregellas, Tim Bacon, Scott Weetch, Joe Wharton, Jo Comer and Julie Jordan

Also Present: Councillors Simon Coles, John Hassall, Libby Lisgo, Nick Thwaites, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 26. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Pilkington.

### 27. 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 C Booth         | All Items  | Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr S Coles         | All Items  | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr R Lees          | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr L Lisgo         | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke           |
| 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 R Tully         | All Items  | West Monkton                           | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr L Whetlor       | All Items  | Watchet                                | Personal | Spoke           |

### 28. Public Participation

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

29. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

**Resolved** that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

30. **Community Chest Report**

The report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Chris Booth, Portfolio Holder for Community and the recommendations seconded by Councillor Smith-Roberts.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- A query was raised as to whether there were criteria around organisations receiving grants from other places?
- *This was specifically queried in the application forms.*
- It was understood this fund would only be for those organisations that were very small and did not employ paid staff?
- *This was confirmed but there was flexibility. Those organisations with an income of £10,000 or less would be prioritised.*
- It was queried as to the Budget identified if not spent by the end of the current financial year?
- *A dashboard had been created which would identify the spend in real time. A decision would be taken as to where to utilise the funds if an underspend remained.*
- The Leader expressed her support for the scheme and stated that it had been highlighted during the current pandemic how the organisations to be supported by this fund underpinned everything the Council did.
- The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the intention was to launch the fund on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

**RESOLVED:**

1. To approve a supplementary budget of £250,000 for the Community Chest, to be funded from Business Rates Retention Pilot surplus income due to be received in 2020/21.
2. Delegate authority to the Communities Portfolio Holder to make decisions relating to the spend of this fund.
3. The Communities Portfolio Holder will engage with ward members on proposed spending within their wards.

31. **Shared Legal Service Report**

The report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Ross Henley, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and the recommendations seconded by Councillor Allen.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- It was commented that pooling of legal resources was considered prudent when legal services could potentially be expensive.
- Queries were raised over how successful the link with Mendip District Council had been, and how the fair sharing of the service had been monitored?
- *Regular monitoring meetings were held with Mendip District Council and Service Level Agreements were in place. This piece of work would be the time to ensure the proposal was reviewed and was fit for purpose.*
- It was commented that it was important to ensure the legal service was available during the next phase of the unitary process.

**RESOLVED to:**

1. Noted the contents of this report.
2. Authorised the establishment of a project team to work on the development of a business case and options appraisal for the sharing of legal services between Mendip District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council, South Somerset District Council and Sedgemoor District Council.
3. Authorised the Director of Internal Operations or her delegated representative, following consultation with the Districts' Unitary Programme Board and Unitary Steering Group, to take any and all decisions as deemed necessary to enable the business case and options appraisal to be developed to include, without limitation, finalising, approving and signing Heads of Terms and engaging any external advisers.
4. Agreed a contribution of up to £5,000 to fund the Councils one quarter share in relation to the engagement of any external advisors.
5. Authorised the Director of Internal Operations or her delegated representative to review the progressing of the shared legal services project in the event that Central Government decide to proceed with one Unitary Authority for Somerset.

32. **National Living Wage Report**

The report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Ross Henley, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and the recommendations seconded by Councillor Smith-Roberts.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- *It was confirmed the Council currently paid employees equally regardless of characteristic and fulfilled its statutory obligations in terms of reporting on pay.*
- Was the Council looking to re-negotiate existing contracts?
- *The Council would not look to re-negotiate existing contracts but would talk to existing suppliers that the Council would be looking to move forward on this issue in future contracts.*
- A question was raised as to whether this had been adopted elsewhere across the country?
- *Just over forty Councils in England had brought this forward, and there was an opportunity for SWT to be an exemplar in the South West on this issue.*
- It was suggested that in negotiating with suppliers, the Council needed to be robust in ensuring the requirement for a real Living Wage was being passed on to the contracted employee.
- The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources expressed that it be included in the minutes that it was his keen aspiration that Steps 2 and 3 of the process as outlined in the report were completed in time for a decision by Council to be made on this matter by the end of May 2021.

**RESOLVED** to endorse the four stage process listed;

1. Stage 1 – Obtain approval from the Executive to proceed to Stage 2 of the process.
2. Stage 2 – Carry out an Internal Review with directorates to ascertain whether it is feasible to become an accredited Living Wage employer.
3. Stage 3 – Carry out a consultation and impact assessment with our suppliers and partners to ascertain if it is feasible to change our procurement process to become an accredited Living Wage Employer.
4. Stage 4 – If stages 2 and 3 identify that it is feasible to proceed with this project, develop an Action Plan to work towards becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer.

### 33. **Unitary Programme Delivery Funds Report**

The report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts, Leader of the Council and the recommendations seconded by Councillor Wakefield.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- It was queried as to what exactly the budget would be required for?
- *The budget was required for a variety of anticipated activity as outlined in the report, including external advice, implementation, and communications with residents. Any unspent funds would be returned to reserves.*
- The specific amount of £249,000 had been requested as the maximum threshold the Executive could approve under the Constitution.

**RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve a supplementary budget of £249,000 funded from general reserves, for expenditure to provide resources and advice to the Council as it progresses the Stronger Somerset business case and prepares for transition.
2. Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council and/or the Chief Executive, to approve individual items of expenditure against the budget.

34. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

35. **Purchase and Development Report**

The confidential report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Marcus Kravis, Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development and the recommendations seconded by Councillor Booth.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive approved;

1. The principle of purchasing the site for up to a maximum of a confidential amount identified in the report.
2. An additional confidential budget to progress detailed design up to construction stage.
3. That funding is sought from Homes England and if a viable solution is not identified then the site should be opened up as a green space with car parking for the benefit of the area.
4. Delegated authority to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the S151 Officer, to agree the final terms and complete the transaction, subject to satisfactory due diligence and satisfactory professional advice is received in relation to Finance, Procurement, Title, SPV, Tax and VAT and Legal and Ground Conditions specifically.
5. The acquisition to be subject to an independent valuation confirming the purchase represents value for money and the scheme is valued as outlined in the report.
6. That the development will achieve zero carbon and if possible contribute affordable housing.

(The Meeting ended at 7.43 pm)

## SWT Executive - 20 October 2020 held via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)  
Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: James Hasset, Dawn Adey, James Barra, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Paul Fitzgerald, Marcus Prouse, Amy Tregellas, Chris Hall, Graeme Thompson, Sue Tomlinson and Tracey Meadows (Democracy and Governance)

Also Present: Councillors Ian Aldridge, Simon Coles, John Hassall, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Ray Tully, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 36. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Marcus Kravis.

### 37. 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 C Booth      | All Items  | Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr S Coles      | All Items  | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr R Lees       | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr M Lithgow    | All Items  | Wellington                             | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr J Lloyd      | All Items  | Wellington & Sampford Arundel          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr D Mansell    | All Items  | Wiveliscombe                           | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr P Pilkington | All Items  | Timberscombe                           | 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-     | All Items  | Taunton Charter                        | Personal | Spoke and Voted |

|                       |           |                         |          |       |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------------|----------|-------|
| Roberts               |           | Trustee                 |          |       |
| Cllr V Stock-Williams | All Items | Wellington              | Personal | Spoke |
| Cllr R Tully          | All Items | West Monkton            | Personal | Spoke |
| Cllr B Weston         | All Items | Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke |
| Cllr L Whetlor        | All Items | Watchet                 | Personal | Spoke |

38. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

39. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

40. **Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan**

The report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Peter Pilkington, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- It was commented that this Strategy set an example, with Councils showing cross-party leadership which would encourage the wider community to follow.
- A query was raised as to whether the formation of the member led groups would be brought back to Full Council for sign-off, and how this work across the whole of Somerset?
- *It was confirmed that the future governance arrangements were yet to be finalised. The Somerset Waste Partnership model was one of the options being looked at.*
- A query was raised as to the impact of the Planning White Paper on these plans and it was confirmed that it was too early to say but this would be something to be monitored.
- It was commented that a lot of Towns and Parish Councils had also declared Climate Emergencies and it would be useful to have a list of those who had done so and how they could work alongside.
- Following on from the recommendation made at Scrutiny around ring-fencing £50,000 of the £500,000 fund for planting trees, a query was raised as to how the figure of £500,000 was arrived at and if this recommendation was adopted would something else be scrapped?



- Concern was raised that the Council needed to have an iterative plan for tree-planting, and specifically stipulating the amount without the due diligence being undertaken on requirement would be counterproductive at this stage.
- It was recognised that the Council could not operate alone on this issue.
- It was stated that Climate Change was the Golden Thread of everything the Council was doing, with recent examples such as the E-Scooter Trial and the Free Trees scheme for Towns and Parish Councils evidence of this.
- The Portfolio Holder thanked Councillors for the robust debate that had taken place at Scrutiny and he had taken on board the comments made.

**RESOLVED** that Executive recommended to Full Council that:-

1. The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy is adopted.
2. The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan is approved.
3. A local, multi-agency Climate Emergency Task Force is established to aid delivery and implementation of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.
4. A supplementary "Climate Change Fund" budget of £500,000 is approved within the General Fund 2020/21 Revenue Budget, funded from General Reserves, for the delivery of Somerset West and Taunton priority actions with delegated authority to the Director External Operations and Climate Change / Assistant Director Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management to agree those priority actions in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change. Council also be asked to approve the principle that any unspent balance of this Fund at the end of 2020/21 be carried forward to 2021/22 financial year.

#### 41. **Coastal Protection Works Associated with the B3191**

The report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Sarah Wakefield, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- As a Coastal Protection Authority, SWT was expected to bring forward protection schemes for areas designated under the Shoreline Management Plan as 'Hold the Line', which this area is entirely.
- The Scrutiny Committee were unable to support the recommendations and instead provided their own statement, which was read to the Committee;
- *"Whilst the committee wished to support moves to protect the coastline and coastal communities, the Committee expressed significant concern about the potential for responsibility and long term liability and recommend Executive and Full Council fully understand and request details on the long term liabilities going forward to ensure a full understanding of the longevity of the scheme and mitigate long term liability and risk."*

- In response, Officers clarified that the Council would appoint the designers and contractors as part of the scheme. The designers would help the Council understand the longevity of the scheme. The proposal would be based on an options appraisal and the professional design would provide the answers. The offer on the table was the subject of lengthy negotiations and was considered the best available.
- It was commented that this was a power of the Council and the funding County Council provided.
- The allusion from the Scrutiny comments of this being a bad deal were felt to be unfounded, considering the lengthy negotiations that had taken place and that this was the best deal available.
- It was commented that the existing structure had been there since 1920 and the Environment Agency immediately declared it an emergency and allocated funds to be used.
- This road was a strategic road and the economic impacts of not approving this scheme would potentially be disastrous.
- It was considered that it was the Council's duty to take on liabilities for the benefit of the people of the area.
- In relation to queries relating to use of private land it was confirmed that there will be a need to use private land and early conversations were being had with the owners who were supportive of the scheme.
- The Chair of Scrutiny sought reassurance over the affordability of it in the long-term, with expectations of liability over the next thirty and forty years. The commuted sum was hoped to be calculated correctly to cover the annual maintenance repair cost.
- The Portfolio Holder amended the wording in her recommendation to insert the word 'entirely' into recommendations 1 and 3.
- It was stated that the Council would make it clear in the agreement that SWT was not taking on liability for the B3191 road and the Council would, if the eventual commuted sum is not sufficient over a period of time, seek to return to Somerset County Council, or the relevant authority at that time, to understand their proposals for the road.

**RESOLVED** that Executive supported the following to Full Council:

1. That Somerset West and Taunton Council agree in principle to accept responsibility and ownership for the coastal protection structure together with a commuted sum to cover estimated maintenance over the estimated lifecycle of the asset, provided that the new infrastructure is funded entirely by the Highways Authority, Environment Agency and or other external contributors.
2. Give authority for the Director for External Operations and Climate Change and/or Assistant Director, Climate Change and Assets, in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment, the authority to negotiate the final funding agreement.
3. That Executive recommends to Full Council the approval of a Supplementary Capital Budget of £3,550,000 for the delivery of the long-term coast protection capital works, funded entirely by expected contributions from Somerset County Council and the Environment Agency.

4. That Executive endorses to Full Council an increase in the annual maintenance budget for coastal protection assets is included on the Medium Term Financial Plan, funded by the commuted sum to be received from Somerset County Council, upon completion of the works. The actual budget increases for expenditure and income will offset, with amount to be determined and approved by the budget holder in line with Financial Procedure Rules.
5. That Executive recommends to Full Council the approval of a Supplementary Capital Budget of £385,000 for the emergency works necessary at Blue Anchor, to be funded by the approved grant from the Environment Agency.

42. **Access to information - Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

43. **Confidential Report - Proposed Sale of Land**

The confidential report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Marcus Kravis, Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive;

1. Approved the sale of the freehold interest in the property to the Highest Bidder for a commercially confidential sum and agreed to complete the sale by 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
2. Approved the sale of the freehold interest in the property to the Highest Bidder for a commercially confidential sum if the deadline above cannot be met.
3. Delegated authority to the Interim Assets Manager in consultation with the s151 Officer to agree final terms and complete the sale transaction.

(The Meeting ended at 7.45 pm)



## SWT Executive - 21 October 2020

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)

Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: Dawn Adey, Tim Bacon, Paul Fitzgerald, James Hassett, Jack Johnston, Paul McClean, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas and Joe Wharton

Also Present: Councillors Ian Aldridge, Simon Coles, John Hassall, Sue Lees, Janet Lloyd, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Alan Wedderkopp and Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 44. Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor R Henley.

### 45. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 16 and 23 September 2020 circulated with the agenda)

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Executive held on 16 and 23 September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

### 46. 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 C Booth      | All Items  | Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr S Coles      | All Items  | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr R Lees       | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr J Lloyd      | All Items  | Wellington & Sampford Arundel          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr P Pilkington | All Items  | Timberscombe                           | 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           |
| Cllr R Tully          | All Items | West Monkton                  | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr A Wedderkopp     | All Items | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr L Whetlor        | All Items | Watchet                       | Personal | Spoke           |

47. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

48. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

**Resolved** that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

49. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the items numbered 7 and 8 on the Agenda as the items contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

50. **Delivering Regeneration – Setting up a Special Purpose Vehicle**

**Resolved** that Executive recommended to Full Council the confidential recommendations included with this report.

51. **Regeneration of Firepool: Business Case for Phase 1 delivery (Infrastructure and Block 1)**

**Resolved** that Executive recommended to Full Council the confidential recommendations included with this report.

(The Meeting ended at 8.45 pm)

## SWT Executive - 28 October 2020

Present: Councillor Benet Allen (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Councillors Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: Dawn Adey, James Barrah, Richard Burge, Emily Collacott, Paul Fitzgerald, Tracey Meadows (Democracy and Governance), Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Clare Rendell, Richard Sealy and Amy Tregellas

Also Present: Councillors Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Roger Habgood, John Hassall, Janet Lloyd, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 52. Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts.

### 53. 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 C Booth          | All Items  | Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr N Cavill         | All Items  | West Monkton                           | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr S Coles          | All Items  | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr R Lees           | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr J Lloyd          | All Items  | Wellington & Sampford Arundel          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr P Pilkington     | All Items  | Timberscombe                           | 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 V Stock-Williams | All Items  | Wellington                             | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr R Tully          | All Items  | West Monkton                           | Personal | Spoke           |

|                |           |                         |          |       |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------------|----------|-------|
| Cllr B Weston  | All Items | Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke |
| Cllr L Whetlor | All Items | Watchet                 | Personal | Spoke |
| Cllr G Wren    | All Items | Clerk to Milverton PC   | Personal | Spoke |

Councillor S Wakefield further declared a personal interest as a member of the Community Interest Company for Toneworks and Councillor M Kravis further declared a personal interest as his partner was employed by the YMCA Dulverton Group.

54. **Public Participation - To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions, statements or petitions from the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 14,15 and 16**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

55. **Corporate Performance Report, Month 4, 2020/21**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried how customers found out when their complaint had been resolved.  
*The Assistant Director for Customer advised that the process was still being constructed but that customers would be told in a timely manner. Training on complaint resolution would be required for officers.*
- Councillors queried how targets were quantified.  
*The Assistant Director for Customer advised that work would be needed to clarify targets and be able to quantify targets. Officers were working on ways of getting information out to customers to assist in minimising the amount of complaints received.*
- Councillors were pleased to see that the targets had been met even during the Covid Pandemic.
- Councillors requested a comparison against last year's figures on complaints.  
*The figures would be sent out to councillors after the meeting.*
- The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services apologised for the increase in complaints received on waste services at the start of the Covid Pandemic, but advised that those figures had now lowered.
- Clarification was requested on the number of appeals outlined in the report.  
*Clarification was given.*
- Councillors requested whether the information could be broken down in ward areas.  
*Officers would investigate if that would be possible.*
- Councillors queried what system was being used to log complaints and for the new process.  
*Firmstep was being used for complaints.*



**Resolved** that Executive considered the attached performance report.

56. **2020/21 Financial Monitoring as at Month 4, ended 31 July 2020, and In Year COVID Budget Changes**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources thanked officers for all their hard work on the budget.

**Resolved** that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Reviewed the Council's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2020/21 financial year as at 31 July 2020;
- 2.2 Recommended that Full Council approved a supplementary estimate of £657k from General Reserves to fund the estimated overspend related to COVID;
- 2.3 Recommended that Full Council approved the realignment of budgets for COVID related income and expenditure to offset the reported variances that net off to zero when including the £657k in 2.2 above;
- 2.4 Recommended that Full Council approved changes to the General Fund Capital Programme by a total of -£1.370m for the following headings as referred in paragraph 11.3:
  - a) £295,000 reduction to Major Transport Schemes budget;
  - b) £375,000 reduction to remove budget for Creech Castle Road Improvements contribution;
  - c) £200,000 reduction to Employment Site Enabling schemes budget;
  - d) £1,000,000 reduction to Public Transport Improvements budget as Housing Infrastructure Fund bid not successful; and
  - e) £500,000 increase to Education Provision budget funded by Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 2.5 Recommended that Full Council approved the revised Budget Total for the Growth Programme of £3.56m to be funded by New Homes Bonus as set out in paragraph 11.7 Table 8, and CIL-funded Infrastructure Capital Programme totalling £16.262m as set out in paragraph 11.10 Table 9; and
- 2.6 Recommended that Full Council approved a supplementary estimate to the Capital Programme, in 2020/21, for Toneworks, up to £500k, which was the maximum value of the grant funding applied for from the Historic England.

57. **Financial Monitoring - Outturn Position 2019/20**

**Resolved** that the Executive:-

- 2.1.1 Noted the reported General Fund Revenue Budget underspend of £1.836m in 2019/20 and the General Reserves Balance of £4.522m as at 31 March 2020 which provided financial resilience and flexibility to meet increased financial pressures in 2020/21 and subsequent years;
- 2.1.2 Noted the reported Housing Revenue Account Budget underspend of £8k in 2019/20 and the HRA General Reserves Balance of £2.701m as at 31 March 2020;

- 2.1.3 Approved the transfer of £1.2m of General Fund Earmarked Reserves back into General Fund General Reserves, as set out in Appendix B; and
- 2.1.4 Noted the Capital Outturn position and approved the proposed carry forward of £29.996m approved budget to 2020/21 General Fund Capital Programme (as per Appendix C) and £15.822m to the 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme (as per Appendix D).

58. **Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23 - Review and Update**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried whether the Section 151 Officer had heard from Central Government on whether any more funding was available to assist with work linked to the Covid Pandemic.  
*The Section 151 Officer advised that another tranche of funding had been announced for £500,000.*
- Councillors queried whether there had been any indication from Central Government's on their trajectory on which direction they would take on future payments of New Homes Bonus.  
*The Section 151 Officer advised that they had not forecast for any future payments to be received after this financial year. However, there had been a hint that this might change once the Government review had taken place.*

**Resolved** that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Approved the updated Financial Strategy for 2020/21 to 2022/23, including agreement of the principle of using general reserves to reduce the Budget Gap in 2021/22 and 2022/23;
- 2.2 Recommended that Full Council approved the amended CIL Allocation Principles as set out in paragraph 21.15 of this report; and
- 2.3 Recommended that Full Council approved the reallocation of reserves to provide increased resilience and flexibility to mitigate COVID related financial pressures, and to support the Revenue Budget in the medium term, as follows:
  - a) To transfer £3.949m of New Homes Bonus reserve to General Reserves, noting alternative financing for relevant capital schemes through Community Infrastructure Levy and borrowing as set out in paragraph 21.7.
  - b) To transfer £1.0m from the Business Rates Volatility Reserve to General Reserves as set out in paragraph 14.6.

(The Meeting ended at 7.10 pm)

## SWT Executive - 18 November 2020

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)

Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: Dawn Adey, James Barra, Chris Brown, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, James Hassett, Simon Lewis, Wendy Lewis, Andrew Low, Gerry Mills, Kate Murdoch, Alison North, Kerry Prisco, Andrew Pritchard, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Shane Smith, Graeme Thompson, Sue Tomlinson, Christian Trevelyan and Jane Windebank

Also Present: Councillors Sue Buller, Simon Coles, Roger Habgood, John Hassall, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Craig Palmer, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Andrew Sully, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 59. Apologies

No apologies were received.

### 60. 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 C Booth  | All Items  | Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr S Coles  | All Items  | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr R Lees   | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr L Lisgo  | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr J Lloyd  | All Items  | Wellington & Sampford Arundel          | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr C Palmer | All Items  | Minehead                               | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr D Perry  | All Items  | Taunton Charter Trustee                | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr M Peters | All Items  | Taunton Charter                        | Personal | Spoke           |

|                      |           |                               |          |                 |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
|                      |           | Trustee                       |          |                 |
| Cllr P Pilkington    | All Items | Timberscombe                  | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr H Prior-Sankey  | All Items | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke           |
| 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 R Tully         | All Items | West Monkton                  | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr B Weston        | All Items | Taunton Charter Trustee       | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr L Whetlor       | All Items | Watchet                       | Personal | Spoke           |
| Cllr G Wren          | All Items | Clerk to Milverton PC         | Personal | Spoke           |

Councillor M Kravis further declared a prejudicial interest on agenda items 7 and 14 and left the meeting for the debate.

#### 61. **Public Participation**

Mrs Linda Brierley submitted a letter on agenda item 7 - A proposal for delivering future single rough sleeper and homelessness accommodation in SWT.

Canonsgrove and its effect on Trull and Staplehay

Following consideration of the matter at the Scrutiny meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020, Officers were asking the Executive to approve the preparation of an Options Appraisal in relation to future permanent homeless accommodation across the Council area.

We attach Trull Residents' Group's representations to the Scrutiny committee for your information. We support the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation that this must be a true Options Appraisal, with full engagement of the local community.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed with us that the report from Simon Lewis of Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) was wrongly focused on providing a business case for the ongoing use of Canonsgrove. It was reassuring to hear Members say that any suggestion of a *fait accompli* should be '*dismissed immediately*'.

Councillors also recognised that the Options Appraisal must be led by technical evidence. How then could SWT Officers propose to undertake the Options Appraisal by December 2020, with a business case provided by February 2021? Likewise, how could Officers already be bidding for '*funding in 2021/22 to support delivery of our preferred accommodation options*' before the Options Appraisal had been undertaken? This looked like the *fait accompli* which Councillors had rightly rejected.

Any presumption towards Canonsgrove in the Options Appraisal would overlook the potential for the use or re-use of other sites in the town and would seem to enable procedural challenge via the Local Government Ombudsman and other routes. Given that SWT was looking at the provision of a new or significantly-altered building, and that the Council was in the process of identifying development sites across the district via the new Local Plan, what was actually needed was a wide-ranging, transparent and properly-evidenced review, taking account of all relevant matters including the independent views of the community.

As noted in our earlier letter, it is also wrong for Trull Parish Council's Canonsgrove Working Group to be excluded from deliberations. Comeytrowe Parish Council should also be consulted. Local residents should be party to an open and evidenced Options Appraisal which takes account of all relevant matters and ongoing/future costs in determining which site(s) were most appropriate for future homeless accommodation in the SWT area.

Councillors of the Scrutiny Committee identified that Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) was the biggest issue in bringing forward new provision for homeless people. Since our last letter, there had sadly been a significant worsening of public safety nearby, with confirmed burglaries (one with a vulnerable young person in the building at the time), bicycle thefts, defecation in residential streets, and ongoing problems with intoxicated people creating road safety issues between the site and town centre. There were four blue-light responses to incidents at Canonsgrove in just one day last weekend.

The response of Officers of SWT and the YMCA that *'you can't prove these issues relate to Canonsgrove'* was often factually wrong, as well as insensitive and lacking credibility. A standard response of *'prove it'* would never instill confidence in the community. In any case, there was enough evidence – the Police accepted a Community Trigger due to issues relating to Canonsgrove and recorded crime statistics paint a clear picture. Such problems had never previously been experienced in our villages, and it was clearly not coincidental that there had been a significant recorded increase in crime and ASB since the current use of Canonsgrove began.

In short, this was not about removing homeless people from the villages. Rather, local people rightly insisting on public engagement and proper management of whatever facility was ultimately brought-forward, in order to avoid the issues which had previously arisen.

I hope that this is helpful in setting the context for the concerns of the local community. Thank-you for your time in this matter.

Yours sincerely L. Brierley, J. Barker, M. Berry, K. Blackwell, D. Brierley, B. Pretty, C. Flood, C. Holder, D. Johnson, J. Kirk, L. Langham, M. McLoughlin, P. Midgley, T. Saunders, E. Sebright, M. Simmonds, T Smith, D. Spurway, G. Steele, B. Sweeting, R. Teale, A. Temblett, G. Tuckett, C. Warburton and all on behalf of Trull Residents Group.

The following response was given by the Portfolio Holder for Housing:-

Dear Trull Residents Group,

We had responded back to the original letter that was sent to Scrutiny and therefore this response focussed on the covering letter addressed to the Executive Committee.

We, like you, also supported the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations that this should be a true options appraisal. The Executive Summary of the report explains the purpose of the report "To propose an approach to identify our future requirements for single homeless and rough sleeper accommodation in SWT and to evaluate and bring back recommendations on the best options to deliver against this need." The questions raised at the Scrutiny meeting were focussed primarily on Canonsgrove and on reflection the report itself had more content focussed on this one site, simply because it was currently where we were housing a large proportion of our rough sleeper community and there was some urgency to resolve what happened to these people in the future. We fully acknowledge it was one of the options we would consider – but it was one of a number. We could only continue to reiterate that there was no prejudgement on any decisions and any supposition of Canonsgrove being a 'fait accompli' had no factual basis.

The option appraisals would be led by the council (or council officers) with technical support from architects, engineers and other consultants as required.

We had not started on any bid for 2021/22 NSAP Funding.

We would continue to engage with the Trull Parish Council and report to them monthly on Canonsgrove which we were currently doing. Officers attended on Monday this week and provided a report. They had also responded to the 17 questions raised by the Trull Parish Council subgroup, the 'Trull Residents Group.' We would also engage with Comeytrowe Parish Council. As part of our engagement, we would be able to share with you information on:

- Our required housing need for the District, the mix, quantum and types of accommodation we forecast we need;
- Our accommodation strategy that provided greater description of what we were seeking and how this would work;
- An outline methodology of how we would approach undertaking the Options Appraisal; and
- Our analysis of the Canonsgrove site to meet this need once we had done this work.

It was worth saying that the findings and recommendations for this work would be taken back to our councillors for approval before progressing plans on our preferred options. These reports would again be publicly available on our website and would only progress if they had the required democratic approval.

We would not be asking the Trull Parish Council or Trull Residents Group to be involved in the appraisal itself as we need this to remain independent and objective and avoid claims of impartiality from other communities who could end up with accommodation provision within their locality.

With respect to anti-social behaviour, we had provided a report to the Trull Parish Council outlining the 5 complaints we had received in the last month and the 5 compliments from the local community. Most of the complaints were not incidents of serious crime (including someone's dog barking at another dog; and two people walking past, playing loud music at 10.30pm who were assumed to be Canonsgrove residents). However we were aware that one of these complaints related to a serious crime (two burglaries) which included the theft of the bicycles and this was very regrettable that two of our residents were involved in this. The police had confirmed that this was the first burglary that Canonsgrove residents had been implicated in and the situation was managed swiftly and decisively, with strong partnership working between the YMCA and the Police - the police turned up immediately to arrest them, stolen goods were returned and both were evicted and were awaiting trial. Every incident we were made aware of was addressed and managed professionally by the YMCA Dulverton Group.

With respect to the notion that there had been a general pattern of increased Crime in the residential and community areas of Trull, I could only go back to what the Police had consistently been telling Trull Parish Council and ourselves, was that that simply wasn't true. The police did get called to incidents and altercations at Canonsgrove itself and that was to be expected with the nature of supporting people in homeless accommodation, but the police had told us that there had not been a noticeable increase in crime within the Trull area itself. An email received from the Police this week confirmed that, explaining "The figure for crimes reported in the Trull area (within ½ mile of postcode TA3 7HP) for April – September 2019 was 13. By comparison, figures for the same period in 2020, not taking into account those incidents that occurred on site at Canonsgrove were only 11, suggesting a slight reduction in reports in the area that would potentially have an impact on the local community."

Officers from the Council were pleased to hear acknowledgement from the Chair of the Trull Parish Council at the October meeting that "troubles had calmed right down".

We have never received any complaints of our residents defecating and the police had confirmed that there had been one complaint to them of this nature in the past six months by person, unknown. Canonsgrove *had* received one complaint of a suspected tenant urinating in public in the past but was able to clearly determine that the culprit was not a resident of Canonsgrove.

The Council and the YMCA Dulverton Group always take every concern and complaint raised seriously at Canonsgrove and address this swiftly and professionally. We never take the stance "that you can't prove these issues are related to Canonsgrove" however both the Police and the Council have requested from the Residents Group and complainants that sufficient information was provided to enable us to identify the culprit as a Canonsgrove resident, understand the nature of the complaint, act on the complaint and ideally provide a description to identify the culprits. An example of this was a complaint we received from a house adjacent to a public footpath into the countryside that did none of these - "two people were sat on the pavement outside of our house", with no further information to go on and no-one there when we arrived. We were not

trying to be obstructive, but genuinely want to be in a position to address issues and need enough information to do so.

We know from our evening patrols that sometimes rowdy groups of young people did walk through Trull making a noise, who were not our residents and as in the example above with the urination, both the Police and the YMCA feel that an immediate assumption that any wrong-doing is undertaken by Canonsgrove residents was false and unfair.

The Council would continue to work with the YMCA Dulverton Group and the Police in partnership to ensure Canonsgrove continued to be managed professionally and we hoped our response above goes some way to answering your questions.

62. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

**Resolved** that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

63. **Interim Policy Statement on planning for the Climate Emergency - Draft for public consultation**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors welcomed the report. They further highlighted that Climate Change was an important issue and the report showed that the Council was taking it seriously.
- Councillors requested clarification on the local validation list mentioned in section 4.24 of the report.  
*Clarification was given and officers understood that it was slightly confusing as the validation list was a separate document.*
- Councillors agreed that a good debate was had by the Scrutiny Committee on the report and highlighted that officers needed to consult properly within the Covid safety guidelines.
- Concern was raised on the section within the report that mentioned parking and public transport and Councillors highlighted the difficulty of using public transport in the former West Somerset area of the district.

**Resolved:-**

- That Executive Committee approved the Draft Interim Policy Statement on planning for the Climate Emergency for public consultation; and
- That responsibility for any minor textual and visual changes and enhancements prior to publication for consultation were delegated to the Director for Development and Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation.



64. **Somerset Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were delighted to see the report coming forward.
- Councillors highlighted that not all charging points would be council led but it was a good document to assist in the implementation process.
- Councillors queried how and where the charging points would be installed. *Council owned car parks would be looked at and then work with other partners to encourage and enable delivery of destination and on-street charge points in other locations across the district. The Strategy would inform these conversations, but the Council would almost certainly not be the body delivering these.*
- Concern was raised on areas that had very limited or lack of off-street parking.
- Concern was raised on other types of fuel being introduced in the future. *It was noted that the report considered alternative fuels including the role that hydrogen was currently expected to play. Working to bring forward EVs was seen as a least regret option.*
- Councillors queried how could planning policy be changed to implement all the positive parts of the document. *The Climate Positive Planning document discussed in the previous item referred to how we could use existing planning policies to ensure EV charge points were implemented in new developments. More explicit reference in planning policy would be explored through the new Local Plan, although it was noted that the Government had consulted previously on amending Building Regulations to make charge points a mandatory requirement.*
- Councillors wanted all local areas to be included and encouraged to take part. *Officers would liaise with local town/parish councils and chambers of commerce etc to assist them.*
- Councillors queried how payment would be made for the charging points. *There are several apps available to make payments.*

**Resolved** that the Executive **recommended** to Full Council that the Somerset Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy was adopted and brought forward into the Council's Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.

65. **A proposal for delivering future single rough sleeper and homelessness accommodation in SWT**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked officers for their work on the Proposal.
- Councillors were aware of the issues experienced at the site and advised that officers were trying to rectify those.
- Councillors requested clarification on section 1.4 in the report on adopting new voluntary responses and whether it would be going beyond the statutory response.

*The Assistant Director for Housing and Communities advised that the scheme was set up to assist homeless people and was part of the legislation put in place during the Covid Pandemic. Councillors needed to decide whether the Council should continue to assist those people going forward.*

- Concern was raised that the scheme would take management time away from other important projects.
- Councillors queried whether there was accommodation available for the residents once they needed to move on from Canonsgrove.  
*The Assistant Director for Housing and Communities advised that the scheme would assist the residents to find accommodation.*
- Councillors queried whether there would be a separate piece of work carried out for helping homeless families.  
*The whole scheme would be used to find out what the wider need was and to get feedback on the services provided to all homeless cases.*
- Councillors agreed that the multi-agency work carried out at Canonsgrove was positive and helped the vulnerable people in the district who required support.

**Resolved** that the Executive noted the proposed steps and timeline outlined in 4.16 including the resource requirements to undertake the options appraisal proposed to bring back a recommended solution.

#### 66. **Staplegrove New Community - Housing Infrastructure Fund**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to support the recommendations.
- Councillors requested assurance that the project would only go ahead if the Council received the funding from Homes England and could complete the build within the timescales quoted.

*The Strategy Specialist gave the councillors reassurance about the funding.*

**Resolved** that the Executive approved:-

- Delegated authority to the Director of Development and Place and s151 Finance Officer, in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder, to agree and enter into a suitable loan facility between Somerset West and Taunton and the Staplegrove developers (or alternatively the landowners with appropriate covenants to bind developers when they were appointed), to ensure draw down of the HIF funding in line with the requirements of the Homes England Grant Funding Agreement; and
- A Supplementary Budget of £14.2m was added to the General Fund Capital Programme for the provision of the loan funding to the developer, dependent on the agreement of terms.

#### 67. **Amendment to the Private Sector Renewal Policy - Disabled Facilities Grants, Repairs Assistance and New Special Purpose Grant**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to see the work move forward which supported the disabled residents within the district.
- Councillors queried the make-up of the panel and who would be involved. *The Partnership Manager advised that officers from all the District Councils would be involved along with officers from mental health agencies and Adult Social Care from Somerset County Council.*
- Councillors were pleased to see that if the funding limit was reached, that no more applications would be allowed until the new financial year.

**Resolved** that the Executive **recommended** that Full Council approved:-

- The amendments to the Somerset West Private Sector Renewal policy;
- The new Appendix B zero interest equity loan product providing additional support to owner occupiers in regeneration areas where SWT were comprehensively refurbishing HRA homes; and
- Phase E of the NTWP as a location and phase where the Special Purpose Grant would be adopted by the Council with a capped Better Care Funding allocation of £600k for 2021/2022.

68. **Access to Information- Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the appendices for items numbered 11, 12 and 13 and for the whole debate on item 14 on the Agenda as the items contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

69. **North Taunton Woolaway Project**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to see the work coming forward and that it included climate considerations with the zero carbon work involved.
- Councillors queried whether the wheelchair accessible properties would be required. *The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that those would only be completed for those who plan to return to the properties who require the adaptations.*
- Clarification was requested on the amount of residents who had decanted and planned on returning to the properties. *Clarification was given on the reasons why some were not returning, which included the need for a larger property.*
- The Chair of Scrutiny gave feedback from their debate on the report.

**Resolved** that the Executive approved the purchase of the private dwelling as set out in confidential Appendix D; and

**Recommended** to Full Council:-

- To allocate a total scheme budget and borrowing requirement for Phases B-E and the conclusion of the regeneration scheme as set out in confidential Appendix A;

- Delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer to determine the final funding profile for each future phase once the finalised designs have been received for Phases B-E and any relevant planning approval and contract costs have been received;
- To approve the decant of tenants within Phases B which would allow Gold band status in the Homefinder Somerset allocations system for tenants in this Phase and allow those who wished to move outside the regeneration area sufficient priority to move home;
- Delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing authority to approve future decanting and demolition for future phases; and
- All new build properties (Phase A-D) would be set at affordable rents in line with the 2020 Rent Setting Policy. The affordable rents would be set to ensure scheme viability at between 60% and 80% of market rates. However, all NTWP SWT secure tenants who lived within the NTWP (Phases A-D) at February 2019, when the Council made its decision to regenerate the neighbourhood, would have their rents capped at the equivalent social rent if being rehoused in the new NTWP development. These rents would remain with the tenant as long as they retained their tenancy. No current NTWP SWT tenant would be required to pay above the equivalent social rent and service charge for their home in line with the Council Shadow Full Council approval to allow existing SWT tenants to remain on a social rent level.

70. **Oxford Inn New Build HRA Zero Carbon Homes, Taunton**

During the discussion, the following points were made:-

- Councillors were pleased to see the development of the land coming forward.
- Some councillors were concerned on the loss of the public house in the area.
- Councillors queried whether the development would include electric vehicle charging points.

*The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that it would be looked at as part of the planning stage.*

**Resolved** that the Executive **recommended** to Full Council the following:-

- Support the use of the vacant SWT public house for new zero carbon affordable homes;
- Approve the demolition of the Oxford Inn;
- Approve the development of 11 affordable homes built to standards emerging from the Zero Carbon Affordable Homes Pilot, subject to planning approval;
- Allocate a total budget and borrowing requirement in line with confidential Appendix A;
- Delegate authority to the Section 151 officer to determine the final funding profile for this scheme once the finalised design had received planning approval and tenders had been received; and

- Note the use of affordable rents for these new build HRA homes in line with the 2020 Rent Setting Policy. The affordable rents would be set to ensure scheme viability at between 60% and 80% of market rates.

71. **Seaward Way, Minehead - New Build HRA Low Carbon Homes**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to see the report coming forward and that it included the infrastructure to combat the issues on flooding in the area.
- Councillors were pleased to see houses being built in the former West Somerset area.
- Councillors advised they would be keen to request that bus stops were added within the new development.

**Resolved** that Executive **recommended** to Full Council the following:-

- Approve the development of 54 Affordable Homes built to very low carbon standards, subject to planning approval;
- To approve the supplementary budget as stated in confidential appendix A;
- To approve the transfer of land from the general fund to the housing revenue account for the use of social housing development and to delegate authority to the Section 151 officer to approve the final land transfer amount;
- Delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to determine the final funding profile for this scheme once the finalised design had received planning approval and tenders had been received; and
- Note the use of affordable rents for these new build HRA homes in line with the 2020 Rent Setting Policy. The affordable rents would be set to ensure scheme viability at between 60% and 80% of market rates.

72. **Commercial Property Investment Strategy Review**

**Resolved** that the Executive **recommended** that Full Council:-

- Receive Part 1 of the report which was the review of the Commercial Property Investment activity and performance since the last report of the 7 July 2020 as set out in Section 10.4 of the original strategy;
- Receive Part 2 of the report which was the first annual portfolio review of the Commercial Property Investment Strategy (CPIS) as set out in Section 11.1 of the original strategy; and
- Agree the amendments set out in the review of the strategy as shown in Appendices 3 and 4.

(The Meeting ended at 9.45 pm)



**EXECUTIVE**

| <b>Executive Meeting</b>       | <b>Draft Agenda Items</b>  | <b>Lead Officer</b>         |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>16 December 2020</b>        | 2020/21 Budget Monitoring Q2   | Emily Collacott             |
| Exec RD = 4 December           | Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review   | Scott Weetch                |
| Informal Exec RD = 10 November | Q2 Performance Report  | Malcolm Riches              |
| SMT RD = 28 October            | Belvedere Road Public Space  | Chris Hall                  |
|                                |  |                             |
| <b>20 January 2021</b>         | Safeguarding Policy Update   | Scott Weetch                |
| Exec RD = 8 January            | Somerset Economic Recovery & Growth Plan   | Lisa Redston/Dan Webb       |
| Informal Exec RD = 8 December  | SWP Business Plan  | Stuart Noyce/Mickey Green   |
| SMT RD = 25 November           |  |                             |
|                                |  |                             |
| <b>9 February 2021</b>         | General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22  | Emily Collacott             |
| <b>BUDGET ONLY</b>             | HRA Revenue and Capital budget setting 21/22, Dwelling Rent setting 21/22 and 30 year Business Plan Review | Emily Collacott/James Barra |
| <b>venue =</b>                 | Policy Framework   | Amy Tregellas               |
| Exec RD = 28 January           |  |                             |
| Informal Exec RD = 5 January   |  |                             |
| SMT RD = 9 December            |  |                             |
|                                |  |                             |
| <b>24 February 2021</b>        | Monkton Heathfield Phase 2 Masterplan: Feedback  | Andrew Penna/ Nick Bryant   |
| <b>venue =</b>                 | East Street/St. James Street, Taunton Pedestrianisation  | Joe Wharton                 |
| Exec RD = 12 February          |  |                             |
| Informal Exec RD = 12 January  |  |                             |
| SMT RD = 21 December           |  |                             |
|                                |  |                             |
| <b>17 March 2021</b>           | 2021/22 Partnership Grants Schedule  | Scott Weetch/Christine Gale |
| <b>venue =</b>                 | 2020/21 Budget Monitoring Q3   | Emily Collacott             |
| Exec RD = 5 March              | Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategies 2021/22  | Paul Fitzgerald             |
| Informal Exec RD = 9 February  | Pay Policy   | Angela Marshfield           |
| SMT RD = 27 January            | Q3 Performance Report  | Malcolm Riches              |
|                                | Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Feedback   | Fiona Webb                  |
|                                | Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide  | Fiona Webb                  |
|                                | Procurement Strategy   | Paul Fitzgerald             |
|                                |  |                             |

|                              |   |                           |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
|                              |   |                           |
| <b>21 April 2021</b>         |   |                           |
| <b>venue =</b>               |   |                           |
| Exec RD =                    |   |                           |
| Informal Exec RD =           |   |                           |
| SMT RD =                     |   |                           |
|                              |   |                           |
|                              |   |                           |
|                              |   |                           |
| <b>Items to be Confirmed</b> | Firepool LDO                                | Andrew Penna/ Nick Bryant |
|                              | Strategic Acquisition Report (Confidential) | Joe Wharton               |



# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Executive – 16 December 2020

### Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 2, 2020/21

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Ross Henley.

**Report Author: Malcolm Riches, Business Intelligence and Performance Manager.**

#### 1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

This paper provides an update on the council's performance for the first 6 months (April – September) of the 2020/21 financial year. The report includes information for a range of key performance indicators and also provides an update on progress against the council's annual plan commitments for the current year.

#### 2. Recommendations

Councillors are asked to consider the attached performance report.

#### 3. Risk Assessment

Failure to regularly monitor performance could lead to the council not delivering on some of its corporate priorities.

#### 4. Background and Full details of the Report

As part of the Council's commitment to transparency and accountability this report provides an update on performance for a number of key indicators across a range of council services and also provides progress monitoring for the implementation of the Corporate Strategy, and the delivery of the commitments made in the 2020/21 Annual Plan.

##### 4.1 Impact of Covid-19

There has been a continued impact on the work of the Council as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The last corporate performance report provided a more detailed update on the specific additional work undertaken by the council between April and July. Many of these tasks have continued and the pandemic has still had a significant impact on the council's activity and workload. In addition, there have been further new requirements placed on the council during August and September, such as implementing the grants for people who need to self-isolate having been contacted by Track and Trace.

##### 4.2 Key Performance Indicators

The table in Appendix 1 includes the council's Key Performance Indicators and shows how the council has performed for the first 6 months of the 2020/21 financial year. The

table also includes a “direction of travel” arrow to show whether performance has improved, worsened or stayed the same, since the last corporate performance report which was for the end of July.

For the majority of indicators the target has either been met or in many cases, has been exceeded. The direction of travel shows that for many indicators performance has remained at a similar level to that at the end of July. However, there are several indicators where performance has got worse, but in all cases, the fall is slight and the target is still being met. Close monitoring of these indicators over future months will be undertaken to ensure appropriate action is taken where required. For the 2 indicators where performance is significantly below target, and the indicator is rated “Red”, commentary is provided below, and a more detailed report is included in Appendix 3:

#### *Number of complaints responded to in 10 working days*

Further to the analysis undertaken over the summer, a review into the Complaints process is underway. A number of process improvements have been identified and are in the process of being implemented. The review has identified a bottleneck within the process. The process is being changed to remove this bottleneck and to move to a process where complaints are investigated and responded to within the individual services rather than issuing all responses through the Complaints Manager. This will also allow the complaints manager to spend more time analysing complaint trends, working with teams to target improvements based on this intelligence and supporting Case Managers through training and workshops.

In addition the Customer Services team are working with the Business Analysts to develop the existing computer system (Firmstep) process so these changes can be implemented. Training for staff who respond to complaints and workshops on best practice will be developed over the coming weeks and months. To enable these changes additional resources have been temporarily assigned to the complaints team.

#### *Number of FOI requests responded to in 20 working days*

As reported previously, a dedicated case manager was recruited last autumn to manage the FOI process, and a new process for submitting FOI requests has been implemented. This had led to significant improvements in performance but the Covid crisis and the need to divert resource to urgent additional activities has clearly impacted on our ability to respond to FOI requests.

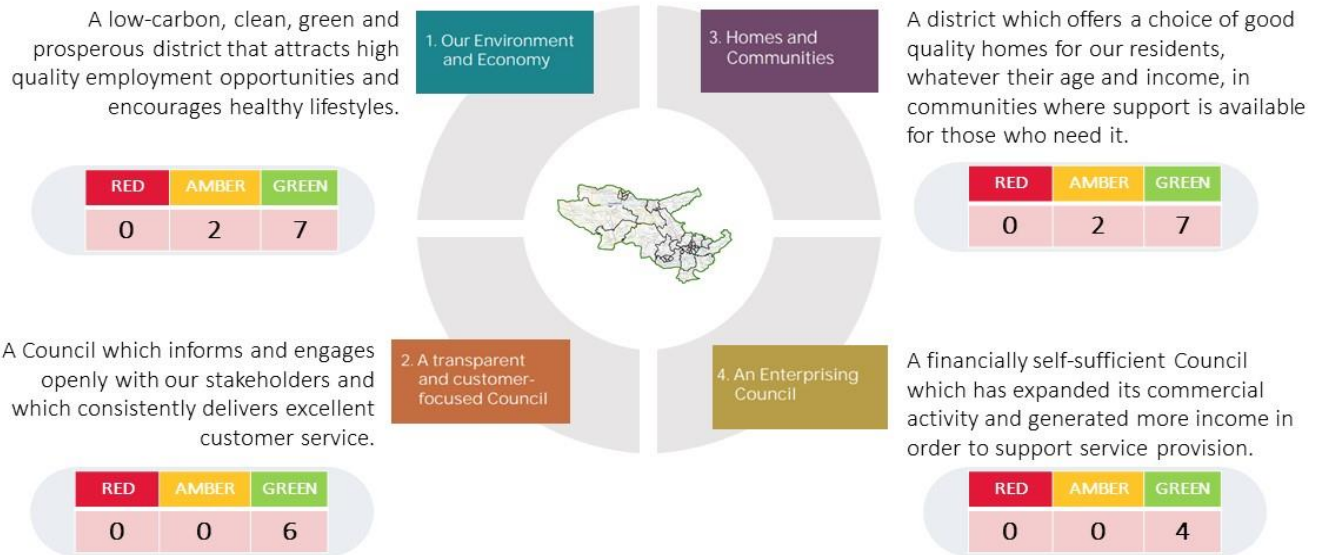
However, we have reviewed the process for FOIs and are in the process of reconfiguring the system used to manage FOI's (Firmstep) to reflect the shape of the remodelled organisation. This work has been delayed due to Covid but has now been assigned to a project team and is underway.

### 4.3 Progress update for 2020/21 Annual Plan

The Annual Plan contains 28 specific commitments that the Council has said it will deliver in 2020/21. The graphic below provides a summary of progress as at the end of September for each of these commitments, split by the 4 themes of the Corporate Strategy. Each commitment has been rated as either Red, Amber or Green to indicate whether it is likely to be achieved.

# Corporate Priority Delivery 2020/21

28 Annual Plan Commitments – RAG coded



In total, 24 of the 28 commitments are rated as Green, meaning that they are on course to be delivered on schedule. There are 4 commitments which are rated as Amber, meaning that there has been some slippage. None of the commitments are rated as Red. A more detailed update on each individual commitment is included in Appendix 2.

## 5. Links to Corporate Strategy

This performance report provides an update on the Annual Plan which is fundamental to the implementation of the Corporate Strategy.

## 6. Finance / Resource Implications

The detailed financial out-turn position is available in a separate report.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – Yes**
- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – No**

**Reporting Frequency: Quarterly****List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)**

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Appendix 1 | 2020/21 Month 6 Performance Indicators Report |
| Appendix 2 | Detailed update on Annual Plan Commitments    |
| Appendix 3 | Further information on complaints and FOI     |

**Contact Officers**

|             |  |             |  |
|-------------|--|-------------|--|
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## Appendix 1

### SWT Performance report

| Full definition  | Target | Unit | Year to date | Direction of travel | Denominator  | Year to date | Numerator   | Year to date |
|--|--------|------|--------------|---------------------|--|--------------|---|--------------|
| Number of complaints responded to in 10 working days   | 90     | %    | 36%          | ↓                   | Total number of complaints responded to in the month / year      | 651          | Number of complaints responded to within 10 working days                                    | 235          |
| Number of FOI requests responded to in 20 working days   | 75     | %    | 65%          | ↓                   | Total number of FOI requests responded to in the month / year    | 203          | Number of FOI responded to within 20 working days   | 131          |
| Percentage of calls to Deane Helpine answered in under 60 seconds                                | 90     | %    | 96%          | ↔                   | Total number of calls to Deane Helpine                           | 148470       | Number of calls answered in under 60 seconds  | 141866       |
| Cumulative percentage of the amount of Council Tax collected *                                   | 97     | %    | 60.91        | ↔                   | Total amount of Council Tax to be collected by the 31st March    |              | Amount of Council Tax collected in the year so far  |              |
| Cumulative percentage of the amount of Business Rates collected *                                | 98     | %    | 59.39        | ↔                   | Total amount of Business Rates to be collected by the 31st March |              | Amount of Business Rates collected in the year so far                                       |              |
| Average processing times of new Housing Benefit claims   | 25     | days | 16.48        | ↑                   | Number of new Housing Benefit claims received                    | 352          | Total number of days  | 5800         |
| Average processing times for changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit claims                 | 10     | days | 4.76         | ↔                   | Number of new Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances received   | 7887         | Total number of days  | 37521        |
| % of reported fly tipping incidents responded to within 5 working days                           | 80     | %    | 89%          | ↔                   | Number of fly tipping incidents                                  | 517          | Number of fly tipping incidents responded to within 5 working days                          | 459          |
| % of service requests for street cleansing actioned within 5 working days                        | 85     | %    | 96%          | ↓                   | Number of service requests for street cleansing                  | 164          | Number of service requests for street cleansing actioned within 5 working days              | 158          |
| % Licensing applications processed within timescales   | 95     | %    | 92%          | ↓                   | Number of licensing applications processed                       | 409          | Number of licensing applications processed responded within timescales                      | 376          |
| % of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (or within agreed extension of time) | 75     | %    | 89%          | ↓                   | Total number of major planning applications received             | 18           | Total number of major planning applications completed within 13 weeks or agreed extension   | 16           |
| % of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed extension of time           | 65     | %    | 80%          | ↓                   | Total number of minor planning applications received             | 171          | Total number of minor planning applications completed within 8 weeks                        | 136          |
| % of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed extension of time.       | 80     | %    | 87%          | ↓                   | Total number of other planning applications received             | 359          | Total number of other planning applications completed within 8 weeks or an agreed extension | 311          |
| % of appeals received that have been overturned  | 33     | %    | 40%          |                     | Number of appeals received                                       | 25           | Number of appeals overturned  | 10           |

\* Although the current figures appear below target, these are cumulative totals, and projections show that the target will be met for the year end.

The column titled Direction of Travel, shows whether performance has improved, worsened or is similar to the last report for the end of July.

-  Performance has improved
-  Performance has got worse
-  Performance is similar



Appendix 2

| Corporate Priority Area     | Ref | Annual Plan Commitments 2020/21<br><a href="https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/">https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/</a>   | Owner            | Directorate         | 30 September progress update   | RAG   |
|-----------------------------|-----|--|------------------|---------------------|--|-------|
| Our environment and economy | 1   | The Council is acutely aware of the need to invest in our local economy to help it recover from Covid 19. There are a number of initiatives in train and none more significant than <b>Firepool</b> . We are working on a business case that will guarantee the delivery of a regenerated Firepool and within an accelerated period. | Joe Wharton      | Development & Place | We have published two reports for Full Council approval which are due for a decision at a Special Full Council on 3rd November. These approvals, which include the formation of a dedicated delivery company to focus on construction works at Firepool and other key regeneration sites in the district, are developments of earlier Firepool papers and members briefings, following the direction of travel as reported to members throughout the year. If approved, the key infrastructure works can begin in earnest in Q1 2021, along with the residential development on Block 1 (Firepool South)   | Green |
|                             | 2   | We will approve a <b>Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan</b> for the District and progress further actions that reduce the Council's and the District's carbon footprint, supports biodiversity and increases resilience to more extreme weather events;  | Graeme Thompson  | Development & Place | We have drafted and published a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience (CNCR) Action Plan for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee. The CNCR Action Plan identifies a proposed one-year action plan together with route maps for longer term action, and the role that we will need to play in delivery.<br><br>Our CNCR Action Plan and the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy are due to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee 14 October, Executive Committee on 20 October, and Full Council at a special meeting on the 26 October  | Green |
|                             | 3   | Using funding from our successful <b>Warmer Homes Fund</b> bid, we will commence installing improved heating systems and energy efficiency measures within 175 SWT council owned homes as well as provide advice, support and access to funding for Private Sector Households to   | Ian Candlish     | Housing & Community | This project was delayed by all capital programmes being placed on hold during the Covid lockdown period. However, procurement has now been undertaken and the initial phase of this two year programme is due to commence shortly.  | Green |
|                             | 4   | We will commence a pilot <b>to create wild meadows</b> initially on Council owned land in Taunton, Minehead and Wellington. Sowing will take place in late Autumn 2020.  | Jonathan Stevens | External Operations | Areas identified and seed purchased. Work being scheduled for Autumn.  | Green |
|                             | 5   | Building on the extensive work that took place during 2019/20, we will produce <b>a draft Local Plan to 2040</b> , undertake consultation before submitting the final Plan to the Secretary of State for consideration   | Laura Higgins    | Development & Place | The timetable of the Local Plan has been affected by the pandemic and so further evidence gathering and the Reg 19 Draft Plan stage planned for Summer 2020 has been delayed.<br><br>Furthermore, the Government's Planning Reform proposals and change to the calculation of housing need will impact upon the content and scope of the Local Plan so we need to review what this means for our Local Plan.<br><br>Additionally, the timetable is likely to be affected by the outcome of the unitary proposals. Whichever scenario emerges, a Local Plan would need to be produced to cover the whole of the new Local Planning Authority area. The background work and consultation so far on the Local Plan 2040 will still be of relevance to any new Local Plan for a unitary authority.   | Amber |
|                             | 6   | We will approach completion of our regeneration project at <b>Coal Orchard</b> , Taunton;  | Joe Wharton      | Development & Place | Following the slowdown of site works due to Covid19 restrictions and the effect on supply chain, the site is now back up and running to maximum capacity given new regulations. The programme has been revised to allow for these unprecedented issues, and is due for completion in May 2021.   | Green |
|                             | 7   | We will jointly commission, and complete, a Strategic Outline Business Case for the re-opening of <b>Wellington Railway Station</b> .  | Sarah Povall     | Development & Place | The brief for the SOBC is complete. SWT and Mid Devon District Council have jointly commissioned WSP to undertake this work, which is running to schedule and due to be complete by December 2020.   | Green |
|                             | 8   | We will undertake works that provide a long term solution for the integrity of the <b>harbour wall in Watchet</b> , that enables it to meet the challenges of rising tidal levels in the future.   | Chris Hall       | External Operations | Work started early October. 12 week programme. On target.  | Green |
|                             | 9   | We will deliver against the Economic Development Strategy including the completion of a feasibility study for an <b>innovation centre</b> in the District  | Mark Wathen      | Development & Place | The economic development strategy was formally approved by Full Council in February 2020 and published on our website in March. The initial action plan has morphed into part of the SWT recovery plan as well as being aligned to and integrated within the Somerset Recovery Plan due to be finalised in November 2020. On the Digital Innovation Centre to be sited on Firepool, two business cases for funding have been submitted. One is for £5.5m of LEP Get Britain Building Fund, earmarked for a 3000m2 Digital Innovation Centre to be built out by January 2022 as well as the other European Regional Development Funding of £1.6m ask from MHDCLG. This is matched by significant capital contributions from County and joint revenue funding from both County and SWT. The only reason for being Amber is that we need final confirmation from the LEP and MHDCLG about securing the funding, which is expected in November 2020. | Amber |

| Corporate Priority Area                    | Ref | Annual Plan Commitments 2020/21<br><a href="https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/">https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/</a>   | Owner         | Directorate         | 30 September progress update  | RAG   |
|--|-----|--|---------------|---------------------|---|-------|
| A Transparent and Customer Focused Council | 10  | Building on improvements introduced during 2019/20, to our <b>housing repairs service</b> , we will be focussing on offering our tenants a time and date for their repair, during the tenants first call with us; same day or a later date at the tenant's convenience and on improving the proportion of repairs which take place on the same day in which they were requested. | Ian Candlish  | Housing & Community | This project was delayed by a focus being prioritised on delivering emergency only repairs during the Covid lockdown period. However, the required IT and scheduling processes are now being put into place and we will be implementing improvements to the service during the remainder of the financial year.   | Green |
|  | 11  | We will improve how we engage with our residents, businesses and tenants by <b>modernising our communications approach</b> .   | Becky Howat   | Housing & Community | We use social media platforms to update tenants including some for specific projects such as the North Taunton Woolaway Project. The tenants newsletter has been revived with the first issue circulated in September. Information is regularly updated on the Coronavirus drop down and the housing pages of our website. Press releases are issued for newsworthy items. We have recently begun engagement around the Canonsgrove project with the community in Trull.  | Green |
|  | 12  | We will undertake elections to the <b>Tenants Strategic Board</b> and enable this group with Mod.gov technology to better support them to fulfil their role.   | Shari Hallett | Housing & Community | A timeline for the election of tenant representatives has been established. Elected tenant representatives will be appointed by end of March 2021 ready to start in April 2021. Meetings of the existing Tenant Strategic Group representatives are already taking place online.  | Green |
|  | 13  | We will continue to <b>review our processes</b> in order to improve the customer experience, including making more of our services available online for those who can and wish to transact in this way.  | Jason Sykes?  | Internal Operations | Below is a list of new forms published since April.<br><br>COVID 19 Related<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Business &amp; Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Scheme</li> <li>• Discretionary Business Grant Scheme</li> <li>• Community Chest Grant</li> <li>• Coronavirus Support Requests</li> <li>• Test and Trace Support Payments</li> </ul> Other<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pavement Licence Application</li> <li>• Bin Report</li> <li>• Dead Animal Report</li> <li>• Litter and Drug Debris</li> <li>• Public Toilet Report</li> <li>• Rural Rate Relief</li> <li>• Retail Discount</li> <li>• Small Business Rate Relief</li> <li>• Licensing Application</li> <li>• Complaint about a licensed person, vehicle or premises</li> <li>• Book an appointment</li> </ul> Process Improved for Customers (Not Firmstep Related)<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting card and electronic payments for Moorings and Slipways</li> </ul> | Green |
|  | 14  | We will introduce a <b>Member Equality Group</b> to be ambassadors for those within our communities who may be at heightened risk of discrimination, to ensure their voices are consistently given prominence in all that the Council does.  | Paul Harding  | Internal Operations | On the 7th September, the Audit, Governance & Standards committee approved a recommendation for the creation of a joint Member and Officer Equalities group as a mechanism for providing additional focus on equalities matters both internally and externally. The group will meet for the first time on 14th October 2020.  | Green |
|  | 15  | We want you to be able to <b>follow and take part in the democratic decisions</b> that affect you in SWT. We understand that not everyone is able to attend council meetings in person, which is why we will continue broadcasting key meetings on our website so that you can   | Amy Tregellas | Internal Operations | Council meetings are being live-streamed on Zoom and have been throughout lockdown and since.   | Green |



| Corporate Priority Area | Ref | Annual Plan Commitments 2020/21<br><a href="https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/">https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/</a> | Owner          | Directorate         | 30 September progress update   | RAG   |
|-------------------------|-----|--|----------------|---------------------|--|-------|
| Homes and Communities   | 16  | We will complete 8 new units of <b>social housing in Laxton Road, Taunton;</b>   | Chris Brown    | Housing & Community | Laxton Road is on schedule to be complete december 2020  | Green |
|                         | 17  | We will build at least <b>6 new modular and energy efficient homes for social rent;</b>  | Chris Brown    | Housing & Community | The service is progressing the zero carbon affordable homes pilot which was approved by Members in July 2020. The first phase of zero carbon homes will be delivered September 2021 through to February 2022 which show homes being opened throughout this period.   | Green |
|                         | 18  | We will commence the <b>construction of 47 good quality, energy efficient homes</b> as part of phase A of the North Taunton regeneration project;  | Michelle Hall  | Housing & Community | Good progress is being made. The demolition of all Phase A properties is now complete and our main construction contractor Engie are working towards a start on site in early 2021. They will be undertaking preparatory works in the lead up this this. We continue to engage with residents, stakeholders, councillors and SWT employees.  | Green |
|                         | 19  | We will increase the number of <b>homelessness preventions</b> within our area,  | Sarah Richards | Housing & Community | In order to increase the number of homeless prevention cases in our area we are adapting how cases are assessed by the Housing Options Service by introducing a robust prevention focussed triage system which identifies opportunities for early intervention in order to prevent homelessness. We can now refer cases to our Tenancy Sustainment Team who works with landlords and tenants to help preserve existing tenancies which are at risk and our Private Rented Sector Team who works with landlords and letting agents to source suitable and sustainable properties for homeless households. This prevention focussed approach will reduce the use temporary accommodation.<br>We are currently recruiting into vacant posts which we have refocused to provide more focus on prevention.  | Green |
|                         | 20  | We will work with partners to put in place a stronger , more joined-up <b>process for rough sleepers</b> in our area.  | Mark Leeman    | Housing & Community | This is being tackled at strategic, tactical and operational levels. Strategically, the Health and Wellbeing Board have (Sept' 20) adopted 'Improving Health and Care through the Home in Somerset'. This is a 'duty to cooperate' among health, care and housing providers. To support this, the HWBB have also agreed to establish a Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board, to be 'stood up' in early 2021, which will oversee all strategic commissioning relating to RS/complex homeless. To complement this, we continue to work with the LGA/ARK consultants on the 'Better Futures for Vulnerable People in Somerset' programme. Tactically, SWT housing options service is currently reviewing demand and need around RS, with a view to developing a RS accommodation strategy, that will inform local commissioning arrangements (including the relationship with support services). Operationally, we continue to work with the YMCA, Arc, and Open Door (plus others) where we are seeking wrap-around support through the Homelessness Cell with some degree of success | Green |
|                         | 21  | We will continue to work with developers to facilitate the provision of <b>additional Affordable Homes;</b>  | Chris Brown    | Housing & Community | The pipeline of schemes remains strong with around 70 schemes in or approaching planning. There remains a challenge in securing sufficient affordable homes to meet the councils affordable housing target. The main challenge is scheme viability which often results in a lower affordable housing contribution from the private developers. The ten affordable housing providers who form SWTs affordable housing partnership continue to work closely with the council on s106 purchases and their own new build programmes.   | Amber |
|                         | 22  | We will <b>review our voluntary and community grants</b> in order that they deliver value for our communities and align to the Council's priorities;                                     | Scott Weetch   | Housing & Community | A review has been undertaken and will go through the committee cycle in the coming weeks to be finalised at Full Council in February 2021  | Green |
|                         | 23  | We will identify, and deliver, a solution that improves <b>CCTV equipment and monitoring arrangements for Watchet and Minehead;</b>  | Scott Weetch   | Housing & Community | Existing equipment has been repaired and become operational again. We are working with partners to find the best solution for the long term which will look at integration with the rest of the CCTV suite.  | Green |
|                         | 24  | We will implement a <b>Public Space Protection Order</b> in order to help fight against anti-social behaviour in Taunton.  | Jeremy Davis   | Housing & Community | The PSPO consultation was suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions need to be had with the portfolio holder and the police to discuss the future proposals of the PSPO so as to take in to account of changes that have brought about due to COVID-19 legislation that has since been put in place by central government.   | Amber |

| Corporate Priority Area | Ref | Annual Plan Commitments 2020/21<br><a href="https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/">https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/</a>  | Owner         | Directorate         | 30 September progress update   | RAG   |
|-------------------------|-----|---|---------------|---------------------|--|-------|
| An Enterprising Council | 25  | We will continue the programme of <b>acquiring income generating property assets</b> which will also help support the funding of service delivery to our communities;   | Andrew Low    | Development & Place | Acquisitions are in line with programme targets.   | Green |
|                         | 26  | We will commence <b>collaboration with the Somerset District Councils to deliver a more efficient, sustainable, but locally accountable, system of local Government</b> in the county that will work better for our communities;  | Martha Dudman | Development & Place | Somerset West & Taunton Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council and South Somerset District Council have together launched Stronger Somerset – an ambitious strategy to reform local government in Somerset. A prospectus has been created to better deliver for people, places and productivity across Somerset. Leaders of the District Councils.<br><br>We have written a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Local Government, Robert Jenrick, to update him on our plans for a Stronger Somerset. We also included our outline Business Case which lays out our vision for a fresh start for our county, from adult care and children's services to a new relationship with towns and parishes. | Green |
|                         | 27  | We will <b>let further empty space within our offices at Taunton and Williton</b> , making better use of public resources and delivering extra income to the Council;   | Sally Stark   | External Operations | We have agreed terms for the letting of the majority of the ground floor Deane House to the MoJ/National Probation Service and solicitors are instructed. Our agents continue to market the 'War Room' and the 2nd floor space. We have agreed terms and completed a lease of part of the ground floor at West Somerset House to Avon & Somerset Police who are fitting out. Further marketing is on hold due to temporary building closure.   | Green |
|                         | 28  | We will <b>review our land and property assets</b> to identify further opportunities to better support the achievement of the council's objectives (including service delivery, regeneration projects and community initiatives). | Darren Stone  | Housing & Community | We have commenced a review of our land and property assets and are working with colleagues in the Development and Place Directorate wherever potential regeneration or community initiatives are identified.   | Green |

## Appendix 3

### Further information on Complaints and FOI

The purpose of this addendum is to provide more background information for Members in relation to the Complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) Performance Indicators.

#### 1. Complaints

- 1.1. The complaints KPI tracks the number of complaints responded to within the target response time of 10 working days. During quarters 1 and 2 we were significantly below target.
- 1.2. The indicator is a cumulative measure so the performance in the first half of the year will impact on overall performance across the year as a whole. We saw a significant spike in the overall number of complaints in the first quarter. Realistically therefore this indicator is likely to remain red all year, because, even if we were to answer all complaints within standard from now on, we are unlikely to receive complaints in sufficient volume to make up the lost ground.

#### *Progress tracked by month*

- 1.3. Consequently we are tracking progress month-by-month across a wider range of indicators and measures. These measures provide a more detailed and rounded picture of progress.
- 1.4. A summary of these additional month-by-month measures is contained in Appendix A which outlines:
  - The total number of complaints received;
  - The number overdue (i.e. not responded to within the 10 working day target); and
  - The average time taken to respond.
- 1.5. Analysis of these measures indicates a significant increase in the number of complaints in the period from May through to August. Our average response times increased during this period, which had a knock on detrimental effect on the numbers of overdue complaints.
- 1.6. We believe the increase in complaints is in part seasonal (e.g. garden waste collection issues). It also results from a significant number of complaints in connection with other waste issues resulting from the move to a new service provider during lockdown and delays delivering new bins. We have worked closely with the Waste Partnership and the new service provider to resolve these issues. The level of missed collections and complaints are now greatly reduced, the new contractor is performing within contractual requirements relating to complaints and at a level better than the previous contractor.
- 1.7. The good news is that the numbers of complaints we are receiving has declined sharply, our average processing times have improved significantly (12 days at the end of October) and the numbers of overdue complaints has declined. This is reflective of the increased focus on complaints during the last three months. However, there is still much work to be done.

### *The Complaints Review*

- 1.8. We instigated a review of the complaints process over the summer in view of the poor month 4 (quarter 1) results. This review examined all aspects of the process.
- 1.9. The review identified a number of factors, which were influencing the low performance figures including:
  - The impact of increases in volumes of complaints
  - Cultural factors & a lack of priority being given to complaints
  - Procedural problems and 'log jams'
  - Our not having a two stage process as required by the Housing Ombudsman and preferred by the Local Govt. Ombudsman
  - Software issues with the process and form used
  - A lack of clarity as to which teams do what & consequently where complaints need to be directed to in the organisation leading to delays
  - Training requirements
  - The impact of Covid upon resourcing

### *The Improvement Plan*

- 1.10. The Complaints Review identified actions required to improve our approach to complaints and performance against target. These actions are now in progress and include:
  - Working with services to prioritise complaints and to change the cultural attitude to complaints
  - Bringing in additional resourcing in the short term to ensure we can quickly finalise and issue responses to complaints once the data is provided by services
  - Developing a new complaints process which:
    - Enables services to respond directly to customers thereby speeding up the response time; and
    - Building in a second stage review process for customers who are unhappy with the initial response – this follows Ombudsman guidelines
  - Implementing changes to the complaints software to enable and support the new process
  - Providing training & guidance for the staff in services who will be responding to complaints
  - These changes free-up the time of the complaints officer to focus more on analysis to identify trends and areas for improvement
- 1.11. We are in the process of implementing these actions in order to drive improvement. However, as outlined above, there are a significant number of issues that need to be addressed so implementing these changes will not happen overnight.

## **2. Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs)**

- 2.1. We are required by law to respond to Freedom of Information Requests within 20 working days. For very detailed requests we are allowed a further 20 working days.

- 2.2. The Information Commissioner has relaxed their enforcement of the statutory timescales this year in response to Covid 19 and in recognition that the priority for local government is around assisting in the national response to the crisis.

*Progress tracked by month*

- 2.3. We are tracking progress against our performance in responding to FOI requests month-by-month. This analysis is detailed in Appendix B.
- 2.4. Appendix B details the overall number of FOIs received month-by-month and maps this against the numbers overdue (i.e. outside of the 20 working day response timeline) and the average response time in days. Overall volumes per month are low in comparison to the numbers for other service requests, but individual FOIs can be complex and time consuming.
- 2.5. The data in Appendix B indicates that the number of requests reduced through the first national lockdown in the Spring, but picked up over the course of the Summer. Our average response times were higher throughout the Spring and Summer, which largely reflects the fact that our priorities throughout that period were on Covid response actions.
- 2.6. The numbers of cases overdue peaked in September, but have improved together with our average response times since then.

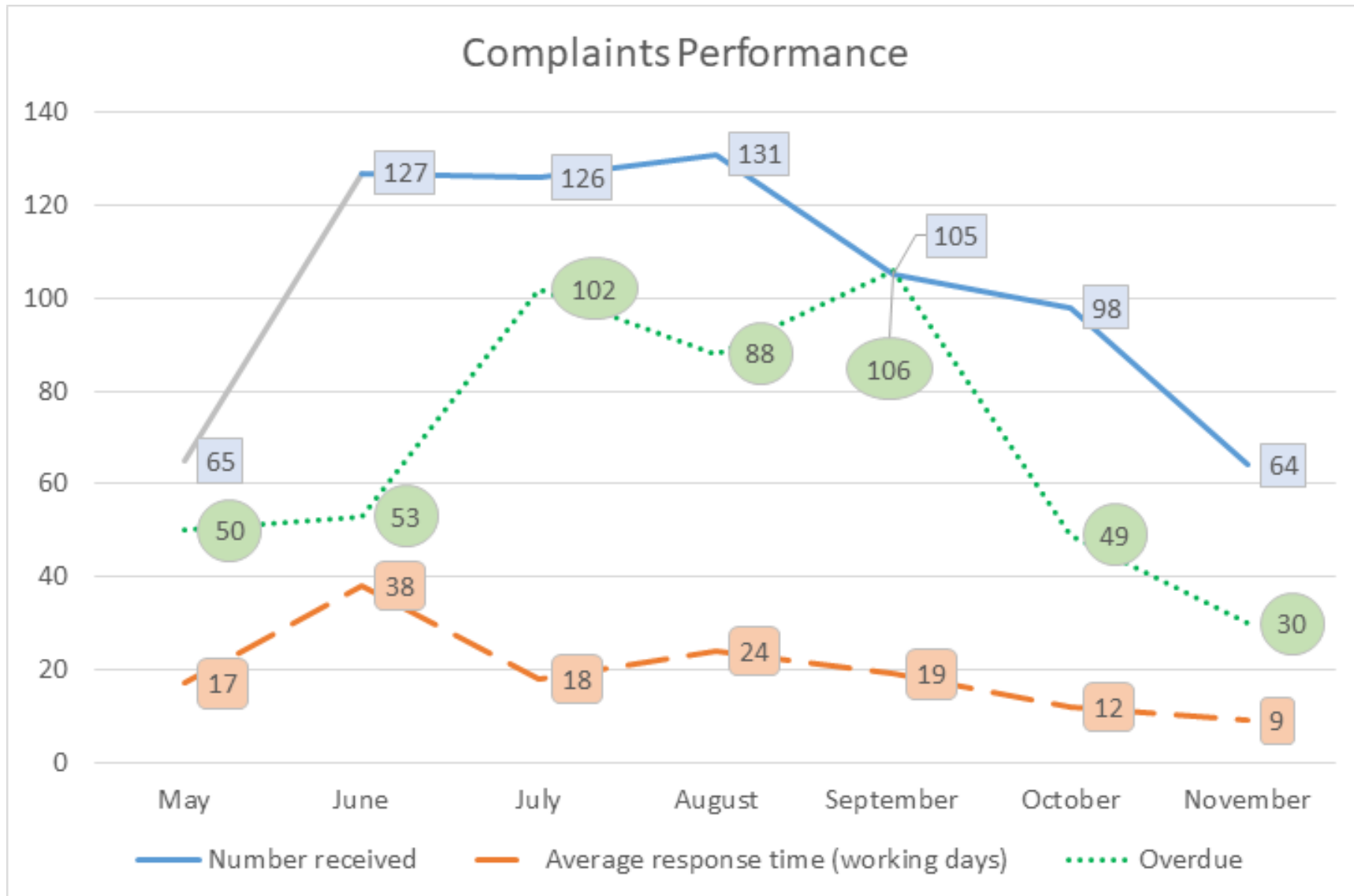
*Process improvements*

- 2.7. We are keeping our FOI response times under close review and actions are being taken to improvement performance. Specifically we are:
- Regularly contacting services to chase-up responses
  - Providing service managers with a weekly update of outstanding cases
  - Reviewing the computer software process to ensure that requests are being properly targeted
  - Developing training to be rolled out to staff responsible for responding to FOIs

APPENDIX A - Complaints volumes and performance month-by-month

Complaints Performance

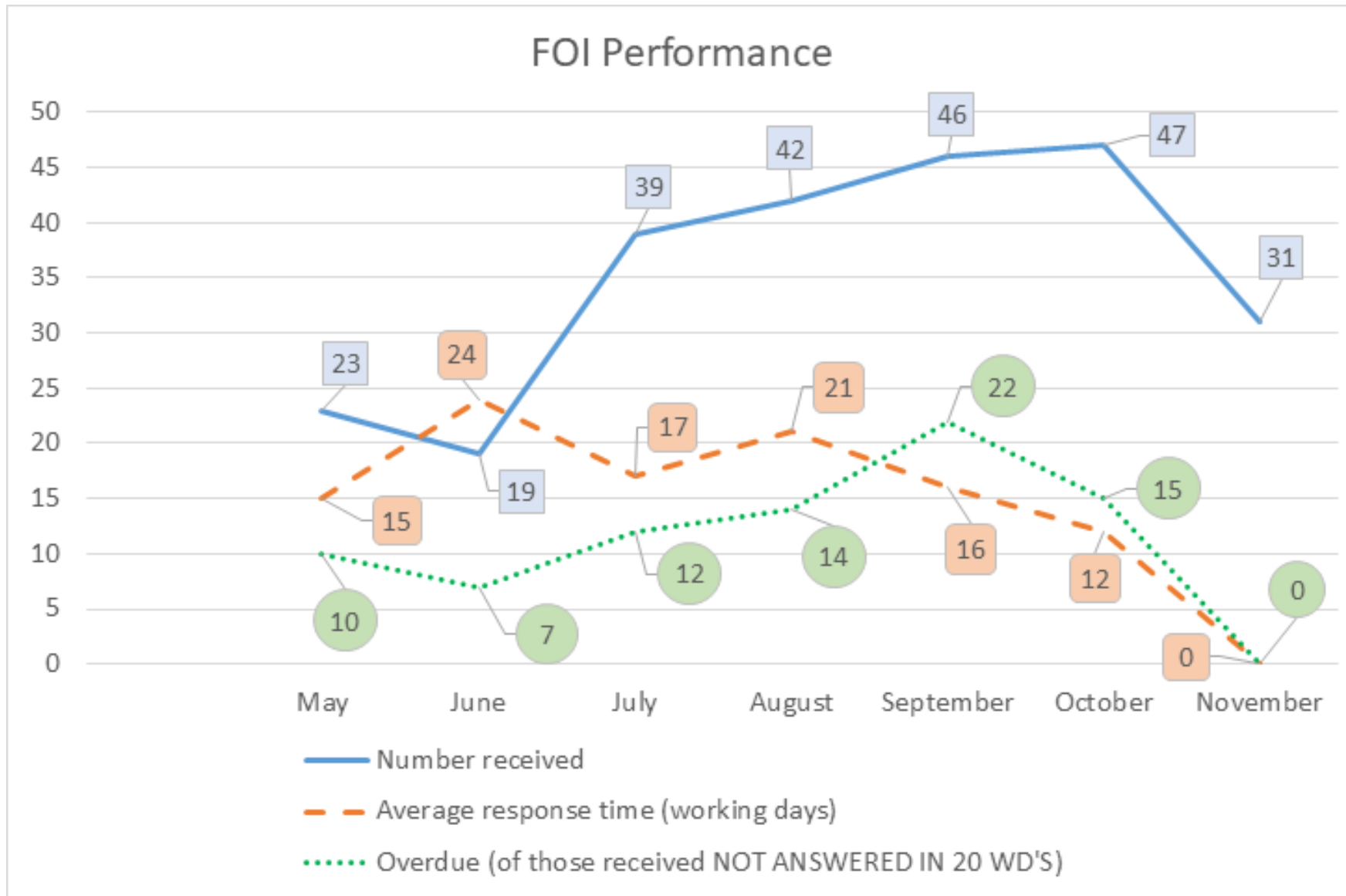
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APPENDIX B - FOIs volumes and performance month-by-month

FOI Performance

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Report Number: SWT 174/20

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Executive – 16 December 2020

### 2020/21 Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2020)

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

Report Author: Emily Collacott (Lead Finance Business Partner & Deputy S151 Officer)

#### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council for the financial year 2020/21 (as at 30 September 2020).
- 1.2 The position this year is significantly affected by COVID – both in terms of large additional sums spent on issuing financial assistance to local businesses and council tax payers, and direct impact on the Council’s service costs and income. Financial pressures are reported, which is partly offset by emergency grant funding from Government but has also required the Council to reprioritise funds and support the annual budget from reserves. Despite this, the Council remains financially resilient and continues to forecast adequate reserve balances.
- 1.3 The current forecast is summarised below:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| General Fund Revenue    | Projected £551k overspend (£625k relating to COVID and an underspend of £74k for non-COVID) |
| Housing Revenue Account | Projected £140k overspend   |

#### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive reviews and notes the Council’s forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2020/21 financial year as at 30 September 2020.

#### 3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 Financial forecasts are based on known information and projections based on assumptions. As such any forecast carries an element of risk. The current forecasts included in this report are considered reasonable given the extra element of risk around COVID, and based on experience it is feasible the year end position could change. It is common for underspends to emerge during the last quarter, reflecting an optimism bias within previous forecasting.
- 3.2 Salient in year budget risks are summarised in sections 9 and 11 in this report. The

Council manages financial risk in a number of ways including setting prudent budgets, carrying out appropriate monitoring and control of spend, operating robust financial procedures, and so on. The Council also holds both general and earmarked reserves which include contingencies to manage budget risk.

#### **4 Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 This report provides the Council's forecast end of year financial position for revenue and capital expenditure as at 30 September 2020 for the Council's General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 4.2 The regular monitoring of financial information is a key element in the Council's Performance Management Framework. Crucially it enables remedial action to be taken in response to significant budget variances, some of which may be unavoidable. It also provides the opportunity to assess any consequent impact on reserves and the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 4.3 Members will be aware from previous experience that the position can change between 'in-year' projections and the final outturn position, mainly due to demand-led service costs and income levels. The budget monitoring process involves a detailed review of the more volatile budgets and a proportionate review of low risk/low volatility budget areas. Budget Holders, with support and advice from their accountants, update their forecasts on a monthly basis based on currently available information and knowledge of service requirements for the remainder of the year. As with any forecast there is always a risk that some unforeseen changes could influence the position at the year-end, and a number of risks and uncertainties are highlighted within this report. However, the following forecast is considered to be reasonable based on current information.
- 4.4 Budgets have now all been allocated out to the relevant Directors.

#### **5 General Fund Revenue Budget – 2020/21 Forecast Outturn**

- 5.1 The Council is currently forecasting an overall net overspend of £551k (2.6% of £21m Net Budget), as summarised below. The main reasons for this are due to pressures relating to COVID additional cost and income reductions accounting for £625k of the overspend. A recommendation to Full Council was included in the Month 4 forecast report to approve a supplementary estimate of £657k from General Reserves for COVID-related pressures. This is due to be considered by Council on 15 December 2020.
- 5.2 The forecast remains volatile and subject to change. It includes a significant number of assumptions about demand for services and the timing of planned spend to meet service objectives. The level of uncertainty is increased this year as the full extent of the impact of COVID is not yet known. There has been an immediate impact on service costs and income, for example a significant reduction in parking income due to lock down in the first half of the year, and Government has introduced new national lockdown measures in November which will further impact on services and income. The Government has so far provided emergency additional funding of £2.4m – including an additional £504k announced on 22 October. Additional new burdens funding has also been received towards the administration of grants, and we are also able to claim grant to partly offset

the loss of income from fees and charges.

5.3 As previously reported, despite the reported pressures and uncertainties summarised in this report, the Council is in a strong position financially to withstand losses this year and remain financially resilient. This financial strength also provides opportunity to allocate reserves to support economic recovery. The scale of flexibility is however still reliant on the receipt of emergency funding, and the sector is continuing to lobby Government to ensure local authorities are adequately funded for the impact of COVID.

5.4 The following table presents a summary of the revenue budget and current forecast outturn for the year by directorate. The forecast variances have been presented to provide a distinction between those primarily as a consequence of COVID impact, and those primarily related to normal operations.

**Table 1 - General Fund Revenue Outturn Summary 2020/21**

|  | Current Budget<br>£'000 | Forecast Outturn for the Year<br>£'000 | Forecast Variance COVID<br>£'000 | Forecast Variance non COVID<br>£'000 | Total Forecast Variance<br>£'000 % |             |
|--|-------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Development and Place                  | 1,188                   | 1,298                                  | 148                              | -38                                  | 110                                | 9.3         |
| External Operations and Climate Change | 7,754                   | 13,728                                 | 5,767                            | 207                                  | 5,974                              | 77.7        |
| Housing                                | 2,603                   | 2,588                                  | 0                                | -15                                  | -15                                | -0.6        |
| Internal Operations                    | 8,787                   | 9,286                                  | 625                              | -126                                 | 499                                | 5.7         |
| Senior Management Team                 | 663                     | 696                                    | 0                                | 33                                   | 33                                 | 5.0         |
| <b>Net Cost of Services</b>            | <b>20,995</b>           | <b>27,596</b>                          | <b>6,540</b>                     | <b>61</b>                            | <b>6,601</b>                       | <b>31.4</b> |
| COVID Grant Income                     | 0                       | -5,047                                 | -5,047                           | 0                                    | -5,047                             |             |
| Interest and Investment Income         | -2,008                  | -2,011                                 | 132                              | -135                                 | -3                                 | 0.5         |
| Net Transfers to Earmarked Reserves    | 3,534                   | 2,534                                  | -1,000                           | 0                                    | -1,000                             | -28.3       |
| Transfers to General Reserves          | 282                     | 282                                    | 0                                | 0                                    | 0                                  | 0.0         |
| Capital and Other Adjustments          | -1,781                  | -1,781                                 | 0                                | 0                                    | 0                                  | 0.0         |
| <b>Net Budget</b>                      | <b>21,022</b>           | <b>21,573</b>                          | <b>625</b>                       | <b>-74</b>                           | <b>551</b>                         | <b>2.6</b>  |
| Funding                                | -21,022                 | -21,022                                | 0                                | 0                                    | 0                                  | 0.0         |
| <b>Variance</b>                        | <b>0</b>                | <b>551</b>                             | <b>625</b>                       | <b>-74</b>                           | <b>551</b>                         | <b>2.6</b>  |

5.5 The table below provides more detail on the significant variances forecast for the year.

**Table 2a - Summary of COVID Related Forecast Variances for the Year**

| Budget heading       | Directorate | Variance<br>£'000 | Comments  |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------------|---|
| Economic Development | D&P         | 27                | COVID response costs in Minehead including a footfall counter and signage with the Minehead Bid Company, together with regional COVID signage and stickering costs. |
| Land Charges         | D&P         | 121               | Reduction in income due to COVID  |
| Harbours             | EO&CC       | 16                | Reduction in mooring and rental income.   |
| Bereavement Services | EO&CC       | 184               | Labour and machinery to expand the capacity of the cemetery, additional crematorium equipment and PPE costs.  |
| Major Contracts      | EO&CC       | 1,469             | This includes the assistance package agreed during the first national lockdown period to support SLM so that they could   |

| Budget heading         | Directorate | Variance £'000 | Comments  |
|------------------------|-------------|----------------|---|
|                        |             |                | safely open leisure facilities at earliest opportunity in line with Government guidance, and additional waste contract costs incurred by the Somerset Waste Partnership due to additional recycling volume and a delay in the roll out of Recycle More.   |
| Parking                | EO&CC       | 3,984          | Reduction in income due to the provision of free parking in the early part of the year and there is the expectation that parking income may be diluted to the end of the financial year due to a reduction in usage of the car parks due to the ongoing COVID situation.  |
| Licensing              | EO&CC       | 57             | Levels of income (including Taxi-Licensing) are down due to COVID. The licensing service recover income from application charges. The staffing costs are fixed and an in year under recovery has occurred due to the significant reduction in applications.   |
| Open Spaces            | EO&CC       | 8              | Additional PPE and hire of vehicles.  |
| Central Overheads      | EO&CC       | 49             | Additional costs relating to using an external supplier for printing and postage due to COVID restrictions.   |
| Visitor Centre         | IO          | 40             | A shortfall in income resulting from COVID. The income sales budget totals £280k for the year. Money will be saved on not having to purchase tickets to resell, but we lose the additional commission income we would ordinarily receive. With a further lockdown now being announced in November it is highly unlikely that we will derive any income from sales this year.  |
| Council Tax Collection | IO          | 339            | The variance largely relates to court costs income, which has been affected by COVID. We budgeted to raise £355k in court costs. To date in view of the COVID restrictions we have not been able to issue any summonses for Council Tax or Business Rates and consequently cannot charge costs. The Courts are dealing with a backlog and have yet to advise us when we will be able to issue summonses. With the further lockdown it is looking unlikely that we will be able to issue any significant number of summonses during this financial year. This position may change if and when we come out of lockdown and the courts are happy for us to issue summonses in large volumes. |
| Council Tax Support    | IO          | 27             | Additional Staffing Costs relating to extra work due to COVID to process additional workload for benefits resulting from COVID related changes to benefits e.g. the £150 support grants.  |
| Comms and Engagement   | IO          | 65             | Additional staffing requirements were required to support our response to COVID both customers and staff as follows:<br>1. Increased internal communications capacity supporting the senior management team and managers. Keeping staff up to date with vital information and instructions re home schooling, H & S, symptoms, shielding. Caring responsibilities working arrangements etc. Also ensuring wellbeing was supported during a time when the working environment changed overnight.   |

| Budget heading                                | Directorate | Variance £'000 | Comments   |
|---|-------------|----------------|--|
|   |             |                | 2. Increase of hours for External communications lead to full time to ensure full availability for cross partner communications cells, press responses and coordination of vital messages to the public  |
| Internal Change                               | IO          | 20             | SWT has incurred additional staff costs as a result of the COVID situation. This was to ensure the transition of the technology solution to Microsoft Team for staff was done as quickly as possible. The team accelerated a 6 month delivery programme into two weeks and we needed this additional resource to make that happen  |
| ICT   | IO          | 134            | SWT incurred additional costs due to upgrading the Civica software to administer the business grants and the discounts for the Council tax hardship allowance. The implementation of Microsoft 365 was accelerated at an additional cost, specifically to provide Teams to support working from home / remotely as staff self-isolate.   |
| Interest Receivable                           | Gen         | 132            | Due to the economic climate this is expected to be below budget, with a reduction in income from investment funds and short term treasury cash balances.   |
| <b>Sub-Total – Net Financial Pressures</b>    |             | <b>6,672</b>   | Estimated net pressure from exceptional additional expenditure and income reductions.  |
| COVID Emergency Grants and New Burdens Grants | Gen         | -5,047         | The Government has provided additional funding to local authorities to assist with immediate COVID response and related impact on General Fund service costs and income losses. This grant has not been ring-fenced, providing local flexibility to decide how best to direct the funds. The Council has received 4 tranches of emergency grant since April, totalling £2.39m. New Burdens Grant of £170k has also been received towards the costs of administering the business grants schemes for small businesses and the retail, hospitality and leisure sector. Government has also announced a scheme to compensate some losses through reduced sales, fees and charges income. A reasonable estimate of additional income has been include in the forecast based on our estimates of relevant income losses, totalling £2.49m. The Council has received £1.2m in November towards income shortfall for the period April to July 2020. |
| Transfer from earmarked reserves              | Gen         | -1,000         | Agreed contribution from the NHB reserve to mitigate COVID-related financial pressure, approved by the Leader and CEO using emergency powers in March 2020.  |
| <b>NET OVERSPEND</b>                          |             | <b>625</b>     | <b>NB – Full Council requested to approve £657k additional allocation from General Reserves to mitigate net financial pressures due to COVID</b>   |

**Table 2b - Summary of non-COVID Related Forecast Variances for the Year**

| Budget heading                             | Directorate | Variance £'000 | Comments  |
|--|-------------|----------------|---|
| Major and Special Projects and Garden Town | D&P         | -38            | The savings is due to vacancies in the Major Programmes department net of the cost of agency staff in the Planning department to cover the Planning Enforcement posts.  |
| Parks and Open Spaces                      | EO&CC       | 388            | Income budget not altered to reflect non-renewal of external contracts.   |
| Street Cleansing Partnership               | EO&CC       | 109            | Budget realigned to contracted costs.   |
| Parking Enforcement                        | EO&CC       | -136           | Budget realigned with actual costs.   |
| Waste Partnership                          | EO&CC       | -61            | Increase in recycling credits.  |
| Park and Ride                              | EO&CC       | -30            | Budget realigned with actual costs.   |
| Asset Management                           | EO&CC       | -60            | Income is predicted to be higher than budgeted – this may continue to alter as we realign income to investment properties.  |
| EO&CC Salaries                             | EO&CC       | -95            | Various salary underspends across the Directorate due to active vacancy management.   |
| Pollution Control                          | EO&CC       | 21             | Private Sector Water sampling was not include within the budget therefore the costs are higher than the budget  |
| Welfare Funerals                           | EO&CC       | 52             | This forecast is based on a greater reliance on the service so far this year (compared with last year) and less recovery of costs from the deceased's estate.   |
| Licensing                                  | EO&CC       | 42             | Budget realigned with actual income   |
| Other minor underspends                    | EO&CC       | -23            | Various minor underspends across the Directorate.   |
| Revenues and Benefits                      | IO          | -41            | Overall there are some pressure in the budget but the grant funding towards operational costs for this year is greater than anticipated.  |
| IO Salaries                                | IO          | -85            | There are various salary overspends and underspend within the Directorate which have been identified. The Deane Helpline salaries budget is not sufficient to cover the current staffing costs, whilst other services such as the Income Team, Customer Services, ICT Infrastructure Team, Internal Change, HR and the Governance Team have had various vacancies throughout the year. The staffing budget within Internal Operations overall is predicted to underspend as whole this year and any changes to the budget moving forward will be managed as part of the budget setting process. |
| Homelessness                               | Housing     | -15            | The service have recently undertaken a thorough review of its homelessness spend and is currently predicting a net underspend of £15k mainly relating to B&B costs, though there is still a lot of uncertainty with regards to COVID.   |
| Senior Management Team                     | SMT         | 33             | Pay award costs above the budget that could not be offset by other salary savings.  |
| Interest payable                           | Gen         | -135           | We have not had to externally borrow for everything that was budgeted for and therefore there is a saving in interest costs. This has benefitted in part by the receipt of cash through Government funding in advance of making payments e.g. for   |

| Budget heading                          | Direct-<br>orate | Variance<br>£'000 | Comments  |
|---|------------------|-------------------|---|
|   |                  |                   | business grants and council tax hardship and early receipt of other grant funding such as New Homes Bonus |
| <b>TOTAL – over /<br/>(-)underspend</b> |                  | <b>-74</b>        |   |

### General Fund (GF) Reserves

- 5.6 The opening reserves balance as at 1 April 2020 is £4.522m, subject to the final audit of the accounts being completed.
- 5.7 Following approved/proposed transfers to and from reserves, the revised overspend and prudent contingency due to COVID and underspend due to non-COVID variances the projected General Fund reserve uncommitted balance this year is £7.871m. As part of the financial strategy agreed by the Executive in October, £3.5m of current reserves are planned to be used to soften the budget gap in the next two financial years, reducing the projected uncommitted balance to £4.371m.

**Table 3 – GF General Reserve Balance**

|  | Approval           | £k            |
|--|--------------------|---------------|
| <b>Balance 1 April 2020</b>                            |                    | <b>4,522</b>  |
| 2020/21 Original Budget Transfer to Reserve            | Council - 19/2/20  | 300           |
| Approved - From Earmarked Reserves review              | Exec 28/10/20      | 1,218         |
| Proposed - From NHB reserve                            | Council - 15/12/20 | 3,949         |
| Proposed - From BR Volatility reserve                  | Council - 15/12/20 | 1,000         |
| Approved - Town Centre Recovery                        | Council - 29/9/20  | -500          |
| Approved - Unitary Programme Delivery Funds            | Exec - 23/9/20     | -249          |
| Approved - Climate Change Fund                         | Council – 26/10/20 | -500          |
| Approved - Tree Planting                               | Officer – 23/09/20 | -18           |
| Proposed - 2020/21 COVID overspend                     | Council – 15/12/20 | -657          |
| <b>Projected Balance after current commitments</b>     |                    | <b>9,065</b>  |
| Projected Outturn - COVID (Month 6 forecast) (657-625) |                    | 32            |
| Projected Outturn - Non-COVID (Month 6 forecast)       |                    | 74            |
| COVID Contingency (plan to reassess Dec 2020)          |                    | -1,300        |
| <b>Projected Balance 31 March 2021</b>                 |                    | <b>7,871</b>  |
| MTFP Planned use of reserves 2021/22                   |                    | <b>-2,250</b> |
| MTFP Planned use of reserves 2022/23                   |                    | <b>-1,250</b> |
| Projected uncommitted balance                          |                    | <b>4,371</b>  |
| Recommended Minimum Balance                            |                    | <b>2,400</b>  |

- 5.8 The projected balance remains above both the minimum requirement. It is prudent to continue to hold reserves above the minimum at this stage as risks remain higher than normal due to COVID and the Council may need additional resources to deliver service efficiency and improvement, and to implement structural change if local government unitarisation is approved by Government next year.

## Earmarked Reserves

5.9 The General Fund Earmarked Reserves brought forward balance for 2020/21 is £20.586m. The budgeted transfers to earmarked reserves in 2020/21 are £2.448m. The following transfers from reserves have been approved: return £6.167m to General Reserves (£1m from the Business Rates Volatility Reserve, £3.949m from NHB and £1.218m identified surpluses from a range of other reserves). Under emergency powers in March the Chief Executive also approved a contribution of £1m from the NHB reserve towards funding COVID pressures, and this is included within the forecast for this year.

5.10 The following table details those reserves with balances greater than £500,000.

**Table 4 – General Fund Earmarked Reserves**

|                                  | Balance<br>1 April<br>2020 | 2020/21<br>Budgeted<br>Transfers | Approved<br>Return to<br>General<br>Reserves | Financial<br>Strategy<br>/COVID<br>Emergency<br>Funding | Projected<br>Balance<br>31 March<br>2021 |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|--|
|                                  | £'000                      | £'000                            | £'000  | £'000   | £'000                                    |
| Business Rates Volatility        | 3,303                      | 2,031                            |  | -1,000  | 4,334                                    |
| Investment Risk                  | 3,500                      | 0                                |  |   | 3,500                                    |
| NHB                              | 6,860                      | 591                              |  | -4,949  | 2,502                                    |
| Garden Town                      | 814                        | -65                              |  |   | 749                                      |
| Asset Management                 | 687                        |                                  |  |   | 687                                      |
| Economic Development Initiatives | 1,268                      |                                  |  |   | 1,268                                    |
| Community Housing*               | 569                        |                                  |  |   | 569                                      |
| Other Smaller Balances           | 3,585                      | -108                             | -1,218                                       |   | 2,259                                    |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>20,586</b>              | <b>3,249</b>                     | <b>-1,218</b>                                | <b>-5,949</b>   | <b>16,668</b>                            |

\*ring-fenced grant

5.11 Earmarked reserves are reviewed during the year. This is in order to confirm they align to current priorities, and to identify any surplus balances that can be redirected to mitigate in-year financial risks or be returned to general reserves.

## **6 COVID Financial Support – Business Grants**

6.1 The Government earlier this year launched a range of grant schemes to provide financial assistance to businesses with fixed property costs that have been affected by COVID. This includes grants to small businesses and to businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector. The Council received grant funding of £46,626,000 on 1 April 2020 to provide us with the cash upfront to meet the costs of the scheme. In May the Government also provided additional flexibilities to introduce a local discretionary grant scheme with a total allocation of up to £2,128,250, which extended eligibility to some businesses that were outside the scope of the initial schemes such as market traders and small businesses in shared spaces that pay no business rates. These schemes closed by September 2020 and the final totals are summarised below. The cost of the local discretionary grants is covered within the initial £46m grant received.



Table 5a – Business Grants

|  | Number of grants issued | £          | £          |
|--|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| Grant Funding Received from Government           |                         |            | 46,626,000 |
| Small Business Grants of £10,000                 | 2,635                   | 26,350,000 |            |
| Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grants of £10,000 | 487                     | 4,870,000  |            |
| Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grants of £25,000 | 427                     | 10,675,000 |            |
| Local Discretionary Grants                       | 353                     | 2,127,500  |            |
| Total Paid Out                                   | 3,902                   |            | 44,022,500 |
| Balance To Be Returned to Government             |                         |            | 2,603,500  |
| Percentage of Funding Spent                      |                         |            | 94.4%      |

- 6.2 Following the reintroduction of national lockdown measures in November 2020, further grant funding has been allocated to provide additional support to local businesses. The grant totals are summarised below, and at the time of writing this report officers are working on the necessary policies and processes to quickly be able to issue grants to eligible businesses.

Table 5b – Local Restrictions Grants

|  | £         |
|--|-----------|
| Local Restrictions Support Grants (Closed) | 3,517,164 |
| Additional Restrictions Support Grants     | 3,102,300 |
| Total                                      | 6,619,464 |

## **7 COVID Financial Support – Business Rates Holiday 2020/21**

- 7.1 In March 2020 the Government also announced a Business Rates Holiday for 2020/21 – expanding the previously announced 50% retail discount to 100%, and including retail, hospitality and leisure property; and adding Early Years nurseries. The Revenues team worked very quickly to apply the discounts to business rates accounts before the 1 April, so that direct debits due on 1 April would exclude eligible property. Discounts totalling £24.5m had been awarded at that stage, and this has increased subsequently to £28.766m as at 13 September 2020 – representing approximately half of the total business rates due to be collected for the year.

Table 6 – Business Rates Holiday 2020/21 Forecast

|                          | Number of accounts | Rateable Values £ | Total Discount £ |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Expanded Retail Discount | 1,388              | 58,989,590        | 28,661,458       |
| Nurseries                | 21                 | 325,275           | 105,477          |
| Totals                   | 1,409              |                   | 28,766,935       |

- 7.2 The discount awarded clearly affects the total amount received from ratepayers, which impacts on the amount of business rates available to distribute through the Business

Rates Retention system. The Government will provide additional S31 Grant to SWTC to fully compensate its 40% share of the reduction in rates income. This does result in a skew in the accounting for business rates retention funding – with S31 grant received in 2020/21 which will be needed to offset the resulting deficit in the Collection Fund (which accounts for income from rate payers but not S31 grant) in 2021/22.

## **8 COVID Financial Support – Hardship Funding**

- 8.1 As well as providing financial support to businesses, the Government has also provided grant funding of £1,382,002 as a Hardship Support fund to support households with council tax costs. Whilst this is discretionary funding the Government set out its expectation that the funding would be used to reduce council tax bills for those in receipt of Local Council Tax Support by £150 (or reduced to nil if the net bill after other discounts is less than £150). As at 4 November the total hardship discount awarded is £1.126m. There is no requirement to repay any grant not used for the £150 discount scheme, however it is considered likely the funding will be fully allocated by the end of this financial year as new claims for LCTS are made.

Table 7 – Hardship Funding

|   | Number of Accounts | £         |
|---|--------------------|-----------|
| Grant Funding Received from Government              |                    | 1,382,002 |
| Total hardship discounts awarded to 4 November 2020 | 8,875              | 1,178,242 |
| Balance of Funding remaining                        |                    | 203,760   |
| Percentage of Funding Spent to date                 |                    | 85%       |

## **9 General Fund - Risk and Uncertainty**

- 9.1 Budgets and forecasts are based on known information and the best estimates of the Council's future spending and income. Income and expenditure over the 2020/21 financial year is estimated by budget holders and then reported through the budget monitoring process. During this process risks and uncertainties are identified which could impact on the financial projections, but for which the likelihood, and/or amount are uncertain. The Council carries protection against risk and uncertainty in a number of ways, such as insurances and maintaining reserves. This is a prudent approach and helps to mitigate unforeseen pressures.
- 9.2 The following general risks and uncertainties have been identified:
- a) **COVID 19:** Although work has been undertaken to identify as much as we can the impacts there could still be short, medium and long term impacts to both income and expenditure which have not yet been identified.
  - b) **Fluctuation in demand for services:** We operate a number of demand-led services and the levels of demand do not always follow a recognisable trend. We therefore have to caveat the forecasts in these areas to account for fluctuations.
  - c) **Forecasting Assumptions:** It is conceivable that, whilst budget holders are

optimistic that they will spend all of their budget, experience shows we could see underspends of £250k-£500k by year-end caused by the cumulative effect of minor underspends in a number of service areas. There is also uncertainty around delivery of service which can vary from operational planning assumptions and impact on the timing of spend.

- d) **Year-end Adjustments:** Certain items are not determined or finalised until the financial year-end. For example, the final assessment of provisions required for bad debts, and final allocations of support service recharges. These can result in potentially significant differences to current forecasts.
- e) **Business Rates:** There are inherent risks and uncertainties within the Business Rates Retention system. The Council's share of business rates funding is directly linked to the total amount of business rates due and collected in the area, which can fluctuate throughout the year and be affected by the result of Rateable Value changes e.g. as a result of Appeals.
- f) **Recruitment costs:** There is a risk of no savings within salary budgets to take into account these costs – these costs are normally covered by vacancy savings in-year.
- g) **Interest receivable:** Due to COVID the forecast have been based on the best current information that we have. Interest rates are unpredictable and there is a risk that interest rates could decrease further, and investment fund performance is susceptible to financial markets.
- h) **Asset Management:** The budgets for maintaining our assets do not hold any contingency for significant unforeseen repairs or improvement works.
- i) **Landlord Property Compliance:** A review of all compliance areas against every property for which Somerset West and Taunton Council has landlord property compliance responsibility is being undertaken. Within 2020/21 these costs are expected to be covered by earmarked reserves though if any costs above the approved budgets/earmarked reserves are identified these will be reported in future financial reports.

## **10 General Fund Capital Programme**

- 10.1 The original capital budget for 2020/21 was £66.49m and £30.57m has been carried forward from 2019/20 giving a total budget of £97.06m at the start of the year. At the start of the year £2.23m was approved for Firepool. Following a review by the leadership team and approval by the Executive the month 4 report recommended that Full Council in December return £1.37m of capital budgets relating to existing schemes and approve a new budget of £0.5m for Toneworks. A supplementary budget of £0.02m for IT was approved. These all bring the total capital programme budget to £98.44m
- 10.2 The Leadership has also developed and proposed some changes to the planned financing of the Growth Programme and Community Infrastructure Programme. This is

in line with one of the objectives set out in the updated Financial Strategy, enabling the release of New Homes Bonus (NHB) funds to support revenue costs, recognising that NHB funding is expected to reduce to zero in the Medium Term Financial Plan, and there is an opportunity to utilise more of the projected Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for growth and infrastructure schemes.

### **Growth Programme – New Homes Bonus Funded Schemes**

10.3 The amount of New Homes Bonus funding available to support the Capital Programme for the period 2019/20 to 2021/22 is £3.56m. Following the Month 4 report a recommendation is being presented to Full Council in December to approve the revised allocation per theme, with allocations to individual projects continuing to be confirmed under agreed delegations.

Table 8 – Growth Programme Funded by NHB

|   | Actual<br>2019/20<br>£k | Estimate<br>2020/21<br>£k | Estimate<br>2021/22<br>£k | Totals<br>2022/23<br>£k |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Major Transport Schemes                 | 98                      | 60                        | 0                         | <b>158</b>              |
| Town Centre Regeneration                | 724                     | 1,124                     | 985                       | <b>2,883</b>            |
| Employment Site Enabling and Innovation | 0                       | 505                       | 0                         | <b>505</b>              |
| Flood Alleviation                       | 14                      | 0                         | 0                         | <b>14</b>               |
| <b>TOTALS</b>                           | <b>836</b>              | <b>1,689</b>              | <b>1,035</b>              | <b>3,560</b>            |

10.4 The main projects planned to be funded within these themes include:

- Major transport schemes – is the contribution to the Park & Ride and there is provision for SWT to contribute to the costs of the SCC led feasibility study at Wellington Station.
- Town Centre Regeneration – mainly consists of the Firepool development costs, NHB funding of the Coal Orchard project as per the approved business case, and an allocation to support the Heritage sites.
- Employment enabling sites – is the SWT contribution to the SCC led development of the Innovation centres and the SWT contribution to the Broadband SEP project.
- Flood alleviation – is the residual cost of the Phase 2 project to determine the flood intervention strategy.

### **Infrastructure Programme – CIL Funded Schemes**

10.5 A review of the CIL Principles was included in the Financial Strategy approved in October. These include the delegations for approving schemes. The main change in terms of planned spending principles is to enhance the exceptions to the thresholds – of maximum CIL funding per scheme of £3.5m and maximum of 50% of scheme costs – to include flood schemes and education provision.

10.6 Following the review of the CIL programme, and the planned reductions in use of New Homes Bonus to finance the capital programme, it was recommended in the Month 4

report that a revised capital programme for CIL-funded schemes is approved. The following table sets out an updated Programme commencing in 2020/21, which has increased from £15.5m to £16.262m.

Table 9 – Community Infrastructure Levy Projects and Infrastructure Budget

|  | 2020/21<br>£     | 2021/22<br>£     | 2022/23<br>£     | 2023/24<br>£     | 2024/25<br>£     | 2025/26<br>Onwards<br>£ | Totals<br>£       |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Funding Available                                    |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                         |                   |
| Balance 1 April 2020                                 | 5,034,532        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                         | 5,034,532         |
| Projected Net CIL Income                             | 1,861,240        | 1,711,240        | 1,711,240        | 1,461,240        | 1,461,240        |                         | 8,206,200         |
| Additional CIL requirement to meet expenditure plans |                  |                  |                  |                  | 21,368           | 3,000,000               | 3,021,368         |
| <b>Total Income Projection</b>                       | <b>6,895,772</b> | <b>1,711,240</b> | <b>1,711,240</b> | <b>1,461,240</b> | <b>1,482,608</b> | <b>3,000,000</b>        | <b>16,262,100</b> |
| Capital Expenditure:                                 |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                         |                   |
| Cycle and Pedestrian Improvements                    | 500,000          |                  |                  | 1,000,000        |                  |                         | 1,500,000         |
| Education Provision                                  | 1,000,000        |                  | 1,000,000        | 1,000,000        | 1,000,000        | 3,000,000               | 7,000,000         |
| Public Transport Improvement                         |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                         | 0                 |
| Taunton Town Centre Regeneration                     | 500,000          | 1,000,000        |                  |                  |                  |                         | 1,500,000         |
| Surface Water and Flood Risk Mitigation*             | 2,262,100        | 2,500,000        |                  | 1,000,000        |                  |                         | 5,762,100         |
| Community Development                                |                  |                  |                  | 500,000          |                  |                         | 500,000           |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>                             | <b>4,262,100</b> | <b>3,500,000</b> | <b>1,000,000</b> | <b>3,500,000</b> | <b>1,000,000</b> | <b>3,000,000</b>        | <b>16,262,100</b> |
| <b>Projected Funding Balance</b>                     | <b>2,633,672</b> | <b>844,912</b>   | <b>1,556,152</b> | <b>-482,608</b>  | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>                | <b>0</b>          |

\*The total budget approved by Council for Surface Water and Flood Risk Mitigation schemes is £6m, with the balance of funding allocated from S106 income.

10.7 As the table shows, the current projected CIL income for the period to 2024/25 is c£13.2m. This is driven by the scale and pace of development within the areas that CIL applies. The intent is to seek approval for the £16.626m commitment in principle, subject to annual review, which effectively prioritises the currently projected CIL income and further CIL income that arises up to the new total. The timing of this will depend on the pace and scale of relevant growth.

10.8 The total allocation for infrastructure investment funded by CIL has increased by a net £762k. This reflects a reduction of £2m for public transport as the related HIF Forward Fund bid was not successful for strategic infrastructure in Taunton (Rapid Bus Link etc), and an increase of £2.762m related to funding of Surface Water and Flood Risk Mitigation.

### Capital Outturn Forecast

10.9 Budget Holders and their accountants have prioritised the monitoring of the revenue spend for quarter 2. Therefore a light touch approach for monitoring the capital programme has been applied for quarter 2 and any further updates on slippage will be reported in future reports. Only one potential overspend for the Crematorium Waiting Room has been identified and officers are looking at the funding options for this within the current capital programme. The spend to date for quarter 2 is £22.2m and it is

estimated that £31.7m of the budget will be required to be carried forward at the end of the year into 2021/22.

10.10 The detailed capital programme is set out in Appendix A. The main areas of capital investment are summarised below:

- a) Development and Place has a budget of £85.6m which includes:
  - £50m Commercial Investments
  - £10.4m for Coal Orchard construction, development and marketing
  - £6.0m Flood alleviation and mitigation schemes
  - £5m capital loan facility to GWR for the re-development of Taunton Train Station
  - £2.1m for completion of Seaward Way Industrial units
  - £3m for Firepool
  - £4m Education provision as the SWT contribution to the Staplegrove development that will be funded by CIL.
- b) External Operations has a budget of £9.9m which includes:
  - £3.7m Disabled Facilities Grants
  - £1.5m capital loan facility of £1.5m to the Onion Collective for their development at the East Quay (this is now unlikely to be needed and the budget requirement will be reviewed in December this year)
  - £0.7m Watchet Splashpoint repairs
  - £0.8m Watchet East Quay wall improvements
  - £0.6m Stogursey Victory Hall
  - £1m for leisure facilities
- c) Internal Operations has a capital budget of £1.2m focussing mainly on the change programme
- d) Housing and Communities budget of £1.7m is mainly for Grants to Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) funded out of S106 and capital receipts.

## **11 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

- 11.1 The HRA is a ring fenced, self-financing, account used to manage the Council's housing stock of some 5,700 properties, with the Council acting as the Landlord.
- 11.2 The Council retains all rental income to meet the costs of managing and maintaining the housing stock, as well as meeting the interest payments and repayment of capital debt.
- 11.3 The current year end forecast outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21 is on budget a net over spend of £140k. It is early in the financial year and management has time to plan to mitigate this during the year, although there are other financial risks that will also need to be managed such as any difficulties collecting rent income due to the potential impact of economic downturn on household income.

**Table 10: HRA Outturn Summary**

|                     | Current Budget<br>£'000 | Forecast Outturn for the Year<br>£'000 | Forecast Variance COVID<br>£'000 | Forecast Variance non COVID<br>£'000 | Total Forecast Variance |              |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
|                     |                         |  |                                  |                                      | £'000                   | %            |
| Gross Income        | -26,773                 | -27,024                                | 0                                | -251                                 | -251                    | -0.94%       |
| Service Expenditure | 15,026                  | 15,296                                 | 0                                | 270                                  | 270                     | 1.80%        |
| Other Expenditure   | 11,746                  | 11,867                                 | 0                                | 121                                  | 121                     | 1.03%        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>0</b>                | <b>140</b>                             | <b>0</b>                         | <b>140</b>                           | <b>140</b>              | <b>0.52%</b> |

11.4 The table below provides more detail on the significant variances forecast for the year:

**Table 11 - Summary of non-COVID Related Forecast Variances for the Year**

| Budget heading                      | Variance<br>£'000 | Comments   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Income                              | -251              | The outturn forecast is an over recovery of income of £251k. This relates in part to dwelling rents where more income is estimated to be recovered than predicted when setting the budget and providing an allowance for voids. This also relates to leaseholder service charges where the budget is set prior to the associated costs being incurred and then billed in arrears.  |
| Service Expenditure                 | 59                | An estimated 2% pay award was included within the budget approved by Full Council in February 2020. The actual pay award has now been agreed at 2.75% meaning an increase in costs to the HRA of £59k.   |
| Depreciation                        | 121               | Following the closedown of the 2019/20 accounts a variance on the depreciation charge, which is transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) to fund the capital programme and/or repay capital debt. Due to this being calculated at the end of the financial year the 2020/21 budgets were not adjusted for this and therefore there will be an overspend of £121k. The budget for 2021/22 will be updated to reflect the latest estimates for this. |
| Landlord Property Compliance        | 211               | A review of all compliance areas against every property for which Somerset West and Taunton Council has landlord property compliance responsibility is being undertaken. The review has so far identified that approximately £211k of additional costs will need to be incurred this financial year over and above existing budgets.   |
| <b>TOTAL – over/ (-) underspend</b> | <b>140</b>        |  |

### **HRA - Risk and Uncertainty**

11.5 Budgets and forecasts are based on known information and the best estimates of the Council's future income and expenditure activity. Income and expenditure over the financial year is estimated by budget holders and then reported through the budget monitoring process. During this process any risks and uncertainties are identified which could impact financial projections, but for which the likelihood and/or amount are uncertain.

11.6 There are also a number of areas where the financial impact is not known until the end of the financial year such as depreciation charges and change in provision for bad debt.

11.7 The current areas of risk and uncertainty being reported include:

- a) **Interest Payable:** There is a risk that the HRA may need to externalise its internal borrowings from the general fund if the general fund needs to borrow internally from itself for any major schemes. The HRA may also need to take on more borrowing to finance capital schemes such as buybacks. As a consequence the interest payable may increase on any additional loans taken.
- b) **Repairs & Maintenance:** Overall this is a very demand led and reactive service based on the needs of the tenants. There are also a number of uncontrollable variables associated with this service such as the weather (e.g. cold winters causing burst pipes, roof leaks, etc), condition of properties when returned (e.g. void refurbishments), consumer demand on minor internal / external repairs (e.g. broken door or fence) and the type of repair work required.
- c) **RTB Receipts:** The RTB scheme is a government scheme that enables tenants to purchase their homes at a discount, subject to meeting qualifying criteria. The receipts allowed to be retained by the Council can fund up to 30% of new social housing costs and must be used within three years of receipt. To date, the Council has successfully spent all of their retained 1-4-1 receipts resulting in no returns being made to the Treasury/MHCLG.

On the 31 Dec 202 the government issued a temporary relaxation of the rules in response to the COVID situation, to give authorities until 31 December 2020 to catch up with their spending plans. This did not provide any benefit to us as we had already exceeded our spend requirements through the purchase of new build properties at Pyrland Fields.

Whilst projected spend and additional purchases are being sought by the service there is a risk that the quarter 3 spend requirements will not be met and may result in funds being return to MHCLD / Treasury. This is a direct result of COVID delaying progress on new build and purchasing houses on the open market.

## 12 HRA Capital Programme

12.1 The HRA approved Capital Programme is £41m. This consists of £15.9m of new schemes approved for 2020/21 plus £15.8m of slippage from prior years and £9.3m supplementary budget approval for the Zero Carbon Affordable Homes Pilot scheme. The Capital Programme relates to schemes which will be completed over the next five years.

12.2 The Council is supporting this investment through the use of the Major Repairs Reserve, Capital Receipts, Revenue Funding and Borrowing.

12.3 The capital programme can be split into three distinct areas:



- 12.4 **Major Works:** The approved budget of £9.5m is funded by the Major Repairs Reserve and relates to spend on major works on existing dwellings such as kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, roofs, doors and windows. New schemes approved for 2020/21 total £6.5m with slippage from the prior year of £3.0m. It is likely that the impact of COVID will result in an underspend in this area within the year.
- 12.5 **Improvements:** The approved budget of £3.3m is funded by the Major Repairs Reserve and relates to spend on improvements such as disabled facilities adaptations, asbestos removal and environmental improvements. New schemes approved for 2020/21 total £2.4m with slippage from the prior year of £0.9m.
- 12.6 **Social Housing Development Programme:** The approved budget of £18.9m is for the provision of new housing through schemes such as Phases A-E for North Taunton Regeneration, Laxton Road and other buybacks to increase the Council's housing stock. Funding allocated for new schemes totals £6.9m with slippage from the prior year of £12m mainly being North Taunton and Laxton Road. A supplementary budget of £9.3m was approved by Full Council on 7 July 2020 for the Zero Carbon Affordable Homes Pilot scheme. In the current year £1.1m has been spent in buy backs.

### 13 HRA Earmarked Reserves

- 13.1 The HRA Earmarked Reserves (EMR) at the beginning of 2020/21 were £1.648m (see **Table 12** below). The Social Housing Development Fund will be used as required to fund social housing development feasibility studies and usage approved through the Housing Programme Board. The remainder of the earmarked reserves have been specifically committed to be spent within the next three financial years.

**Table 12: Balance of Earmarked Reserves held at 1 April 2020**

| Description                     | Balance<br>b/f<br>(£'000) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| HRA Employment and Skills Dev   | 102                       |
| HRA Asbestos Surveys            | 102                       |
| HRA One Teams                   | 37                        |
| Social Housing Development Fund | 1,232                     |
| HRA Contribution to Change      | 175                       |
| <b>HRA Total</b>                | <b>1,648</b>              |

### 14 HRA General Reserves

- 14.1 The HRA reserves at the start of the year were £2.701m. This is £901k above the minimum recommended reserve level of £1.800m.
- 14.2 **Forecast Outturn** - The current outturn position is forecast to be an under spend of £71k. If this is the position at year end then this will be returned to general balances, increasing them to £2.742m.

**Table 13: HRA Reserve Balance**

|   | £k           |
|---|--------------|
| Balance Brought Forward 1 April 2020                  | 2,701        |
| Forecast Outturn 2020/21 (as at 31 Aug 2020)          | 71           |
| <b>Forecast Balance Carried Forward 31 March 2020</b> | <b>2,742</b> |
| Operational Minimum Balance                           | 2,400        |
| Financial Resilience Minimum Balance                  | 1,800        |

**15 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities**

- 15.1 The financial performance of the Council underpins the delivery of corporate priorities and therefore all Corporate Aims.

**16 Partnership Implications**

- 16.1 A wide range of Council services are provided through partnership arrangements e.g. SLM for leisure services and Somerset Waste Partnership for Waste and Recycling services. The cost of these services is reflected in the Council's financial outturn position for the year.

**17 Other Implications**

- 17.1 None for the purpose of this report.

**18 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendations**

- 18.1 This report was considered by the Scrutiny Committee on 2 December. The Committee supported the report and the printed recommendations.
- 18.2 During the debate a number of questions were asked of which some were addressed at the meeting:
- a) What is the current debt for the HRA and does the rent cover the cost of Debt – the debt is circa £100m, summary information will be provided, and yes the rent covers the cost. Affordability is measured as part of the business planning process.
  - b) The Age of the housing stock – summary information will be provided.
  - c) What is the NHB Capital Programme being spent on – the report provides summary information and officers will provide more detail.
  - d) Why is the Employment and Innovation capital budget reducing by £220k – The budget was reprioritised as part of the review of the capital programme leading to releasing £3.95m of NHB to general reserves in view of the COVID risks. During this year £535k of earmarked reserves have been prioritised towards town centre economic recovery this year and a further £500k into Economic Development productivity budget.
  - e) How much has been spent on the Unitary budget – officers to provide an update.

- f) What steps are being taken to reduce the overspend and what is the headcount and costs for the last 3 years – a response to follow.
- g) What is the future strategy for car parking – a response to follow.
- h) Can we ensure the review of the loan to the Onion Collection is undertaken – officers to note and respond.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny – 2 December 2020**
- **Executive – 16 December 2020**
- **Full Council – no**

**Reporting Frequency: Quarterly**

**List of Appendices**

|            |                   |
|------------|-------------------|
| Appendix A | Capital Programme |
|------------|-------------------|

**Contact Officers**

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| Description                                  | 19/20 budget carry forward | 20/21 Approved budget | Proposed Adjustments to approved budget | Proposed Total 2020/21 Budget | Q2 Spend for P1-P6 | Forecast Capital Spend P7-P12 | Total Forecast Capital outturn 2020/21 | Forecast Capital Carried Forward Required |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>General Fund</b>                          |                            |                       |   |                               |                    |                               |  |   |
| <b>Development &amp; Place: Dawn Adey</b>    |                            |                       |   |                               |                    |                               |  |   |
| Investment Properties                        | -                          | 50,000,000            |   | 50,000,000                    | 14,831,729         | 25,168,271                    | 40,000,000                             | 10,000,000                                |
| Taunton Bus Station                          | 77,068                     | -                     |   | 77,068                        | 1,245              | 75,823                        | 77,068                                 | -   |
| Coal Orchard Construction                    | 9,047,026                  |                       | 1,010,501                               | 10,057,527                    | 3,587,085          | 4,179,145                     | 7,766,230                              | 2,291,297                                 |
| Coal Orchard Devcosts                        | 1,303,598                  |                       | (1,010,501)                             | 293,097                       | 3,391              | 29,000                        | 32,391                                 | 260,706                                   |
| Major Transport Schemes                      | -                          | 875,000               | (295,000)                               | 580,000                       | -                  |                               | -                                      | 580,000                                   |
| Emp Site Enabling Innova                     | -                          | 300,000               | (200,000)                               | 100,000                       | -                  |                               | -                                      | 100,000                                   |
| Creech Castle Improvement                    | 375,000                    |                       | (375,000)                               | -                             |                    |                               | -                                      | -   |
| Superfast Broadband (Legacy TD)              | 380,000                    |                       |   | 380,000                       | -                  |                               | -                                      | 380,000                                   |
| Superfast Broadband (Legacy WSC)             | 170,000                    |                       |   | 170,000                       | -                  |                               | -                                      | 170,000                                   |
| Steam Coast Trail                            | 102,186                    |                       |   | 102,186                       | -                  |                               | -                                      | 102,186                                   |
| Seaward Way                                  | 2,056,314                  |                       |   | 2,056,314                     | 1,460,336          | 595,978                       | 2,056,314                              | 0   |
| Firepool Development                         | 475,895                    |                       |   | 475,895                       | 84,803             | 31,092                        | 115,895                                | 360,000                                   |
| Firepool Master Planning                     | 754,245                    |                       | 2,235,000                               | 2,989,245                     | 76,008             | 2,100,000                     | 2,176,008                              | 813,236                                   |
| Great Western Railway Development Loan       | 5,000,000                  |                       |   | 5,000,000                     | -                  | 5,000,000                     | 5,000,000                              | -   |
| J25 Improvement Scheme Contribution          | 1,500,000                  |                       |   | 1,500,000                     | -                  | 1,500,000                     | 1,500,000                              | -   |
| Flooding Alleviation                         |                            | 6,000,000             |   | 6,000,000                     | -                  | 30,000                        | 30,000                                 | 5,970,000                                 |
| CIL - Cycle & Pedestrian Improvements        |                            | 500,000               |   | 500,000                       | -                  |                               | -                                      | 500,000                                   |
| CIL - Education Provision                    |                            | 3,500,000             | 500,000                                 | 4,000,000                     | -                  |                               | -                                      | 4,000,000                                 |
| CIL - Public Transport Improvements          |                            | 1,000,000             | (1,000,000)                             | -                             | -                  |                               | -                                      | -   |
| CIL - Town centre regeneration               |                            | 500,000               |   | 500,000                       | -                  |                               | -                                      | 500,000                                   |
| Toneworks Wellington                         |                            |                       | 500,000                                 | 500,000                       | 70,786             | 429,214                       | 500,000                                | -   |
| <b>Total Development &amp; Place</b>         | <b>21,241,331</b>          | <b>62,675,000</b>     | <b>1,365,000</b>                        | <b>85,281,331</b>             | <b>20,115,383</b>  | <b>39,138,523</b>             | <b>59,253,906</b>                      | <b>26,027,425</b>                         |
|  |                            |                       |   | -                             |                    |                               | -                                      |   |
| <b>External Operations: Andrew Pritchard</b> |                            |                       |   |                               |                    |                               |  |   |
| Unparished Area Grants                       | 11,000                     |                       |   | 11,000                        | -                  | 11,000                        | 11,000                                 | -   |
| Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)              | 2,379,642                  | 1,274,000             |   | 3,653,642                     | (54,056)           | 3,707,698                     | 3,653,642                              | -   |
| DLO Vehicles Acquisition                     |                            | 152,000               |   | 152,000                       | -                  | 43,800                        | 43,800                                 | 108,200                                   |
| Waste Containers                             |                            | 100,000               |   | 100,000                       | 50,748             | 49,252                        | 100,000                                | -   |
| Grants to Parishes Play                      |                            | 15,000                |   | 15,000                        | -                  | 15,000                        | 15,000                                 | -   |
| Replacement Play Equipme                     |                            | 64,000                |   | 64,000                        | -                  | 64,000                        | 64,000                                 | -   |
| SWP Waste Vehicle Loan                       | 874,795                    |                       |   | 874,795                       | -                  | 874,795                       | 874,795                                | -   |
| DLO Plant                                    |                            | 23,000                |   | 23,000                        | 23,000             | -                             | 23,000                                 | -   |
| Waiting Room                                 | 30,000                     |                       |   | 30,000                        | 41,213             |                               | 41,213                                 | (11,213)                                  |
| Watchet East Quay Development Loan (OC)      | 1,500,000                  |                       |   | 1,500,000                     | -                  | -                             | -                                      | 1,500,000                                 |
| Cuckoo Meadow Play Area                      | 1,103                      |                       |   | 1,103                         | -                  | -                             | -                                      | 1,103                                     |
| Stogursey Victory Hall                       | 637,896                    |                       |   | 637,896                       | 548,444            |                               | 548,444                                | 89,452                                    |
| Minehead Esplande                            | 15,147                     |                       |   | 15,147                        | -                  |                               | -                                      | 15,147                                    |
| Leisure                                      | 1,000,000                  |                       |   | 1,000,000                     | -                  |                               | -                                      | 1,000,000                                 |
| Watchet Splashpoint Hole                     | 704,096                    |                       | -                                       | 704,096                       | 94,046             | 610,050                       | 704,096                                | -   |
| Wellington Air Handling Unit                 |                            | 253,000               |   | 253,000                       | -                  | 253,000                       | 253,000                                | -   |
| East Quay Wall                               | 100,000                    | 740,000               |   | 840,000                       | 7,172              | 200,000                       | 207,172                                | 632,828                                   |
| Onion Collective Grant                       | -                          |                       |   | -                             | 537,516            | (537,516)                     | -                                      | -   |

| Description                                  | 19/20 budget carry forward | 20/21 Approved budget | Proposed Adjustments to approved budget | Proposed Total 2020/21 Budget | Q2 Spend for P1-P6 | Forecast Capital Spend P7-P12 | Total Forecast Capital outturn 2020/21 | Forecast Capital Carried Forward Required |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Blue Anchor Coast Defence Work               | -                          |                       |   | -                             | 38,989             | (38,989)                      | -                                      | -   |
| <b>Total External Operations</b>             | <b>7,253,679</b>           | <b>2,621,000</b>      | <b>-</b>                                | <b>9,874,679</b>              | <b>1,287,072</b>   | <b>5,252,090</b>              | <b>6,539,162</b>                       | <b>3,335,517</b>                          |
| <b>Internal Operations: Alison North</b>     |                            |                       |   |                               |                    |                               |  |   |
| Members IT Equipment                         |                            | 4,000                 |   | 4,000                         | -                  | -                             | -                                      | 4,000                                     |
| Change Programme                             |                            | 343,500               |   | 343,500                       | -                  | 132,170                       | 132,170                                | 211,330                                   |
| Community Alarms                             |                            | 25,000                |   | 25,000                        | 11,328             | 13,672                        | 25,000                                 | (0)                                       |
| IT Server Refresh                            | 20,000                     | -                     |   | 20,000                        | -                  | -                             | -                                      | 20,000                                    |
| Resources for Change Programme               |                            | 360,000               |   | 360,000                       | 21,167             |                               | 21,167                                 | 338,833                                   |
| Finance System                               |                            | 76,800                |   | 76,800                        | 55,783             | 20,984                        | 76,767                                 | 33  |
| SIP  |                            | 353,700               |   | 353,700                       | 11,001             | 342,699                       | 353,700                                | -   |
| Transformation                               |                            |                       |   | -                             | 6,847              |                               | 6,847                                  | (6,847)                                   |
| PC Refresh Project                           |                            | 30,000                | 16,500                                  | 46,500                        | 15,469             |                               | 15,469                                 | 31,031                                    |
| <b>Total Internal Operations</b>             | <b>20,000</b>              | <b>1,193,000</b>      | <b>16,500</b>                           | <b>1,229,500</b>              | <b>121,595</b>     | <b>509,526</b>                | <b>631,120</b>                         | <b>598,380</b>                            |
| <b>Housing: James Barrah</b>                 |                            |                       |   |                               |                    |                               |  |   |
| Grants to Registered Social Landlords        | 1,625,381                  |                       |   | 1,625,381                     | 244,253            |                               | 244,253                                | 1,381,128                                 |
| Gypsy Site                                   | 108,502                    |                       |   | 108,502                       | -                  |                               | -                                      | 108,502                                   |
| <b>Total Housing</b>                         | <b>1,733,883</b>           | <b>-</b>              | <b>-</b>                                | <b>1,733,883</b>              | <b>244,253</b>     | <b>-</b>                      | <b>244,253</b>                         | <b>1,489,630</b>                          |
| <b>General Fund Total before S106</b>        | <b>30,248,893</b>          | <b>66,489,000</b>     | <b>1,381,500</b>                        | <b>98,119,393</b>             | <b>21,768,303</b>  | <b>44,900,138</b>             | <b>66,668,441</b>                      | <b>31,450,952</b>                         |
| <b>Hinkley S106 : Andrew Pritchard</b>       |                            |                       |   |                               |                    |                               |  |   |
| Hinkley Total                                | 318,237                    | -                     |   | 318,237                       | 60,000             |                               | 60,000                                 | 258,237                                   |
| <b>Section 106: Andrew Pritchard</b>         |                            |                       |   |                               |                    |                               |  |   |
| S106 Total                                   | -                          | -                     |   | -                             | 370,728            | (370,728)                     | 0                                      | (0)                                       |
| <b>General Fund Total</b>                    | <b>30,567,130</b>          | <b>66,489,000</b>     | <b>1,381,500</b>                        | <b>98,437,630</b>             | <b>22,199,031</b>  | <b>44,529,410</b>             | <b>66,728,441</b>                      | <b>31,709,188</b>                         |
| <b>Housing Revenue Account: James Barrah</b> |                            |                       |   |                               |                    |                               |  |   |
| Majors and Improvements                      | 3,839,300                  | 8,946,000             |   | 12,785,300                    | 377,091            | 8,769,963                     | 9,147,054                              | 3,638,246                                 |
| Social Housing Development Schemes           | 11,982,490                 | 6,898,000             | 9,300,000                               | 28,180,490                    | 2,224,905          | 2,560,692                     | 4,785,597                              | 23,394,893                                |
| <b>HRA Total</b>                             | <b>15,821,790</b>          | <b>15,844,000</b>     | <b>9,300,000</b>                        | <b>40,965,790</b>             | <b>2,601,996</b>   | <b>11,330,655</b>             | <b>13,932,651</b>                      | <b>27,033,139</b>                         |
| <b>Grand total</b>                           | <b>46,388,920</b>          | <b>82,333,000</b>     | <b>10,681,500</b>                       | <b>139,403,420</b>            | <b>24,801,027</b>  | <b>55,860,065</b>             | <b>80,661,092</b>                      | <b>58,742,328</b>                         |

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Executive – 16 December 2020

### Review of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Cllr Booth

Report Author: Scott Weetch, Community Resilience Manager

#### 1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

To report on progress since February 2020 regarding the Annual Review for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants and make future spending proposal.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To maintain current levels of funding for the final year of the current agreement to end in March 2022.
- 2.2 A cross party Members Working Group is established to work with officers to ensure that clear funding criteria are in place for future work with the Voluntary and Community Sector beyond March 2022.

#### 3. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

- 3.1 There is a risk of misuse of awarded funds by a third party organisation or intended initiatives proposed not being successful or hitting issues during delivery. This is mitigated by existing monitoring arrangements.

#### 4. Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 On 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020, the Localities Manager brought forward a report to Full Council outlining the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants Annual Review for 2019/20. This is a comprehensive report and no attempt is made to replicate it here.
- 4.2 A copy of that report is available here: (page 221 onwards)  
<https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/documents/g2283/Public%20reports%20pack%2019th-Feb-2020%2018.15%20SWT%20Full%20Council.pdf?T=10>
- 4.3 Full Council resolved “*that officers, in consultation with Councillors, carried out a review of current areas of funding and set new funding objectives in line with the Councils corporate objectives and current needs within the community and reported to the Scrutiny Committee, Executive and Full Council in September/October 2020;*”
- 4.4 Initial work towards the review outlined above took the form of a workshop of officers who set a number of criteria that they felt VCS funding should meet. These included but were not limited to:

- Money and debt advice
- Housing advice and tenancy sustainment
- Mental health support and advocacy
- Social enterprise, skills and training support in deprived areas
- General information, advice and guidance
- Support for rural areas
- Support for families
- Advice for Community buildings and village halls
- Community transport

- 4.5 From March onwards the country has seen the effects of the global pandemic known as COVID-19. This has had a profound effect on the voluntary and community sector in two ways. Firstly, this sector has been at the forefront of efforts to look after the wider community in often unexpected ways. There are countless examples of communities and individuals stepping forward to provide help and support. Secondly, this sector has been unable to raise funds for themselves in their normal fashion and are therefore vulnerable themselves to the effects of the coronavirus, albeit economically.
- 4.6 The priorities set out above came from a workshop to act as a guide for decision making regarding 20/21 funding of the VCS. In light of the interruption and disruption caused by COVID, the aim of this review is to demonstrate if the Council is meeting these priorities and in which locations and to identify any gaps by priority or geographic area.
- 4.7 The original report recommended aligning funding with Corporate Objectives and current needs within the community. Corporate Objectives and the current needs within the community as espoused by the Voluntary and Community Sector are aligned – in particular, this work supports tackling economic, social and health inequalities within the groups and communities that need extra support. It is felt that employment and skills are generally picked up elsewhere and so are not fully reflected here.
- 4.8 This commentary forms part of the review of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants taken to Full Council in February 2020. Other issues recommended in the review referred to the Governance of the schemes, in particular clarity of outputs, outcomes and performance measures submitted by partner organisations. Further that the grant proposal document includes information captured on sustainability of projects, match funding and added value. This has been picked up as a business as usual improvement. Grants forms are continually reviewed and improved and work is in progress to try to align the application process to ensure that applicants have a clear and obvious process which signposts them to the right funding for their project. Additionally, each scheme is subject to grants monitoring, usually on a quarterly basis. These meetings often identify and implement incremental improvement to process and reporting mechanisms.
- 4.9 All expenditure is outlined in the linked report above.
- 4.10 A review of projects has taken place and where questions have been raised, these have been addressed with funding partners and in some cases additional measures have been put in place to better understand and quantify projects. For example, a project was being monitored in terms of hours received and number of referrals made. In order to provide additional assurance, additional qualitative measures have been put



in place to give a better understanding of the work undertaken and the value achieved for the customer and the Council.

4.11 A desktop review was undertaken to understand the allocation and proportion of spend against the priorities outlined above. This is summarised in the table below:

| Priority  | Name of Project Supporting  | Amount(s)                          | Total    | Proportion of overall spend | Area covered                      |
|---|---|------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Money and Debt Advice   | Citizen's Advice Taunton  | Portion of £120,610 @45% (£54,275) | £108,515 | 25%                         | Taunton and district              |
|   | Money Matters Advisors for Taunton East, Taunton North and Wellington   | £42,000                            |          |                             | One Team areas                    |
|   | West Somerset Advice Bureau   | Portion of £30,600 @40% (£12,240)  |          |                             | West Somerset                     |
| Housing Advice and Tenancy sustainment                                    | Citizen's Advice Taunton  | Portion of £120,610 @45% (£54,275) | £66,515  | 15.50%                      | District wide coverage            |
|   | West Somerset Advice Bureau   | Portion of £30,600 @40% (£12,240)  |          |                             |                                   |
| Support for young families in rural areas                                 | CLOWNS  | £1,000                             | £1,000   | 0.23%                       | West Somerset                     |
| Self-advocacy and engagement with disability groups                       | Compass Disability Services   | £2,700                             | £2,700   | 0.63%                       | District wide coverage            |
| Mental health support and advocacy  | Bridging the Gap (MIND)   | £41,000                            | £41,000  | 9.50%                       | District wide coverage            |
| Domestic Abuse  |   |                                    |          | 0%                          | Nil                               |
| General information, advice and guidance                                  | Citizen's Advice Taunton  | Portion of £120,610 @10% (£12,061) | £19,489  | 4.50%                       | Taunton and district              |
|   | Wiveliscombe Area Partnership - Community Centre  | Portion of £29,710 @25% (£7,428)   |          |                             | Wiveliscombe and 10 Parishes area |
| Pre-natal and peri-natal support for families in rural areas              | Homestart (WS)  | £1,000                             | £1,000   | 0.23%                       | West Somerset                     |
| Supporting Community organisations/community hubs in deprived areas       | North Taunton Partnership   | £14,500                            | £32,000  | 7.50%                       | North and East Taunton            |
|   | Taunton East Development Trust  | £14,500 + £3,000                   |          |                             |                                   |
| Support for Village Agents  | Village Agents  | £20,000                            | £20,000  | 4.66%                       | District wide coverage            |
| Advice for Community Buildings and Village Halls                          | Community Council for Somerset  | £5,400                             | £5,400   | 1.25%                       | District wide coverage            |
| Social enterprise, skills and training support in deprived areas          | Inspire 2 Achieve (Yarlington)  | £46,000                            | £46,000  | 10.70%                      | One Team areas                    |
| Supporting Community organisations with seed funding for projects         | VCS small grants fund - grants of up to £1,000 to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in SWT area | £20,000                            | £20,000  | 4.66%                       | District wide coverage            |
| Employment skills and job training for those farthest from the job market | West Somerset Advice bureau   | Portion of £30,600 @20% (£6,120)   | £6,120   | 1.40%                       | West Somerset                     |
| Community Transport in rural areas  | Wiveliscombe Area Partnership - Wivey Link  | Portion of £29,710 @75% (£22,283)  | £22,283  | 5.20%                       | Wiveliscombe and 10 Parishes area |
| Arts projects and skills development in deprived areas                    | Fuse performance  | £6,000                             | £6,000   | 1.40%                       | East Taunton                      |
| Administration  | Covers West Somerset lottery, small grants and partnership fund   | £8,000                             | £8,000   | 1.86%                       | Not applicable                    |
| Others not covered above  | Creating volunteering opportunities - Spark   | £23,500                            | £23,500  | 5.50%                       | District wide coverage            |
|   |   |                                    | £429,520 |                             |                                   |

- 4.11 Money and debt advice (25%) plus housing advice and tenancy sustainment (15%) account for 40% of overall spend. Mental health support (10%) and employment, skills and training support (10%) account for a further 20%.
- 4.12 It can be clearly seen from the above that there is a wide range of support given across the sector and that this help covers the district to some degree. This shows that there is a strong alignment of Council and community priorities that are met through the provision of funding and that these are targeted to those that will benefit most.
- 4.13 It is apparent from the above that the prevention of domestic abuse is a priority that is not funded through this route. However, the Council does fund domestic abuse prevention through a partnership arrangement with Somerset County Council. In addition, the Safer Somerset Partnership, of which the Council is an active partner, does fund initiatives and there are agreed ways of working in this arena. The Domestic Abuse Bill when enacted provides an opportunity to review provision and service.
- 4.14 The recommendations of Full Council from February of this year have been met through this review. That is, that funding be reviewed and new priorities set. However, this is a different review to that anticipated due to the changes brought about within the sector caused by COVID. As a result, this review has determined that grants should not be reallocated nor priorities changed unless there is clear supporting evidence that priorities and outcomes are not being met. As part of the review, value for money and contract compliance have been assessed but are not directly addressed as there are no significant concerns on any of the projects which are the beneficiaries of funding.
- 4.15 Changes to the current levels of funding for many of the organisations that rely upon this support could have long lasting detrimental effects for the groups and the communities that they support. This is underlined in the various multi-agency meetings that the Council is part of.
- 4.16 During November partners in receipt of VCS Grant Funds submit proposals for funding for the following financial year. That information is not collated at the time of writing. It is unknown therefore if there are to be gaps in provision.
- 4.17 It is unknown at this stage what the medium and long term effects of COVID are likely to be. Maintaining current levels of funding will allow some analysis of impact.
- 4.18 Lessons learned and impact analysis from the current crisis will allow the Council to better place resources according to identified need. This will not be known in time to inform 2021/22.
- 4.19 An end date of March 2022 aligns with proposed timetables for a new unitary authority and allows an unfettered and objective view to be taken by any shadow authority.
- 4.20 In addition to the grants reviewed here, the Council oversees a significant number of other grants, all of which are referenced in the previous report to Full Council linked at the top of this report.
- 4.21 The Council has additionally funded £250,000 of one off support to the Voluntary and Community Sector through the Community Chest grants scheme.

## 5. Links to Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Homes and Communities - Engage with the voluntary sector in their mission to help support our communities.

## 6. Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 Existing funding arrangements and agreements are in place until March 2022 unless varied by either party.

- 6.2 Tables outlining grants are presented below:  
Voluntary and Community Sector Grants 2019/20

| Project                            | Total Awarded   | General Fund    | HRA            |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Citizen's Advice Taunton           | £83,610         | £75,432         | £8,178         |
| CLOWNS (WS)                        | £1,000          | £1,000          |                |
| Community Council for Somerset     | £5,400          | £5,400          |                |
| Compass Disability Services        | £2,700          | £2,700          |                |
| Spark (TD)                         | £22,500         | £22,500         |                |
| Spark (WS)                         | £1,000          | £1,000          |                |
| Fuse                               | £6,000          | £1,200          | £4,800         |
| Homestart (WS)                     | £1,000          | £1,000          |                |
| North Taunton Partnership          | £14,500         | £2,000          | £12,500        |
| Taunton East Development Trust     | £14,500         | £2,000          | £12,500        |
| West Somerset Advice Bureau        | £30,600         | £30,600         |                |
| Wiveliscombe Area Partnership      | £29,710         | £28,710         | £1,000         |
| Village Agents                     | £20,000         | £20,000         |                |
| VCS Small Grants Fund (SCF)        | £20,000         | £20,000         |                |
| Citizen's Advice Taunton (one off) | £45,000         | £45,000         |                |
| <b>Totals</b>                      | <b>£297,520</b> | <b>£258,542</b> | <b>£38,978</b> |

## Administration and Monitoring Costs

| Project                            | Total Awarded | General Fund  | HRA |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----|
| SCF administration of SLAs         | £1,560        | £1,560        | -   |
| SCF administration of small grants | £2,000        | £2,000        | -   |
| Somerset West lottery admin fees*  | £2,400        | £2,400        | -   |
| Licensing fees Gambling Commission | £350          | £350          | -   |
| <b>Totals</b>                      | <b>£6,310</b> | <b>£6,310</b> | -   |

\*Does not impact on Council budgets as taken from Lottery ticket sales

## HRA Commissioned Projects

| Project  | Total Awarded   | General Fund | HRA             |
|--|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Taunton CAB – Debt Advice for Tenants          | £42,000         | -            | £42,000         |
| Taunton East Development Trust                 | £3,000          | -            | £3,000          |
| MIND – mental health advocacy                  | £41,000         | -            | £41,000         |
| Inspire to Achieve – Employment/skills support | £46,000         | -            | £46,000         |
| <b>Totals</b>                                  | <b>£132,000</b> |              | <b>£132,000</b> |

## **7. Legal Implications (if any)**

- 7.1 There are no legal implications if current funding is maintained. If funding levels are changed or removed, there are notice periods to be served on existing agreements.
- 7.2 Existing funding agreements with individual parties are monitored and reported on a regular basis to ensure agreed standards are met.

## **8. Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)**

- 8.1 No anticipated impacts

## **9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)**

- 9.1 None

## **10. Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)**

- 10.1 A full EIA is not required because the recommendation is to maintain existing levels of service provision.
- 10.2 The support provided to the VCS by this funding helps to promote equality and diversity and increases social cohesion through the maintenance of social capital – i.e. it helps the community to grow together by connecting and improving existing links.

## **11. Social Value Implications (if any)**

- 11.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act came into force on 31 January 2013. It requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits.
- 11.2 Clearly, the continued funding of the VCS Grants scheme will ensure that greater social value is gained through the nature, breadth and scope of the work that they are undertaking and the communities and individuals that they support.

## **12. Partnership Implications (if any)**

- 12.1 None

## **13. Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)**

- 13.1 The VCS Grants scheme has far reaching consequences for health and wellbeing. This includes individual and families' ability to sustain tenancies; support for mental health; debt and benefit advice; employment and careers advice. The inability of an individual or family to secure and maintain work or a home with have impacts on their immediate health and wellbeing as well as the potential for a knock on into other areas of care and support such as GP surgeries, housing and homelessness if not addressed.

## **14. Asset Management Implications (if any)**

- 14.1 None

**15. Data Protection Implications (if any)**

15.1 None

**16. Consultation Implications (if any)**

16.1 If the Council does not agree with the recommendations outlined, there will need to be a period of consultation and engagement with the beneficiaries of grants in line with contractual agreements, which states that a minimum of 3 months' notice of a termination of contract shall be given.

**17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)**

17.1 Scrutiny met on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020. In addition to accepting the two recommendations at the top of this paper, they made a further recommendation. This is recorded below

17.2 “As part of the review of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants, the increased workload for the two Citizens Advice Bureaus that cover the SWT area must be recognised accordingly with a grant increase in line with their objectives to meet increased demands due to Covid, and that this support is equalized across population areas that they cover, but not to the detriment of other organisations being funded by SWT.”

17.3 This recommendation is discussed in Appendix A

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – Yes**
- **Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

**Reporting Frequency: Ad-hoc**

**Contact Officers**

|       |  |
|-------|--|
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# Information on Citizen’s Advice Bureau in Somerset West and Taunton Council area

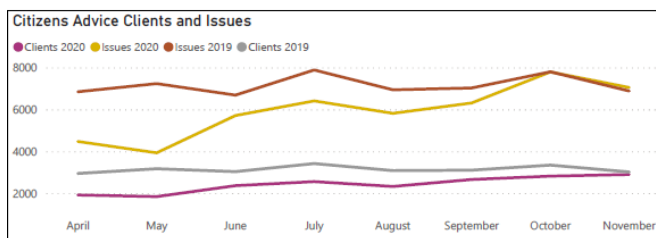
Information current as at 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Recommendation from Community Scrutiny on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 read as:

As part of the review of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants, the increased workload for the two Citizens Advice Bureaus that cover the SWT area must be recognised accordingly with a grant increase in line with their objectives to meet increased demands due to COVID, and that this support is equalized across population areas that they cover, but not to the detriment of other organisations being funded by SWT.

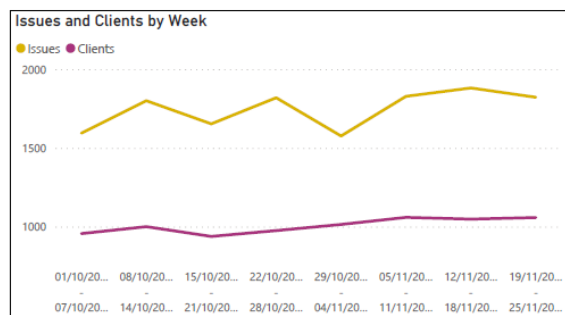
The table below is taken from information provided to the Community Resilience Cell as part of the multi-agency response to the COVID crisis.

## Community Resilience Cell Dashboard - Demand On System 3 - Citizens Advice



Citizens Advice Weekly Update:  
19/11/20 – 25/11/20 : 1061 clients 1825 issues, comparable to last week. Very similar picture around issues - benefits is top with Personal Independence Payments significant again this week along with Universal Credit initial claim, debt, housing and relationships all high with employment slightly less than previous weeks.

| Category                        | Clients - September | Clients - October | Issues - September | Issues - October |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Benefits & Tax Credits          | 663                 | 725               | 1626               | 1844             |
| Benefits Universal Credit       | 371                 | 439               | 780                | 1110             |
| Debt                            | 298                 | 307               | 805                | 902              |
| Financial services & capability | 257                 | 287               | 376                | 490              |
| Housing                         | 286                 | 280               | 584                | 548              |
| Employment                      | 253                 | 258               | 572                | 552              |
| Relationships & family          | 206                 | 238               | 379                | 430              |
| Legal                           | 139                 | 155               | 233                | 263              |
| Other                           | 129                 | 143               | 199                | 196              |
| Consumer goods & services       | 107                 | 125               | 210                | 210              |
| Utilities & communications      | 64                  | 91                | 163                | 198              |
| Travel & transport              | 78                  | 69                | 115                | 98               |
| Health & community care         | 60                  | 61                | 113                | 91               |
| Discrimination & Hate & GVA     | 38                  | 47                | 58                 | 75               |
| Tax                             | 33                  | 46                | 45                 | 77               |
| Immigration & asylum            | 30                  | 40                | 50                 | 76               |
| Education                       | 18                  | 16                | 24                 | 24               |



In the graph to the top left, it can be seen that Issues in 2019 (the top line) are higher than those in 2020, coloured yellow. Further, that clients in 2019 are also higher than in 2020, as seen in the grey and purple lines on the same graph. Demand across the two years is only now converging so that demand is on a similar month on month level to last year.

Moving on to the issue of support being equalised across the two population areas that they cover:

Population Taunton Deane mid-year estimate 2019 is 120,000.

Population West Somerset mid-year estimate 2019 is 35,000.

(Source Somerset Information Network).

#### Funding received

| Project  | Total Awarded | General Fund | HRA     |
|--|---------------|--------------|---------|
| Citizen's Advice Taunton   | £83,610       | £75,432      | £8,178  |
| Taunton CAB – Debt Advice for Tenants (Money Matters enhanced service) | £42,000       | -            | £42,000 |
| West Somerset Advice Bureau  | £30,600       | £30,600      |         |

It can be seen that Taunton CAB receives £125,610 for a population of 120,000, of which £42,000 is debt and benefit advice for tenants of SWT Council, giving a net figure of £83,610.

West Somerset Advice Bureau gets £30,600 for a population of 35,000.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that there is no inequality in funding between the two bureaux. However, Taunton CAB gains a specific funding input for advice to tenants who exclusively live within Taunton CAB catchment and which comes from their rental payments, there being no SWT tenants in the former West Somerset area.



Report Number: SWT 176/20

## **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

### **Executive - 16 December 2020**

#### **Extension of Public Space at Belvedere Road**

**This matter is the responsibility of: Cllr Marcus Kravis**

**Report Author: Chris Hall – Assistant Director Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management**

#### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Asset Management Team are reviewing ongoing liabilities for Council owned property as part of the 30 year maintenance plan. Flook House and the disused building nearby have been identified as adding limited value to the portfolio when compared with the on-going costs of maintenance, the capital investment needed, and the potential to improve the area that the current properties occupy.
- 1.2 Flook House and the disused building are General Fund assets, the former accommodates a number of tenants with an annual income of £14,810pa.
- 1.3 The disused building was once a public toilet, this was closed over 8 years ago. At that point there was no identified alternative use for the property and it has remained unused and deteriorating ever since. This and the rear of Flook House have become a magnet for anti-social behaviour.
- 1.4 The recent surveys on property compliance have identified an immediate expenditure of in the region £22,000 needed on Flook House. Added to that is a predicted spend of £220,000 to modernise the property and improve accommodation standards.
- 1.5 The recommendations of this report are to demolish both properties and remove the ongoing liabilities for Somerset West and Taunton Council. The area to then be utilised as an extension to the public space removing the opportunities for antisocial behaviour through activities no longer being shielded by the buildings.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Executive approves a £20,000 capital budget for the demolition of the disused building at Station Road, Taunton using the land to extend the existing public space.

This to be funded from unallocated capital receipts / general reserves.

- 2.2 That Executive approves a £90,000 capital budget for the demolition of Flook House Station Road, Taunton using the land to extend the existing public space. This to be funded from unallocated capital receipts / general reserves.
- 2.3 That the appropriate notice and support be provided to tenants within Flook House.
- 2.4 That the works to demolish the disused building at Station Road are added to the 2020/21 capital programme.
- 2.5 That the works to demolish Flook House are added to the capital programme for 2021/22.
- 2.6 That the Flook House property is written down to £0 in the fixed asset register.

Or

- 2.7 If the above recommendations cannot be supported a capital budget of £220,000 is requested to bring Flook House up to a modern standard of accommodation, inclusive of a 15% risk contingency. These are to be taken from unallocated capital receipts / general reserves.
- 2.8 Also to note that the compliance costs of £22,000 will be taken from the general Assets maintenance budget.

### **3. Risk Assessment**

- 3.1 Rising costs of property compliance mean that the Council need to invest significant sums to maintain the aging Flook House building with little in return by way of rent.
- 3.2 Tenants within Flook House will be served their notice but are unlikely to move to Deane House due to the costs of modernised office space, Assets officers will do what they can to support these tenants.
- 3.3 Costs estimates for ongoing works have not been put to market and therefore may be understated. A risk contingency of 15% has been included in the recommendation at 2.6 of the report, but the report notes that the list of improvement works could increase.
- 3.4 The Council need to invest significant sums of money to retain a property that has little value to its own operation.

### **4. Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 The ex- toilet block has been largely untouched since the facilities were closed, the useful fittings have already been removed and it is now a shell. Its continued external

deterioration attracts antisocial behaviour with groups able to hide from sight around the building, out of public view. It is the view of the assets team that the building is unlikely to have an alternative use and should be demolished. The cost to demolish the building, cap off utilities, remove the demolition waste from site and turf is estimated to be £20,000.

4.2 Flook House has a number of users which includes additional meeting space for the council, provision of an office space for UNISON, and a number of paying tenants. The property is generally in poor condition and does not meet the standard of accommodation that the council wishes to promote either for its employees or for lettable office space. Following compliance surveys this year there are works in the region of £22,000 that are required in the coming months along with a range of longer term works to bring the building to a higher standard, these include but are not limited to:

- Refurbishment of the windows and external doors - estimated £35k
- Replacement of the kitchen and toilets – estimated £15k
- Insulation and heating works – estimated £20k - £40k
- Roof repairs and possible replacement – estimated £10k - £60k
- Floor resurfacing – estimated £10k
- Electrical and lighting works – estimated £10k
- Internal decoration – estimated £10k
- External decoration – estimated £10k
- External drainage – estimated £10k

4.3 It is considered that the council’s own uses, including the accommodation for UNISON, can be accommodated within the Deane House. If this report is approved further consideration will be given to contracting out the safe document storage requirements, initial estimate place this at around £1,000 pa.

4.4 There are exit opportunities for the current tenants, see table 1, within Flook House and we would look to support these with the appropriate notice and alternatives where they exist.

**Table 1**

| Room           | Tenant   | Lease Expiry Date       | Comments                                 |
|----------------|----------|-------------------------|--|
| R04            | Tenant 1 | Ongoing                 | Claims protected tenancy                 |
| R05/06/07      | Tenant 2 | Ongoing                 | Claims protected tenancy                 |
| E04/09/10/ E17 | Tenant 3 | 13/05/2021              | Cannot get possession before 13/05/2021. |
| E22/23/24      | Tenant 4 | Ongoing tenancy at will |  |

4.5 For those with a protected tenancy we may be required to give some compensation linked to the rateable value. A budget of £13k is required to settle the claims that may arise from this, this is included in the recommendation at 2.2.

- 4.6 There are a small number of parking spaces that are currently set aside for Flook House tenants, if the recommendation to demolish this property is supported these spaces would be available for use by the public.
- 4.7 The Flook House property is not listed but is old and deemed to have some historic value. Council could consider the protection of this property and undertake the works as set out, it is for this reason that an alternative recommendation is also included.
- 4.8 Council may face some opposition to the demolition of this property. Somerset West and Taunton officers are currently making an external bid for resources to help create a local list of important assets that are otherwise not captured in the listing process, it is possible that this may be one of those assets in the future should.

## **5. Links to Corporate Strategy**

- 5.1 A financially self-sufficient Council which has expanded its commercial activity in order to support service provision: The demolition would prevent a greater level of expenditure on the asset whilst not disposing of the land on which the properties sit leaving opportunities for site development at a later stage.

## **6. Finance / Resource Implications**

- 6.1 If the recommendations to demolish Flook House are accepted the council would lose the potential future income from rental, at £14,810 p.a. However the proposal also removes the risk of future void periods, and the need for capital investment.
- 6.2 The value of the property in the fixed asset register is £274,743 based on a 2019 valuation. Demolition would therefore remove the property within the asset register. There would however still be a value for the land which is £120,150. The land will remain in SWT ownership and could be used for wider regeneration in the future.
- 6.3 Based on the assumed need for safe document storage a new budget commitment of £1,000pa is required.
- 6.4 If Members wish to support the retention of this property a capital budget of £220,000 is needed. This exceeds any available budget within assets maintenance and would need to be taken from unallocated capital receipts / reserves.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The tenants will require notice to vacate the property, the longest notice provision is six months and as such all tenants will be given this length of time to aid their search for new premises.

- 7.2 The notice given will be specifically for the purposes of property demolition and as such overrides a tenant's protected status, compensation may be payable for some tenants.
- 7.3 Demolition must be undertaken in accordance with the appropriate legislation including the Construction Design Management Regulations 2015.

## **8. Climate and Sustainability Implications**

- 8.1 If the Flook House property is to remain in use it will require investment as set out in section 4 of the report. The financial ranges identified include improvement to the building within a standard refurbishment. With the council having declared a climate change emergency and needing to set the standard for others to follow greater consideration should be given to an enhanced standard of insulation and heating systems. This might include internal or external wall insulation, floor insulation, triple glazing, air source heat pump(s), solar PV, rainwater harvesting and so on. If the property is to be retained in accordance with recommendation 2.6 these costs estimates are likely to be insufficient for this enhanced standard and further money will need to be found, potentially from the climate change budget.

## **9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications**

- 9.1 There are community safety and antisocial behaviour issues that occur in and around the two properties identified. In demolishing these properties and opening up the area there will be less opportunity for these activities to be hidden from sight and it is considered that these activities once exposed will move from here.

## **10. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 10.1 All tenants will be treated appropriately in law and there are not considered to be any equality and diversity implications as a result of this report.

## **11. Social Value Implications**

- 11.1 Social value may be a feature of the demolition contract once put to market.

## **12. Partnership Implications**

- 12.1 There are no identified implications of this report.

## **13. Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 13.1 Officers will support tenants impacted by the notice and where possible offer alternative rental space for their consideration.

## **14. Asset Management Implications**

- 14.1 Officer time spent managing a multi-tenanted property will be reduced.

14.2 Potential remediation liabilities will be removed through demolition and Somerset West and Taunton Council will avoid the cost of pursuing any dilapidations against the outgoing tenants.

14.3 One off officer time will be necessary to give notice and support tenants, as well as prepare the information necessary prior to demolition.

## 15. Data Protection Implications

15.1 There are no identified implications.

## 16. Consultation Implications

16.1 There are no identified consultation implications of this report, but notice will need to be served on existing tenants.

## 17. Scrutiny Committee comments

17.1 The Scrutiny Committee considered this report on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 but felt unable to support either the recommendation to demolish the Flook House property or invest in its maintenance for the future. They were verbally more comfortable with the loss of the ex-toilet block but no vote was taken. The committee makes the following recommendation for Executive to consider:

“The Scrutiny Committee consider that the historical importance of this building for Taunton needs to be secured in the long term, meaning that a decision on its future needs to be taken in Full Council.”

### Democratic Path:

- SMT – 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020
- Scrutiny – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020
- Executive – 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020
- Full Council – No

Reporting Frequency: One off

### Contact Officers

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