

SWT Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 2nd December, 2020,
6.15 pm

The logo for Somerset West and Taunton, featuring the text "Somerset West and Taunton" in white on a teal background with a white swoosh.

[SWT VIRTUAL MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

Members: Gwil Wren (Chair), Libby Lisgo (Vice-Chair), Ian Aldridge, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, John Hunt, Dave Mansell, Derek Perry, Phil Stone, Nick Thwaites, Danny Wedderkopp and Keith Wheatley

Agenda

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14 October, 4 November and 11 November 2020

To approve the minutes of the previous meetings of the Committee held on 14th October 2020, 4th November and 11th November 2020.

(Pages 7 - 32)

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. Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

(Pages 33 - 34)

To receive items and review the Forward Plan.

6. Executive and Full Council Forward Plan

(Pages 35 - 38)

7. Update on addressing Phosphate levels

This matter is the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, Cllr Mike Rigby.

By request of the Scrutiny Committee for further information, a presentation will be given following the letter received by the Council from Natural England.

8. Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2020/21

(Pages 39 - 48)

This matter is the responsibility of Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources, Cllr Ross Henley.

The report 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.

9. 2020/21 Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2020)

(Pages 49 - 68)

This matter is the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources, Cllr 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).

10. Review of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants

(Pages 69 - 76)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Cllr Chris Booth.

The report provides an update on progress since February 2020 regarding the Annual Review for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants.

11. Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public

During discussion of the following item it may be necessary to pass the following resolution to exclude the press and public having reflected on Article 13 13.02(e) (a presumption in favour of openness) of the Constitution. This decision may be required because consideration of this matter in public may disclose information falling within one of the descriptions of exempt information in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Scrutiny Committee will need to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption, outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. If Councillors on the Committee wish to discuss any of the confidential appendices included in the following reports, a motion to exclude will have to be passed as follows;

Recommend that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next items of business on the grounds that it involves 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).

12. Extension of Public Space at Belvedere Road

(Pages 77 - 82)

This matter is the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development, Cllr Marcus Kravis.

The report concerns the options available regarding two Council-owned buildings.

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

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

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

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: 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

SWT Scrutiny Committee - 14 October 2020

Present: Councillor Gwil Wren (Chair)

Councillors Ian Aldridge, Norman Cavill, Dixie Darch, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Dave Mansell, Derek Perry, Phil Stone, Nick Thwaites, Sue Buller, Simon Coles and Ray Tully

Officers: Andrew Randell, Marcus Prouse, Dawn Adey, Chris Hall, Andrew Pritchard, Graeme Thompson and Sue Tomlinson

Also Present: Councillors Janet Lloyd, Peter Pilkington, Francesca Smith, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp and Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

63. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Hunt, Lisgo and Wheatley.

Councillor Tully attended as a substitute for Councillor Wheatley. Councillor Buller attended as a substitute for Councillor Hunt.

Councillor Coles was appointed as Vice-Chair of the committee for the meeting in absence of Councillor Lisgo.

64. Minutes of the previous meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held on 30 September (attached) and 7 October (attached).

(Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 30th September and 7th October 2020 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 30th September and 7th October 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

65. 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 N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter	Personal	Spoke and Voted

		Trustee		
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Councillor Wren, Perry and Farbahi declared personal interests as they had both undertaken site visits to Blue Anchor.

Councillor Mansell declared a personal interest as a member of a community renewable energy co-operative.

66. Public Participation

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

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

The item was introduced by Councillor Pilkington and further statement read out by Councillor Whetlor setting out the work undertake by the Climate Change working group and what the strategy sought to address working in partnership with County and District colleagues.

The Strategy Specialist presented the report.

The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy (the Somerset-wide Strategy) had been produced in partnership between SWT, Sedgemoor, Mendip and South Somerset District Councils and Somerset County Council together with expert inputs from a number of external bodies. The purpose of the Strategy was to provide a strategic overview of the key issues facing Somerset and the Councils in relation to the climate emergency and the shared ambition to work towards carbon neutrality for the county of Somerset by 2030 and to provide a strategic basis for partnership working going forwards on addressing the issues together, where a shared approach would be appropriate and improve the chances of delivery. The Strategy included three strategic goals, a number of proposed outcomes relating to nine workstreams/sectors and a high level action plan to guide the direction of travel. The Strategy mentioned that each district would produce its own detailed action plan to supplement/complement the strategic one. For SWT, this was the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience (CNCR) Action Plan.

The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan (the CNCR Action Plan) had been produced as the Council's own response to declaring a Climate Emergency in February 2019 and inclusion of addressing climate change as the Council's number one priority in the Corporate Strategy. The CNCR Action Plan identified a total of 345 potential actions to progress over the next ten years based on current understandings, but focused on a Y1 action plan with Y2+ routemaps, with an intention for the plan to remain iterative and to be reviewed on an annual basis, which will evolve as the understanding of what was necessary and possible improved. The CNCR Action Plan sat alongside the Somerset-wide Strategy as the detail for how the Council proposed to address the specific issues, meet the goals and deliver on the outcomes that the Somerset-wide Strategy identified.

The Council has already committed to working towards carbon neutrality by 2030, and as such, the Somerset-wide Strategy and CNCR Action Plan adds detail as to what is

necessary, the actions and projects to be developed and help to identify the places where we can look to focus partnership working going forwards. The CNCR Action Plan is already informing internal resourcing and project development. The formal adoption of both the Somerset-wide Strategy and CNCR Action Plan is now being sought to improve corporate and public visibility and inform the 2021 budget setting

During the debate the following points and comments were raised.

- The District action plan was considered positive and received strong praise for the work undertaken to produce this from the strategy officer.
- The taskforce and group still needed to be set out to inform members of the governance channels of the climate change agenda in the future.
- Further detail was requested of exactly what this is, members were reassured that they would be part of the governance going forward.
- Additional Leadership was considered necessary to acknowledge the scale of challenge in the future.
- Further details around the budget were requested. £500k of funding was achieved from a rebalancing of reserves but in future years there was a commitment made that this would be hardwired into budget setting.
- More certainty was encouraged on the budget going forward, to provide an indicative breakdown when the report is considered at Full council.
- The local multi agency climate emergency task force had been set up to involve all councils to be included.
- Somerset wide strategy was considered, this would include details around the Somerset Waste Partnership and their initiatives in tackling climate change.
- Further information was requested in the Full Council report to provide more details on the working groups to take forward the strategy and action plan, including member involvement. As an alternative the committee were happy for this information to be brought back to a future scrutiny meeting before it is finalised.
- Further guidance was requested over the priority of the list of actions and what the impact and achievement was for these actions
- Tree planting proposals and increasing woodland was requested, recognition of this was understood along with the importance and enthusiasm for tree planting from the public.
- Councillor Stone referred to a previous statement circulated to the committee in advance of the meeting setting where both strategy's didn't go far enough in addressing tree planning and developing community woodlands and orchards. A formal request was made to make an allocation of £50k out of the £500k climate change budget for the purposes of tree planting.
- Work was being encouraged with parish councils support to consider areas that could be earmarked for rewilding schemes.
- Awareness of Carbon neutrality along with the need to absorb more carbon than what's emitted was an area of concern. More details of the plan of addressing carbon reduction and absorption was requested.
- Various workstreams across the organisation would be factored in, with the need to work towards phosphate replacement and neutrality. Further innovation would be needed to address the implementation of new green initiatives.
- Provisions in the local plan to increase strategic natural green space in housing developments were discussed, alongside promoting a more natural environment with additional open spaces for residents.
- It had been established that 8 out of 10 members of the countywide Task and Finish Group supported the strategy.

- Focusing on decarbonisation was a priority over other alternatives. Emissions were the urgency in terms of the immediate impacts and tackling climate change. Adaptation techniques were being explored as well as reducing carbon.
- The countywide strategy to plant 55k trees was referred to, 1k of these trees were in the nursery ready to plant.
- The principles of tree planting was supported but the specific budget allocation was considered and questioned.
- Officers were congratulated on the strategy which was welcomed as a starting point.

The Scrutiny Committee recommend to the Executive that:-

2.1 The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy progresses to Council for adoption.

2.2 The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan is approved.

2.3 A local, multi-agency Climate Emergency Task Force is established to aid delivery and implementation of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.

2.4 A recommendation is made to Full Council that 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.

2.5 The Committee request that the report to full council gives more details for proposals on the groups to take forward the strategy and action plan, including on member involvement, or that these details are brought back to a future Scrutiny meeting before they are finalised.

2.6 £50k of £500k Climate Change fund (referred to in 2.4) to be allocated for tree planting.

The committee voted by majority in favour of recommendation 2.6 with three abstentions.

68. **Coastal Protection Works Associated with the B3191**

Councillor Wakefield introduced the item and The Assistant Director for Climate Change and Assets presented the report.

Somerset West and Taunton Council, the Coastal Protection Authority, had received a proposal from Somerset County Council, the Highway Authority, with a view to undertaking works to protect the B3191 at Blue Anchor. If the scheme of work was accepted this council would deliver any agreed coastal protection scheme for the benefit of that community.

This proposal followed on from the previously approved request that Somerset West and Taunton Council used its status as the Coastal Protection Authority to deliver a scheme on behalf of Somerset County Council. This proposal offered the funding necessary to deliver the scheme and a commuted sum so that Somerset West and Taunton Council

could take all future ownership, inspection, and maintenance responsibilities for any newly created asset.

There was no immediate financial liability for Somerset West and Taunton Council.

This report was not a detailed review of the scheme design, this would be finalised with the designers and principle contractor as the project evolved over time. Consultation on any proposed scheme would take place with the appropriate bodies, parish councils, and impacted residents.

During the discussion the following points and comments were raised.

- It was clarified that the Council had the power but not the duty for the Coastal defence scheme.
- The road was considered an important part of the network in the area and the continued protection of this alongside solutions were supported.
- Consideration was given for diversion options and compulsory purchase of land. This had been dismissed previously on the basis of cost.
- Phase 1 of the emergency repairs had been completed. The project was awaiting further materials to be delivered via the sea. A permanent solution was expected by the end of next year.
- The continuing liability for Somerset West and Taunton was questioned following the works.
- The temporary works were estimated at £385k which were temporary concrete reinforcement funded from the environment agency, the £4million funding was estimated for a more permanent solution to protect the road. If the proposals were accepted SWT were responsible for the asset, SWT would not accept liability for the road going forward.
- Regulatory requirements that required planning consent and licence from the maritime management organisation. It was considered if this was likely delay costs. There remained an acceptable timescale for the project.
- Future issues further down the line when the viability of the road comes into question were considered there remained no liability. Longer term there remained the risk of coastal erosion in the area.
- Protection of the road was the responsibility of Somerset County Council.
- The committee broadly supported the protection of land and residents in the area but concerns were expressed in relation to taking on additional liabilities.
- The funding set out in the report was questioned. The commuted sum and paying for maintenance and not taking on extra liabilities were the preferred solution.
- The committee encouraged officers to undertake an inspection and not undertake any additional costs of future repair on the advice of the inspections.
- It was the Councils responsibility to residents in the area to support them and businesses in the area, the road was a vital link to the community.
- Support for the proposal was questioned from the committee, it was considered the proposals delivered the County's cheapest option but not sure if it was a long term solution, liability for the road and the agricultural land was at risk.
- The cliff had already eroded to the 2050 position set out in the report, officers estimated that erosion moving faster than expected.
- It had been determined that the greater emphasis and priority on the impact from Watchet. There were continued ongoing responsibilities to manage the project properly.

- Future liability of the area was considered a risk and the committee expressed concerns. The scheme protected more than the road in the area and. Liability to maintain the road would remain the County Councils.

Recommendations

1 It is recommended that Scrutiny supports the following to the Executive:

2. 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 the proposal and requested further details on the long term liabilities going forward to ensure a full understanding of the longevity of the scheme to mitigate long term liability and risk.

69. **Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Scrutiny Committee 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 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan be considered in detail by the committee at the next agenda setting.

70. **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 considered in detail by the committee at the next agenda setting.

71. **Full Council Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Full Council 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 Full Council Forward Plan be considered in detail by the committee at the next agenda setting.

(The Meeting ended at 9.11 pm)

SWT Scrutiny Committee - 4 November 2020 held via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Councillor Gwil Wren (Chair)

Councillors Ian Aldridge, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Dave Mansell, Phil Stone, Nick Thwaites, Sue Buller (In place of John Hunt), Caroline Ellis (In place of Derek Perry), John Hassall (In place of Danny Wedderkopp) and Ray Tully (In place of Keith Wheatley)

Officers: Paul Fitzgerald, Marcus Prouse, Dawn Adey, James Barra, Chris Brown, Chris Hall, Simon Lewis, Andrew Low, Tracey Meadows (Democracy and Governance) and Graeme Thompson

Also Present: Councillors Chris Booth, Roger Habgood, Janet Lloyd, Simon Nicholls, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp and Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

72. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Lisgo, Hunt, Perry, D Wedderkopp and Wheatley.

Councillor Buller substituted for Cllr Hunt. Cllr Hassall substituted for Cllr Wedderkopp. Cllr Tully substituted for Cllr Wheatley. Cllr Ellis substituted for Cllr Perry.

RESOLVED that Cllr Nick Thwaites be appointed Vice-Chair for the duration of the meeting, in the absence of the Vice-Chair.

73. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14 October 2020.

(Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14th October 2020 circulated with the agenda).

Cllr Mansell brought to the attention of the Committee a concern over the accuracy of the recommendations in the Coastal Protection report.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14th October 2020 be deferred for approval to the next meeting whilst the matter was investigated.

74. 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
Cllr N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	Personal	Spoke
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Wedderkopp	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

Cllr Thwaites declared a Personal Interest in respect of Item 5 (Rough Sleepers) – that he had been lobbied on the matter.

75. Public Participation

1) Trull Residents Group – Item 5

We understand that you are shortly to hear from officers of Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) Council in relation to the ongoing use of Canonsgrove Halls of Residence as temporary emergency accommodation for homeless people during the Covid-19 crisis. We further understand that you are to be asked to approve the preparation of an Options Appraisal in relation to future permanent homeless accommodation across the Council area, with Canonsgrove being one of the options under consideration.

Simon Lewis of SWT has told Trull Parish Council and local residents that the Options Appraisal was to include a review of potential sites around the town. However, rather than an open, forward-looking review of potential sites, it appears that you are being asked to approve SWT spending £10,000 to formulate a business case for the potential further use of Canonsgrove.

Aside from the Options Appraisal's flawed scope, it is wrong for the Parish Council to be excluded from deliberations until such time as they are presented with Canonsgrove as the preferred option.

Trull Parish Council and 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) are most appropriate for future homeless accommodation in the SWT area. During initial talks with the Parish Council meaningful, ongoing consultation was promised. Then Simon Lewis stated that any involvement would only come if Canonsgrove became the preferred option. In his report he says there will be such involvement. Can we please have a guarantee of this along with terms of reference?

You will be aware that the current use of the site led to issues including antisocial and criminal behavior in Trull and Staplehay which has been deeply unsettling to the village community. A Community Trigger was approved by the Police as a consequence of these problems and, in recent months, conditions have thankfully somewhat improved due to the Police presence around our villages, greater engagement by SWT and the YMCA (who run the site).

The concerns relating to the current and potential future use of the site have led Trull Parish Council to form a Working Group to liaise with SWT and the YMCA. Local residents have also formed a communication group to enable the recording and reporting of the ongoing issues relating to Canonsgrove, as well as the dissemination of news relating to the site. We have prepared the attached summary of the situation at Canonsgrove as it has developed, which we hope you will find useful in framing your discussion.

It is worrying to hear the Leader of the Council go on record to say that Canonsgrove should be promoted as a permanent facility, in advance of any options review or consultation. Likewise, it is concerning to see the Executive Member publicly describe the anti-social behavior, crime and anxiety experienced by the local community as nothing more than 'inconveniences'.

In short, this is not about removing homeless people from the villages. Rather, local people rightly insist on proper management of the facility in order to avoid the issues which have previously arisen.

Any presumption towards Canonsgrove in the Options Appraisal would be procedurally wrong – it overlooks the potential for the use or re-use of other sites in the town and, it seems to us, would enable procedural challenge via the Local Government Ombudsman and other routes. What is actually needed is a wider-ranging, transparent and properly-evidenced review, taking account of all relevant matters including the views of the community.

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.

The Portfolio Holder and Report Officer stated that a written response would be provided to the Trull Residents Group and the points they raised.

Cllr Habib Farbahi requested to pass on the concerns of Comeytrowe Parish Council also. They had met in October and discussed Canonsgrove and had sent a letter to Cllr Fran Smith outlining their concerns. The crux of their concern was a site in Town Centre would be more appropriate to be nearer the services required to support the individuals.

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

The report was introduced by the Executive Councillor Francesca Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Simon Lewis (Assistant Director - Housing and Communities).

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The use of the former Bus Station was raised as a possible option and homeless people were still a visible presence in the town centre. Officers clarified that the Station would be difficult to convert into accommodation, and that as part of the 'Everyone In' campaign some people had rejected the offer, and some people had unfortunately had to be evicted from Canonsgrove due to breaking house rules.
- It was appreciated the use of Canonsgrove was one that had to be taken in extraordinary circumstances.
- The feedback from the residents was concerning, and engagement with the residents needed to be addressed.
- Further clarity was sought on the activity package in place and the funding available from Government to support this. Officers had clarified this was now enhanced and further details were shared on this. Unfortunately the age profile of YMCA volunteers meant that in the early stages Covid had had an impact.
- An update on the extension of leases was requested, and whether the County Council/District Council would be the lead commissioner going forward. Officers clarified that SWT had a statutory duty around accommodation and SCC had a duty around care and support so there was a Memorandum of Understanding between the two authorities.
- An emphasis on strong communications with the community and parish council was important (Trull and Comeytrowe both being mentioned)
- Strong partnership working with the YMCA and police was important and should continue.
- It was strongly felt the options appraisal should consider all options and sites and reach an objective and fair conclusion based on evidence.
- Dealing with incidents and antisocial behaviour was important.

- Officers commented that interventions by SWT, YMCA Dulverton Group and Police working together had reduced the incidents and concerns to a minimal level in recent weeks.
- The town centre should be considered and had advantages, although there was also discussion on the benefits of more rural / semi-rural locations.
- Discussion was had on seeking further engagement with all communities' at all potential sites.
- Officers highlighted that pragmatically this would be difficult due to in some cases commercial confidentiality and that the purpose of the options appraisal was to objectively appraise which sites would best meet the council's strategic homeless accommodation and support requirements for the whole district, whereas local communities would be more focussed on their immediate neighbourhood impact.

The Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMENDED:**

1. That the Scrutiny Committee 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.
2. The Scrutiny Committee expected the Executive to take full regard of the comments and concerns raised at Scrutiny and to take these into account when making a full decision on this matter. In particular, any options appraisal must be open, transparent and a forward looking review of all potential sites. Any appraisals involving Canonsgrove should be communicated with both Trull and Comeytrowe Parish Councils as well as local residents.

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

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 questioned what involvement the Planning Dept has had in the development of the draft Statement, and how they will be involved as it progresses. – The Strategy Specialist had attended a Development Management team meeting to present and discuss the Statement as well as conducted internal consultation with various officers. As the final Statement neared the point of approval, the intention was to hold training sessions with Development Management officers and the Planning Committee to help with understanding of its role and what tools planning has available to it.

- Government Planning Reforms were raised, with some concern over the timing of this document meaning that it would quickly become obsolete. Some considered that a document like this would be of great value in presenting the Council's requirements within any new "growth" areas as proposed by the Planning White Paper. – However, the Planning Reforms were only proposals at present, and there was no guarantee of exactly what they would look like in the end or when they would be enacted. The Statement could easily be reviewed at such point, but it was felt not sensible to wait for the reforms.
- It was noted that it was good to see the document include reference to the recent Ecological Emergency declaration. However, it was suggested that there could be an additional question in the IPS1 checklist relating to this. – Officers would consider this point.
- It was noted that the document stated that developments in West Somerset would be encouraged to comply with policy DM5 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, but it was felt that this was not clearly and obviously referenced in the document and could be missed. – Officers were happy to look at how reference to this could be bolstered, though reiterated that it could only be encouraged in the context of adopted policy NH13 of the West Somerset Local Plan.
- There were concerns raised around accessibility of consultation if it were online only. – Officers would consider how this could be enhanced whilst recognising the difficulties presented by the current lockdown circumstances.
- A number of specific suggestions and questions were raised including in relation to trees on new developments, natural regeneration, public rights of way and links to health and wellbeing. Councillors with specific suggestions of changes to wording in the document were encouraged to contact the Portfolio Holder and Report Author outside of the meeting in advance of the Executive Committee meeting. Following Scrutiny Committee, a few Councillors forwarded comments on the draft Statement and officers considered these in drafting the updated version appended for Executive Committee.
- There were some concerns raised over the formatting of the document including the lack of paragraph numbers, font and the need for an index. – Officers agreed to explore ways to improve the legibility and navigation of the document.
- A concern was raised about Solar PV farms and the impact they can have on landscapes and particularly taking high quality agricultural land out of agricultural use. – Existing policies do allow for solar farm developments where criteria are met and the Statement refers to this in the context of wider renewable and low carbon energy generation. No reference is made to agricultural land specifically in relation to solar farms in the Statement, but this issue is covered by national policy.
- More clarity was requested on the purpose and status of the document. – Officers would improve the clarity on this issue in the

document. The Statement is explanatory guidance to support existing adopted planning policies. It was clarified that the Statement itself would not be referenced in planning decisions, but would guide consideration against the policies themselves, which it provides additional explanation and guidance for. It is the policies themselves which have “teeth”.

- It was asked how the Statement would be communicated to developers. – An agent’s forum is planned to be arranged during the consultation. It will be important to sell the benefits of policy compliance.

The Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMENDED:**

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

78. **Somerset Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy**

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

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors praised the report and its balanced account of the benefits of EV Charging, and it was commented that it was felt worth proceeding with but would not be the whole solution.
- Councillors expressed a wish that that this Strategy was translated into a plan for action, and officers confirmed if approved these measures would be programmed into the Councils Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan.
- It was commented that only 22% of EV Charging points would be placed in the SWT area, despite this being the largest geographic district in the County.
- Further information was sought on the trends relating to private car ownership and the placing of points where cars would be owned and not travel to. Officers confirmed that the locations were based on propensity and would not be the final locations. The purpose of the Strategy and the Councils role would be as an enabler in the delivery.
- It was raised that there was Government grant funding in this area that the Council needed to pursue e.g. EV Charging points in SWT staff car parks.
- It was commented that the Delivery section of the report needed further refinement before this went to Full Council, to better reflect the need for a further spread of points in the rural centres.

The Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMENDED** to the Executive to;

1. That Executive recommend to Full Council that the Somerset Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy is adopted and brought forward into the Council's Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.
2. Requested that the Report to Full Council contains more detail on how the Strategy will be delivered in the SWT area.

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

Councillor Mansell raised his concerns that the entire item was being taken in confidential session. This error had been taken from the start when the Strategy was first taken through the democratic process. The Council had not issued any information substantially on the borrowing amounts for its residents, and the Council needed to do more in this regard. Councillor Ellis supported the comments and stated that too many decisions were being taken in private and if investments went wrong the public would be picking up the cost. She stated that statutory guidance was clear that the Strategy should have been published in full originally so that the public could know what the Strategy is and what type of investments the Council was going to make.

The Chair thanked Councillors for their comments.

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).

80. **Confidential Report - Commercial Investment Review**

The confidential report was introduced by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts.

The Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMENDED** to the Executive to;

1. Receive Part 1 of the report which is the review of the Commercial Property Investment activity and performance since the last report of the 07/07/20 as set out in Section 10.4 of the original strategy.
2. Receive Part 2 of the report which is the first annual portfolio review of the Commercial Property Investment Strategy (CPIS) as set out in Section 11.1 of the original strategy.
3. Agree the amendments set out in the review of the strategy as shown in Appendices 3 and 4.

81. **Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Scrutiny Committee 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 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan be deferred for consideration until the Special meeting next week.

82. **Full Council Forward Plan**

RESOLVED that the Full Council Forward Plan be deferred for consideration until the Special meeting next week.

83. **Executive Forward Plan**

RESOLVED that the Executive Forward Plan be deferred for consideration until the Special meeting next week.

(The Meeting ended at 9.45 pm)

SWT Scrutiny Committee - 11 November 2020

Present: Councillor Gwil Wren (Chair)

Councillors Libby Lisgo, Ian Aldridge, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Dave Mansell, Derek Perry, Nick Thwaites, Keith Wheatley, Ray Tully and Sue Buller

Officers: Paul Fitzgerald, Marcus Prouse, James Barra, Chris Brown, Alison North, Kerry Prisco, Andrew Pritchard, Jane Windebank, Wendy Lewis and Shane Smith

Also Present: Councillors Mark Blaker, John Hassall, Janet Lloyd, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston and Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at Time Not Specified)

84. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Stone and Wedderkopp.

Councillor Tully substituted for Councillor Stone

85. 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 N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC & Bishop's Hull	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Councillor Tully declared a personal interest as having a family member who lives in a property that's part of the Woolaway development.

86. **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.

87. **Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Scrutiny Committee 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.

A request was made for an item of Homefinder to be added to a future committee.

Resolved that the Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan be noted.

88. **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.

89. **Full Council Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Full Council 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 Full Council Forward Plan be noted.

90. **Verbal Update on Section 106 Spend**

Councillor Rigby provided a verbal update on the section 106 spend and set out the Projects and expenditure along with the system set up to track where section 106 funding is directed. This was following the result of a recent Audit where it was established that, there were not sufficient measures in place to track section 106 funding and the timescales in which funding needed to be spent.

- The Heritage Mills funding was questioned, the portfolio holder would have a conversation about the project outside of the meeting.
- The committee were Disappointed to hear the situation around the delays in the Section 106 spend and looked forward to hearing further conversations about a solution.
- The system of how section 106 money was tracked would be reviewed to ensure choices choice were made in how the funding is utilised.
- The committee requested for Involvement and consultation with ward and parish councillors in the process in future.
- It was recognised that a wider conversation about 106 funding was needed, concerns were expressed over the lack of monitoring of funds that had been unspent.
- Members expressed concerns over significant housing developments not making the contributions necessary to support the infrastructure.
- The Committee questioned when the last occurrence of section 106 funding timing out, the earliest was from 2018, there was no evidence that this had been checked since then, with no system or central record of this.
- Concerns were expressed that there were substantial sums of money that developers were benefitting from due to a lack of monitoring. Parish Council access to section 106 funding was important to ensure there was awareness of the funding available and access to this.
- Travel plans were needed to be kept up to date for developers to be held to account.
- It was agreed there should be more broadly defined instances of the section 106 agreement where possible.
- The section 106 officer was aware of the situation and the results of the audit carried out.
- The Portfolio holder committed to continue to liaise with all councillors and developers on the nature of section 106 funding, this item would be considered again in the New Year.

The Committee noted the update.

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

Resolved that:- The Scrutiny Committee Recommended that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the ground that it involves 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).

92. **North Taunton Woolaway Project**

The North Taunton Woolaway Project is the flagship regeneration project of the SWT's housing development programme which set out to tackle some of the Council's worst performing homes in one of the most socially deprived areas in the County.

The Report recommended the approval of funding for all future phases of the Project as set out in Appendix A. The budget for Phase A and Enabling Works for Phases B-E totalling was approved in February 2019. This included the purchase of owner occupied properties and decanting tenanted properties. A confidential financial summary was

included at Appendix D for the purchase of the private property, which was within Phase C of the Project.

The Project set out the demolition of homes in Phase A and would start building 47 new homes with the first of these properties completed by August 2021 with Phase A estimated to complete by September 2022.

To ensure a smooth transition between all future phases and to quicken the pace of regeneration, permission was being sought to approve the budget to fund the regeneration of the remaining Phases B–E.

The Project would deliver new Council homes and was an essential part of the Council's commitment to offer a choice of good quality homes for residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those in need. The proposals identified in the Report would identify the funding and assist the progression of the remaining Phases (B–E) in a timely manner and provide certainty and security to the North Taunton Woolaway Project tenants.

During the discussion the following points were raised:-

- The low carbon ambition as opposed to zero carbon were questioned.
- The scheme was based on building regulations, these were the requirements in terms of specification.
- Under the pre-contract agreement the contractor would consider efficiencies to deliver maximum low carbon benefits.
- There were challenges around the amount of low carbon changes in the construction.
- There were more opportunities in future phases for additional carbon reduction measures in the construction, this would be reported to members.
- Further details on the specification would be provided before the Executive report. Information would be modelled to ensure the right balance. This would be assessed within the next 2-3 weeks.
- The contingency fund was built into Appendix A, this could be balanced between fabric and technology depending on the benefits of the carbon reduction and the comparable cost.
- Impact on recent developments of phosphate issues as part of the planning application were considered. This was anticipated to be a short to medium term impact.
- Provision of affordable homes were encouraged. Tenants returning can retain their social rent agreement. The affordable rent arrangements were considered along with the percentage split.
- Reducing the carbon impact of construction was considered. More information was requested over the energy use of the residents.
- Heat pumps and insulation were encouraged on the projects. The same Zero carbon standard was the ambition with all the projects to be considered in the agenda.
- Feedback from the residents was very positive and residents were looking forward to the development and their future homes.
- The specification for phase E had not been agreed, it was anticipated that this would be complete around March 2021.
- The committee were positive to see the ambition from the three project and the progress of the zero carbon ambitions and positive responses.

- The resident's feedback and ensuring a positive impression was an achievement and progress had made on the positivity and public perception of the project. Those living in the houses and the surrounding area were supportive of the scheme.
- Councillors praised the community involvement with the contractor repainting the local community centre after it was damaged by fire.
- EIA and Legal implications of the Woolaway project was considered.
- The impact assessment from February last year was included. It was questioned if a full up to date EIA would be provided. An updated EIA could be provided by the end of the year.
- Disabled facilities grants were considered, a full response in relation to these would be provided outside of the meeting.
- Calculations had been undertaken with engineers to ensure the flood risk was fully understood.
- The expense of the zero carbon improvements were considered contrasting their benefit.
- Councillors commended officers for their community engagement.
- It was questioned if the land value had been factored into the capital development cost. This has not been factored in but could be provided with planning permission.
- Costs around phosphate had not been factored in, this was determined as too early to tell what the impact would be.
- The sustainability of the projects were questioned with the reliance on borrowing. Calculations had been undertaken on the benefits and the cost of the borrowing repayments. The project would be a 60 year lifespan guarantee.
- This was considered as affordable as set out and included in the HRA business plan and HRA debt during the planned period.
- Fluctuations in the construction index were discussed. It was determined there was a good amount of contingency in the budget.
- The increase of regeneration costs of north Taunton was considered high. Inflation was recognised as a factor alongside the potential of a shorter timescale of the project.

The Scrutiny Committee recommended the purchase of the private dwelling as set out in confidential Appendix D.

The Scrutiny Committee supported the following recommendations to Full Council:-

1. 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.
2. Delegate 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.
3. To approval the decant of tenants within Phases B which will allow Gold band status in the Homefinder Somerset allocations system for tenants in this Phase and allow those who wish to move outside the regeneration area sufficient priority to move home.

4. Delegate 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.
5. All new build properties (Phase A-D) will be set at affordable rents in line with the 2020 Rent Setting Policy. The affordable rents will 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, will have their rents capped at the equivalent social rent if being rehoused in the new NTWP development. These rents will remain with the tenant as long as they retain their tenancy. No current NTWP SWT tenant will 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.

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

The Site is owned by Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT), and had a planning consent for residential development. It adjoined a SWT scheme under construction for light commercial development of two industrial units.

It was proposed to develop the site as an exemplar scheme of new homes for the Council to showcase an innovative approach to house building and its commitment to affordable housing throughout the district and addressing climate change.

The scheme would re-purpose an existing Council asset into much needed housing stock for our residents in the former West Somerset area, together with community benefit from high performing houses that are cost efficient to maintain. It would result in the improved general appearance of the area and the gateway to Minehead.

During the discussion the following points were raised:-

- The committee commended the project with new housing being needed for the community in this part of the district.

The Scrutiny Committee recommended:-

- (a) Approval of the development of Affordable Homes built to very low carbon standards, subject to planning approval.
- (b) To approve the supplementary budget as stated in confidential appendix A.
- (c) 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.
- (d) Delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to determine the final funding profile for this scheme once the finalised design has received planning approval and tenders have been received.
- (e) 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 a percentage of market rates.

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

The report recommends the development of new council HRA homes on the Oxford Inn site, Taunton.

The scheme would be built to the specifications being developed as part of the Zero Carbon Affordable Homes Pilot approved by members in July 2020 which was now at procurement and planning pre application stage.

This site was located in the Halcon and Lane area of Taunton is owned by Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and fell under the HRA and was formerly operated as a public house.

The scheme would demolish the existing buildings and new homes would be built broadly on the existing footprint. The development would result in the improvement of the appearance of this prominent corner site and deliver very energy efficient housing with low energy bills for the residents in line with the benefits envisaged of the Council's Zero Carbon Affordable Homes Pilot.

During the discussion the following points were raised:-

- The committee welcomed the development into the area which was considered long overdue for regeneration, the site had remained empty for some time and had fallen into a state of disrepair.
- The ambitions of the Zero Carbon affordable homes pilot was welcomed, along with providing energy efficient housing for the residents.

The Scrutiny Committee recommended:-

(a) Support of the use of the vacant SWT public house for new zero carbon affordable homes.

(b) Approve the demolition of the Oxford Inn

(c) Approve the development of affordable homes built to standards emerging from the Zero Carbon Affordable Homes Pilot, subject to planning approval.

(d) Allocate a total budget and borrowing requirement in line with confidential Appendix A.

(e) Delegate authority to the Section 151 officer to determine the final funding profile for this scheme once the finalised design has received planning approval and tenders have been received.

(f) Note the use of affordable rents for these new build HRA homes in line with the 2020 Rent Setting Policy. The affordable rents will be set to ensure scheme viability at a percentage of market rates

(The Meeting ended at Time Not Specified)

SCRUTINY

Meeting	Draft Agenda Items	Lead PFH/ Lead Officer	Executive Report?
2nd Dec 2020	2020/21 Budget Monitoring Q2	Cllr R Henley/Emily Collacott	Yes
Virtual	Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review	Cllr C Booth / Scott Weetch	Yes
	Q2 Performance Report	Cllrs F Smith-Roberts/R Henley/SMT	Yes
	Belvedere Road Public Space	Cllr M Kravis / C. Hall	Yes
	Update on Phosphates Measures	Cllr M Rigby/ N. Bryant	No
6th Jan 2021	<i>Tonedale Mill Update (to be confirmed)</i>	<i>Cllr M Rigby/ J. O'Hara</i>	<i>No</i>
Virtual	Executive Cllr PFH Session (cllrs Pilkington & Rigby)	Executive Members various	No
27th Jan 2021	General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22	Cllr R Henley/ Emily Collacott	Yes
Virtual	HRA Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22	Cllr R Henley / Emily Collacott	Yes
	HRA Business Plan	Cllr F Smith / James Barrah	Yes
BUDGET ONLY	Executive Cllr PFH Session	Executive Members various	No
3rd Feb 2021			
Virtual	Executive Cllr PFH Session	Executive Members various	No
3rd March 2021	2020/21 Budget Monitoring Q3	Cllr R Henley/ Emily Collacott	Yes
Virtual	Q3 Performance Report	Leader/Cllr R Henley/SMT	Yes
	Executive Cllr PFH Session	Executive Members various	No
7th April 2021	Executive Cllr PFH Session	Executive Members various	No
Virtual			

EXECUTIVE

Executive Meeting	Draft Agenda Items
16 December 2020	2020/21 Budget Monitoring Q2
Exec RD = 4 December	Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review
Informal Exec RD = 10 November	Q2 Performance Report
SMT RD = 28 October	Belvedere Road Public Space
20 January 2021	Safeguarding Policy Update
Exec RD = 8 January	Somerset Economic Recovery & Growth Plan
Informal Exec RD = 8 December	SWP Business Plan
SMT RD = 25 November	
9 February 2021	General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22
BUDGET ONLY	HRA Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22
venue =	Policy Framework
Exec RD = 28 January	HRA Business Plan
Informal Exec RD = 5 January	
SMT RD = 9 December	
24 February 2021	Monkton Heathfield Phase 2 Masterplan: Feedback
venue =	East Street/St. James Street, Taunton Pedestrianisation
Exec RD = 12 February	
Informal Exec RD = 12 January	
SMT RD = 21 December	
17 March 2021	2021/22 Partnership Grants Schedule
venue =	2020/21 Budget Monitoring Q3
Exec RD = 5 March	Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategies 2021/22

Informal Exec RD = 9 February	Pay Policy
SMT RD = 27 January	Q3 Performance Report
	Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Feedback
	Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide
	Procurement Strategy
21 April 2021	
venue =	
Exec RD =	
Informal Exec RD =	
SMT RD =	
Items to be Confirmed	Firepool LDO
	Obridge
	Strategic Acquisition Report (Confidential)

FULL COUNCIL

Meeting	Report Deadline	Draft Agenda Items
01 December 2020	19 November 2020	Amendment to the Private Sector Renewal Policy – Disabled facilities Grants, Repairs assistance and new Special Purpose Grant
SPECIAL FOR AMOUNT OF WORK		North Taunton Woolaway Project – NTWP phases B and E
		HIF Loan Agreement
		Oxford Inn New Affordable HRA Homes
		Seaward Way - New Affordable Homes in Somerset West
		Coastal Protection Works
		NO MORE ITEMS
03 December 2020	25 November 2020	Stronger Somerset Business Case
SPECIAL		NO MORE ITEMS
08 December 2020	26 November 2020	Maggies Report
SPECIAL		NO MORE ITEMS
15 December 2020	3 December 2020	Revised Political Allocation of Committee Seats
		2020/21 Budget Update and in year Covid Budget Approval (emergency covid funding - Jo O'Hara)
		Financial Strategy Review and MTFP Update
		Decisions taken under the urgency rules regarding Parking Charges
		Decisions taken under the urgency rules regarding Test and Trace Support Payments - discretionary scheme
		Council Tax Support Scheme
		Decisions taken under the urgency rules regarding the Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme
		Somerset EV Charging Strategy
		Commercial Investment Review
		Skate Park Petition
		PFH Reports

		NO MORE ITEMS
18 February 2021	8 February 2021	General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22
Budget Only		HRA Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22
		Policy Framework
		HRA Business Plan
23 February 2021	11 February 2021	Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review
		Council Tax Resolution 2021/22
		Cultural Strategy
		PFH Reports
30 March 2021	18 March 2021	2021/22 Partnership Grants Schedule
		Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategies 2021/22
		Pay Policy
		Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Feedback
		Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide
		Procurement Strategy
		PFH Reports
ITEMS TO BE CONFIRMED		Obridge
		Firepool LDO
		Strategic Acquisition Report (confidential)

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Scrutiny Committee – 2nd December 2020 Executive Committee – 16th 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

4.2 Key Performance Indicators

The table in Appendix 1 includes the councils 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:

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

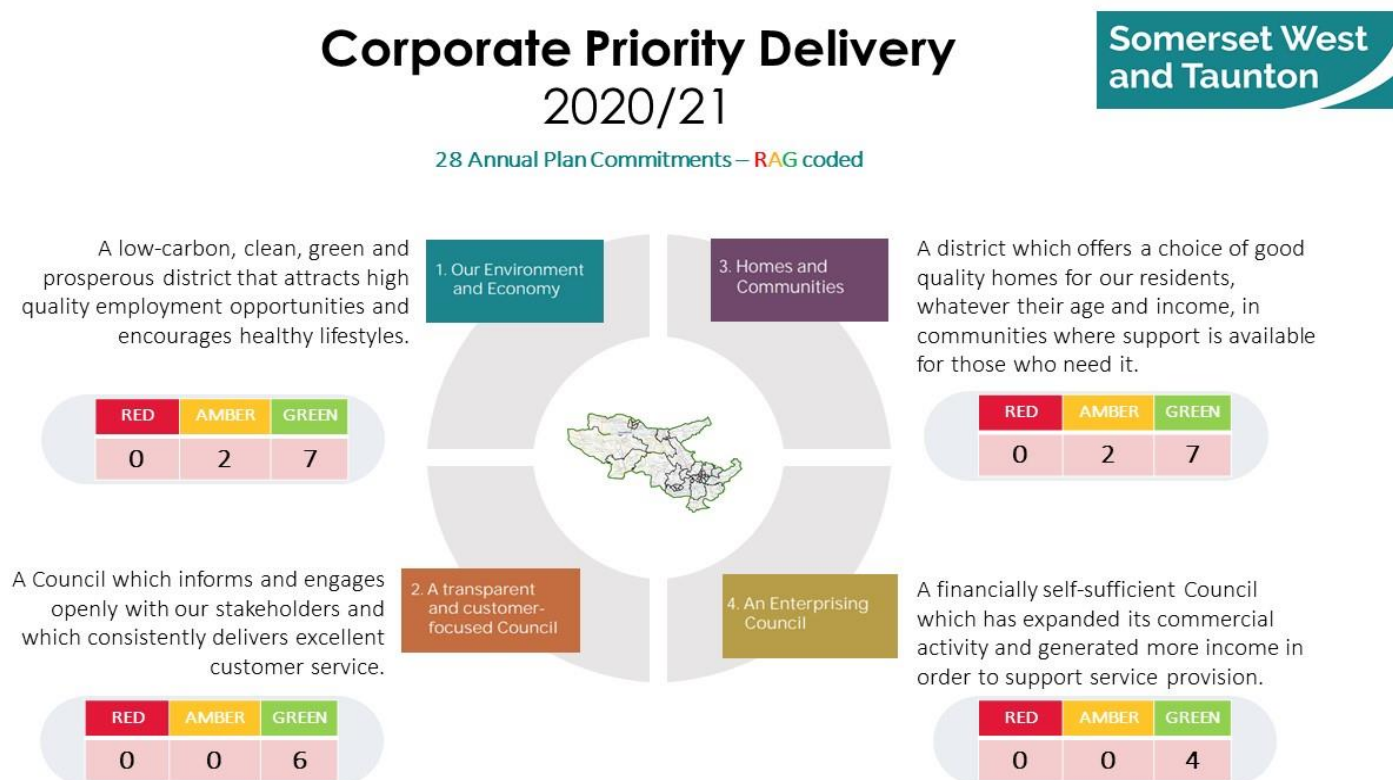
As reported previously, a dedicated case manager was recruited last autumn to manage the FOI process, and a new process for submitting FOI requests has been implemented. This had led to significant improvements in performance but the Covid crisis and the need to divert resource to urgent additional activities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



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: ☐ Once only ☐ Ad-hoc Y Quarterly
☐ Twice-yearly ☐ Annually

List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)

Appendix 1	2020/21 Month 4 Performance Report
Appendix 2	Further information on complaints

Contact Officers

Name	Richard Sealy	Name	Malcolm Riches
Direct Dial	01823 217558	Direct Dial	01823 219459
Email	r.sealy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk	Email	m.riches@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

(IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES REGARDING THIS TEMPLATE PLEASE CONTACT THE GOVERNANCE TEAM governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

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 https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/	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 Firepool . 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 Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan 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. 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 Warmer Homes Fund 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 to create wild meadows 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 a draft Local Plan to 2040 , 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. 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. 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 Coal Orchard , 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 Wellington Railway Station .	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 harbour wall in Watchet , 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 innovation centre 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 https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/	Owner	Directorate	30 September progress update	RAG
A Transparent and Customer Focused Council	10	Building on improvements introduced during 2019/20, to our housing repairs service , 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 modernising our communications approach .	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 Tenants Strategic Board 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 review our processes 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. COVID 19 Related • Small Business & Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Scheme • Discretionary Business Grant Scheme • Community Chest Grant • Coronavirus Support Requests • Test and Trace Support Payments Other • Pavement Licence Application • Bin Report • Dead Animal Report • Litter and Drug Debris • Public Toilet Report • Rural Rate Relief • Retail Discount • Small Business Rate Relief • Licensing Application • Complaint about a licensed person, vehicle or premises • Book an appointment Process Improved for Customers (Not Firmstep Related) • Accepting card and electronic payments for Moorings and Slipways	Green
	14	We will introduce a Member Equality Group 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 follow and take part in the democratic decisions 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 https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/	Owner	Directorate	30 September progress update	RAG
Homes and Communities	16	We will complete 8 new units of social housing in Laxton Road, Taunton ;	Chris Brown	Housing & Community	Laxton Road is on schedule to be complete december 2020	Green
	17	We will build at least 6 new modular and energy efficient homes for social rent;	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 construction of 47 good quality, energy efficient homes 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 to this. We continue to engage with residents, stakeholders, councillors and SWT employees.	Green
	19	We will increase the number of homelessness preventions within our area,	Sarah Richards	Housing & Community	In order to increase the number of homelessness 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. 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 process for rough sleepers 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 additional Affordable Homes ;	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 review our voluntary and community grants 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 CCTV equipment and monitoring arrangements for Watchet and Minehead ;	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 Public Space Protection Order 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 https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/	Owner	Directorate	30 September progress update	RAG
An Enterprising Council	25	We will continue the programme of acquiring income generating property assets 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 collaboration with the Somerset District Councils to deliver a more efficient, sustainable, but locally accountable, system of local Government 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. 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 let further empty space within our offices at Taunton and Williton , 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 review our land and property assets 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

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Scrutiny – 2 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 Scrutiny Committee 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 £'000	Forecast Outturn for the Year £'000	Forecast Variance COVID £'000	Forecast Variance non COVID £'000	Total Forecast Variance £'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
Net Cost of Services	20,995	27,596	6,540	61	6,601	31.4
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
Net Budget	21,022	21,573	625	-74	551	2.6
Funding	-21,022	-21,022	0	0	0	0.0
Variance	0	551	625	-74	551	2.6

- 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 £'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 SLM assistance package agreed during the first national lockdown period to support SLM so that they could safely open leisure facilities at earliest opportunity in line with Gov guidance and, SWT will also be required to

Budget heading	Direct- orate	Variance £'000	Comments
			contribute to 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: 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. 2. Increase of hours for External communications lead to full time to ensure full availability for cross partner

Budget heading	Direct- orate	Variance £'000	Comments
			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.
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.
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.
Transfer from NHB 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.
TOTAL – over / (-)underspend		625	

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

Budget heading	Direct- orate	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.

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

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
Balance 1 April 2020		4,522
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
Projected Balance after current commitments		9,065
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
Projected Balance 31 March 2021		7,871
MTFP Planned use of reserves 2021/22		-2,250
MTFP Planned use of reserves 2022/23		-1,250
Projected uncommitted balance		4,371
Recommended Minimum Balance		2,400

- 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 1 April 2020	2020/21 Budgeted Transfers	Approved Return to General Reserves	Financial Strategy /COVID Emergency Funding	Projected Balance 31 March 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
Total	20,586	3,249	-1,218	-5,949	16,668

*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 given 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 £0.2m 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 2019/20 £k	Estimate 2020/21 £k	Estimate 2021/22 £k	Totals 2022/23 £k
Major Transport Schemes	98	60	0	158
Town Centre Regeneration	724	1,124	985	2,883
Employment Site Enabling and Innovation	0	505	0	505
Flood Alleviation	14	0	0	14
TOTALS	836	1,689	1,035	3,560

- 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 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 Onwards £	Totals £
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
Total Income Projection	6,895,772	1,711,240	1,711,240	1,461,240	1,482,608	3,000,000	16,262,100
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
Total Expenditure	4,262,100	3,500,000	1,000,000	3,500,000	1,000,000	3,000,000	16,262,100
Projected Funding Balance	2,633,672	844,912	1,556,152	-482,608	0	0	0

*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 Watchet Marina (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 £'000	Forecast Outturn for the Year £'000	Forecast Variance COVID £'000	Forecast Variance non COVID £'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%
Total	0	140	0	140	140	0.52%

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 £'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.
TOTAL – over/ (-) underspend	140	

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 b/f (£'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
HRA Total	1,648

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
Forecast Balance Carried Forward 31 March 2020	2,742
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 To be added following the Scrutiny meeting.

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

Name	Emily Collacott
Direct Dial	01823 218742
Email	e.collacott@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Name	Paul Fitzgerald
Direct Dial	01823 217557
Email	p.fitzgerald@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

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
General Fund								
Development & Place: Dawn Adey								
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	-
				-			-	
Total Development & Place	21,241,331	62,675,000	1,365,000	85,281,331	20,115,383	39,138,523	59,253,906	26,027,425
				-			-	
External Operations: Andrew Pritchard								
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)	-	-
Total External Operations	7,253,679	2,621,000	-	9,874,679	1,287,072	5,252,090	6,539,162	3,335,517
Internal Operations: Alison North								
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
Total Internal Operations	20,000	1,193,000	16,500	1,229,500	121,595	509,526	631,120	598,380
				-				
Housing: James Barrah								
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
Total Housing	1,733,883	-	-	1,733,883	244,253	-	244,253	1,489,630
				-				
General Fund Total before S106	30,248,893	66,489,000	1,381,500	98,119,393	21,768,303	44,900,138	66,668,441	31,450,952
Hinkley S106 : Andrew Pritchard								
Hinkley Total	318,237	-		318,237	60,000		60,000	258,237
Section 106: Andrew Pritchard								
S106 Total	-	-		-	370,728	(370,728)	0	(0)
General Fund Total	30,567,130	66,489,000	1,381,500	98,437,630	22,199,031	44,529,410	66,728,441	31,709,188
Housing Revenue Account: James Barrah								
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
HRA Total	15,821,790	15,844,000	9,300,000	40,965,790	2,601,996	11,330,655	13,932,651	27,033,139
Grand total	46,388,920	82,333,000	10,681,500	139,403,420	24,801,027	55,860,065	80,661,092	58,742,328

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Scrutiny – 2nd 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 To recommend to Executive that 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 19th 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	Citizens' Advice Taunton	Portion of £120610 @45%	£108,514.50	25.26%	Taunton and district One Team areas West Somerset
	Money Matters advisors for Taunton East, Taunton North and Wellington	£42,000			
	West Somerset advice bureau	Portion of £30,600 @40%			
Housing Advice and tenancy sustainment	Citizens' Advice Taunton	Portion of £120610 @45%	£66,514.50	15.49%	District wide coverage
	West Somerset advice bureau	Portion of £30,600 @40%			
Support for young families in rural areas	CLOWNS	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	0.23%	West Somerset
Self-advocacy and engagement with disabled people	Compass Disability Services	£2,700.00	£2,700.00	0.63%	District wide coverage
Mental Health support and advocacy	Bridging the Gap (MIND)	£41,000.00	£41,000.00	9.55%	District wide coverage
Domestic Abuse				0.00%	Nil
General information, advice and guidance	Citizens' Advice Taunton	Portion of £120610 @10%	£19,488.50	4.54%	
	Wiveliscombe Area Partnership - Community Centre	Portion of £29,710 @25%			
Prenatal and perinatal support for families in rural areas	Homestart (WS)	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	0.23%	West Somerset
Supporting community organisations/community hubs in deprived areas	North Taunton Partnership	£14500	£32,000.00	7.45%	North and East Taunton only
	Taunton East Development Trust	£14500 +£3,000			
Support for Village Agents	Village Agents	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	4.66%	
Advice for Community Buildings and Village Halls	Community Council for Somerset	£5,400.00	£5,400.00	1.26%	District wide coverage
Social enterprise, skills and training support in deprived areas	Inspire 2 Achieve (Yarlington)	£46,000.00	£46,000.00	10.71%	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 SW&T	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	4.66%	District wide coverage
Employment skills and training support for those farthest from the job market	West Somerset advice bureau	Portion of £30,600 @20%	£6,120.00	1.42%	West Somerset
Community transport in rural areas	Wiveliscombe Area Partnership - Wivey Link	Portion of £29,710@75%	£22,282.50	5.19%	Wiveliscombe (10 Parishes)
Somerset West Lottery	Small amounts raised via Lottery to local causes			0.00%	District wide coverage
Arts projects and skills development in deprived areas	Fuse Performance	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	1.40%	East Taunton
Administration	Covers Somerset West lottery, small grants and partnership fund	£8,000.00	£8,000.00	1.86%	Not applicable
Other not described above	Creating volunteering opportunities - Engage.	£22,500 TD; £1,000 WS	£23,500.00	5.47%	District wide coverage
			£429,520.00	100.00%	

- 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 domestic abuse is a priority that is not funded through this route. However, the Council does fund the prevention of domestic abuse 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	
Engage (TD)*	£22,500	£22,500	
Engage (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	
Totals	£297,520	£258,542	£38,978

*nb now known as Sparks

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	-
Totals	£6,310	£6,310	-

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

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
Totals	£132,000		£132,000

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 Not applicable

Democratic Path:

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

Reporting Frequency: ☐ Once only ☒ Ad-hoc ☐ Quarterly

☐ Twice-yearly ☐ Annually

Contact Officers

Name	Scott Weetch	Name	
Direct Dial		Direct Dial	
Email	s.weetch@somersetwestandtauntouncouncil.gov.uk	Email	

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Scrutiny Committee 2nd 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

It is recommended that Scrutiny committee support the following to the Executive committee:

- 2.1 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 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. Tenants

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.

Democratic Path:

- **SMT – 11th November 2020**
- **Scrutiny – 2nd December 2020**
- **Executive – 16th December 2020**
- **Full Council – No**

Reporting Frequency: One off ☐

Contact Officers

Name	Chris Hall
Direct Dial	01823 217578
Email	c.hall@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk