

## SWT Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 6th January, 2021,  
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.

### Webcasting - Virtual Meeting

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**Members:** Gwil Wren (Chair), Libby Lisgo (Vice-Chair), Ian Aldridge, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Dave Mansell, Derek Perry, Phil Stone, Ray Tully, Nick Thwaites and Keith Wheatley

### Agenda

**1. Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (to follow)**

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

**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 5 - 6)

To receive items and review the Forward Plan.

**6. Executive Forward Plan**

(Pages 7 - 8)

**7. Full Council Forward Plan**

(Pages 9 - 10)

**8. To consider reports from Executive Councillors**

(Pages 11 - 18)

To consider reports from Executive Councillors on their respective Portfolios;

- i. Councillor Mike Rigby – Planning and Transportation
- ii. Councillor Peter Pilkington – Climate Change

3.2 of the Scrutiny Terms of Reference state that the Scrutiny Committee may review and scrutinise and ask questions of the Leader, lead Councillors, the Executive in relation to their portfolios.

**9. Access to Information - Exclusion of 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).

**10. Heritage Project Update**

This report concerns an update in relation to a Heritage Project.

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

**JAMES HASSETT  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded and webcast. 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 entering the Council Chamber and speaking 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.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions. There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions. Speaking under "Public Question Time" is limited to 3 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chair will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate. Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chair will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group. These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room. Full Council, Executive, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: [www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

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

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

**SCRUTINY**

Meeting	Draft Agenda Items	Lead PFH/ Lead Officer	Executive Report?
<b>6th Jan 2021</b>	Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public		
Virtual	To consider reports from Executive Councillors (Pilkington and Rigby & Henley)	Executive Members various	No
<b>27th Jan 2021</b>	General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22	Cllr R Henley/ Emily Collacott	Yes
Virtual	HRA Revenue and Capital budget setting 21/22, Dwelling Rent setting 21/22 and 30 year Business Plan Review	Cllr R Henley / James Barrah & E Collacott	Yes
<b>BUDGET ONLY</b>			
<b>3rd Feb 2021</b>			
Virtual	Executive Cllr PFH Session Kravis and Fran Smith	Executive Members various	No
<b>3rd March 2021</b>	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
<b>7th April 2021</b>	Executive Cllr PFH Session	Executive Members various	No
Virtual			



<b>Executive Meeting</b>	<b>Draft Agenda Items</b>
<b>20 January 2021</b>	Somerset Economic Recovery & Growth Plan
Exec RD = 8 January	SWP Business Plan
Informal Exec RD = 8 December	
SMT RD = 25 November	
<b>9 February 2021</b>	General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22
<b>BUDGET ONLY</b>	HRA Revenue and Capital budget setting 21/22, Dwelling Rent setting 21/22 and 30 year Business Plan Review
<b>venue =</b>	Policy Framework
Exec RD = 28 January	
Informal Exec RD = 5 January	
SMT RD = 9 December	
<b>24 February 2021</b>	East Street/St. James Street, Taunton Pedestrianisation
<b>venue =</b>	Safeguarding Policy Update
Exec RD = 12 February	
Informal Exec RD = 12 January	
SMT RD = 21 December	
<b>17 March 2021</b>	2021/22 Partnership Grants Schedule
<b>venue =</b>	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
<b>21 April 2021</b>	Belvedere Road Public Space
<b>venue =</b>	
Exec RD =	
Informal Exec RD =	
SMT RD =	

Items to be Confirmed	Firepool LDO
	Strategic Acquisition Report (Confidential)



## FULL COUNCIL

Meeting	Report Deadline	Draft Agenda Items
<b>18 February 2021</b>	<b>8 February 2021</b>	General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2021/22
<b>Budget Only</b>		HRA Revenue and Capital budget setting 21/22, Dwelling Rent setting 21/22 and 30 year Business Plan Review
		Policy Framework
<b>23 February 2021</b>	<b>11 February 2021</b>	Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review
		Council Tax Resolution 2021/22
		Cultural Strategy
		PFH Reports
<b>30 March 2021</b>	<b>18 March 2021</b>	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
<b>ITEMS TO BE CONFIRMED</b>		Firepool LDO
		Strategic Acquisition Report (confidential)



## Full Council Meeting – 15 December 2020

### Report of Councillor Mike Rigby – Planning and Transportation

#### **SWT Local Plan Review:**

We consulted on the Local Plan Issues and Options document at the beginning of 2020. An initial Consultation Report Part 1 summarising online responses was published in July and Part 2 reporting the more lengthy responses was published in October. As part of the “trawl for sites” we have received 103 suggestions from developers and others with interest in land. These have been logged and sorted into areas. Details can be found at:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/2454/swt-lp-io-consultation-report-stage-2-appx2.pdf>

I would urge councillors to familiarise themselves with the details. While there is no guarantee that a suggested site will ultimately be accepted into the local plan and from there be the subject of a successful planning application, it is likely that, Government intervention notwithstanding, most of the sites coming forward in the period to 2040, will be amongst this number.

The timetable of the Local Plan has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and so further evidence gathering and the Regulation 19 Draft Plan stage anticipated for Summer 2020 (as set out in the Local Development Scheme) has been delayed. Furthermore, the Government’s recent 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 if the proposed changes are confirmed.

Additionally, the timetable is likely to be affected by the outcome of the unitary proposals for Somerset. Whichever unitary 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.

#### **Wellington Station:**

Work continues on the Strategic Outline Business Case for Wellington Station, which is due to be complete by the end of the year. This work is being funded by the Restoring Your Railways Fund. The Government’s recent spending review includes plans for a third round of the New Stations Fund, with an expanded pot of £32 million, which the project team intends to make a submission to.

#### **Interim Policy Statement on Planning for the Climate Emergency:**

A Draft Interim Policy Statement has been produced to provide additional explanation and guidance on our existing planning policies in relation to the climate emergency. Its principal purpose is to reiterate existing adopted planning policies and ensure that we are applying them to the best of their effect in tackling the Climate Emergency. The Draft Statement is due for consultation from 23 November 2020 – 4 January 2021.

## **Vacancies**

Planning Specialist – the role was advertised for a 2nd time but attracted no applicants. The role will be re-advertised in January 2021.

## **Phosphates**

We have recently advised Members that a number of planning applications will require a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) due to the letter we had received from Natural England about the high levels of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site. A copy of the advice letter/ advice note from Natural England provides a helpful explanation of the issues and the types of development affected and is available on our website at:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning/phosphates-on-the-somerset-levels-and-moors/>

## **Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site**

In light of a court Judgement ( known as Dutch N), Natural England have advised SWT that, in light of the unfavourable condition of the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site, before determining a planning application that may give rise to additional phosphates within the catchment, competent authorities should undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

To date, we have only been able to conclude one HRA and that is because mitigation was not required as it was concluded that the development would not create additional phosphates.

In order to move this matter forward we have commissioned consultants to undertake work on developing a phosphates calculator. This should then allow for an assessment and mitigation of the phosphates impacts in proposed new developments. The calculator will allow applicants to calculate their phosphate budget and mitigate to show with sufficient and reasonable certainty that the development does not adversely affect the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site. While this piece of work is being undertaken we will not be able to determine any of the affected planning applications unless developers are able to provide their own solution.

It is anticipated that this work will be concluded prior to Christmas but at present, I cannot guarantee that it will be achievable.

Planning Committee - I have formed the view that meetings of the Planning Committee continue to be lasting significantly longer than ought to be the case. I am working with the Chairman of the Committee and officers to devise means to see the smoother functioning of these meetings.

The reviews of the council's car parks continue with the first examining the future charging regime, including the 'first hour free' trial. I expect to report the initial findings and recommendations in the first quarter of 2021. The second undertaking will shadow the first but may take slightly longer to conclude and that will determine the adequacy of long-term strategic car parking availability across the district - Do we have the correct amount of parking in the right places?

East Street Pedestrianisation - We undertook a survey to gauge views of the pedestrianisation of East Street in order to determine how to manage this issue

going forward. It was the council's largest consultation ever, with in excess of 2,000 responses. A majority of respondents felt that the closure was a success and should be extended. Full details of the questions and responses can be found here:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/2458/east-reach-consultation-results.pdf>

Together with SCC, we decided to keep the street closed through Lockdown 2.0 given that many of the shops were fully open and many of those that weren't were open for click and collect. Given the short duration of Lockdown 2.0, it was also felt reopening it would cause confusion and disrupt reconfigured travel patterns. I will provide a verbal report on the next stages.

#### Active Travel - East Street

Extensive work consultation work has taken place on the scheme implemented over the summer. Following this, design work has started to change the scheme to allow for timed opening of the road at peak times, and to allow blue badge holders to park on the street during specific hours. This work will be subject to further consultation and Road Safety Audit verification, prior to implementation.

Government guidance and award of Active Travel P2 funding was published in November. The County wide active travel cell are absorbing this information with a view to deciding on which of the schemes submitted by the individual districts meet the revised criteria for grants before Christmas.

The Gateway Park and Ride reopened on 2 November 2020, following SCC's completion of highways works at the site. We continue to discuss how to improve the park and rides, the operation of which we subsidise, though the plan to take ownership of them has been severely dented first by Covid and then by local government reorganisation.

As a council we have objected to the Government's proposed changes to the Standard Method for calculating housing numbers, which would have an enormous impact on the district with as many as 24,000 homes needing to be built in the period to 2040. Likewise we have objected to the deeply unsatisfactory Government proposals to effectively do away with local plans and instead designate lands into three simple categories. Indeed the consultation appears to be trying to fix a problem that does not exist and we have responded accordingly.

#### Feasibility work - Cycling schemes

SWT are continuing to work towards feasibility studies with local cycling groups and other stakeholders on cycling infrastructure projects in the district, including links from Taunton to Wellington and Bishops Lydeard/Cotford St Luke. Dedicated resource is now working through the many complex issues, such as land ownership(s), funding and planning, with a view to bringing together detailed proposals.

#### Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

SWT continue to work with colleagues in SCC on refining and prioritising schemes within the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, with the intention of developing detailed project delivery proposals.



# Full Council Meeting – 15 December 2020

## Report of Councillor Peter Pilkington – Climate Change

- **Countywide Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy**

The strategy was adopted by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Since then it has been through each of the other Councils and adopted. Conversations are ongoing with regards to the governance arrangements for the delivery phase of the Strategy, which will be reported to Members in due course.

- **CNCR Action Plan**

The SWT CNCR Action Plan was approved by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020. This provides us with a more detailed plan of aspirational actions which our Climate Change Programme will look to deliver against.

- **Somerset EV Charging Strategy**

A pan-Somerset EV Charging Strategy has been produced, as an early product of the Climate Emergency Strategy work. It is currently on its way through the democratic path towards adoption both here and in the other Councils. The Strategy provides us with projections for EV adoption in Somerset and identifies the actions that we need to take and facilitate to influence this positively. As a result of the Strategy, we will be aiming to work towards 25% of vehicle kms travelled being EV in Somerset by 2030.

- **Electric Vehicle Charge Points**

SWT are planning to lease four car parking bays to an electric vehicle charging point (EVCP) operator, installing 50kw, rapid charge points at Deane House and Blackbrook Sports Centre. Both are expected to be operating towards the end of Q1 2021 and will be accessible to the public 24/7. A number of further sites are being investigated with the same EVCP operator.

In addition to this invitations for expressions of interest have been requested using a nationally recognised procurement framework. Prospective EVCP suppliers will tender to investigate the suitability and, where appropriate, to supply charging points at multiple car parks throughout the district.

- **DC Share**

Western Power Distribution and SWT are finalising the cable routes to the 15 charge points, seeking permissions from stakeholders and landowners across the three locations, Canon Street, Firepool & Coal Orchard.

- **Fleet Transition to Electric Vehicles**

Following the positive use of demo vehicles officers are progressing the procurement of 2 x electric pool vehicles to align with the implementation of the charge points at Deane House, these vehicles will be the first of our pool vehicles to be switched to electric.

- **CDP Annual Disclosure**

Officers submitted our annual disclosure to CDP in August, based on the emerging CNCR Action Plan and Countywide Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy, and recently confirmed that these have now been adopted. In 2019 (our first year of disclosure) we received a score of “C” (Awareness) reflecting the fact that we had declared a climate emergency, and were beginning work on understanding what was necessary to tackle it. In the CNCR we set ourselves a target to work towards a score of “A” (Leadership) by 2023, expecting that we might achieve a “B” (Management) this year. We have now received our 2020 score of “A-” (Leadership) which means we have exceeded our expectations and are now very close to achieving our 2023 goal ahead of time. However, the scoring methodology progressively tightens and there are many things we can and need to do to continue to improve, so we should not become complacent.

- **Interim Policy Statement on Planning for the Climate Emergency**

A Draft Interim Policy Statement has been produced to provide additional explanation and guidance on our existing planning policies in relation to the climate emergency. Its principal purpose is to reiterate existing adopted planning policies and ensure that we are applying them to the best of their effect in tackling the Climate Emergency. The Draft Statement is due for consultation from 23 November 2020 – 4 January 2021.

- **Ecological Emergency**

In September 2020, the Council declared an Ecological Emergency. Work has recently begun, scoping out where the Council should go from here in terms of strategy and action planning as well as how we are already taking action in this regard. A further update report will be presented to Council in due course.

- **Zero Carbon Pilot**

The pilot has commenced pre app stage and has gone out to the market for a main modular build contractor. Seaward Way and Oxford Inn zero carbon projects are being considered by members in December and if approved a total of 115 zero carbon homes will be built over the following 3 years. The low carbon standard for NTWP is being discussed and a report by Hydrock will be produced on the options prior to a works cost being agreed for phase A.

- **EScooter Trial**

The Taunton scheme went live on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and the first three weeks stats from Zipp Mobility show that this new form of public transport is extremely popular.

	15/11/2020 - 22/11/2020	Cumulative Total
Total number of rides	2063	4910
Total distance travelled (km)	7734	19076
Average trip length (km)	3.74	
Average trip duration	0:27:14	
Total time spent on scooters (hours)	936:25:55	2404.00
New users last 7 days	903	
Total users signed up since launch	4073	



- **Free Trees**

The free trees scheme was launched in September and was open to all Parish / Town Councils to request free trees for National Tree Planting week, November 2020. SWT supplied and delivered a total of 223 trees.

- **Water Refill Stations**

We are continuing to work with Wessex Water on this project and have identified two town locations to install 3 water refill stations, further detail will be available in the New Year.

