

SWT Executive - 16 June 2021

Present: Councillor Derek Perry (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Councillors Derek Perry, Chris Booth, Caroline Ellis, Marcus Kravis, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Andrew Sully

Officers: James Hasset, Andrew Pritchard, Marcus Prouse, Amy Tregellas, Clare Rendell, Emily Collacott, Chris Hall and Joe Wharton

Also Present: Councillors Ian Aldridge, Norman Cavill, Dawn Johnson, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren (via Zoom)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

9. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors F Smith-Roberts, D Darch and R Henley.

10. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 26 May 2021 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 26 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

11. Declarations of Interest

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

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

12. Public Participation

Mr Alan Debenham spoke and asked the following questions:-

Q (1) Ever since the Earth summit of 1992 and its subsequent Local Agenda 21, 3Rs and new thrust for Sustainability there has been decades of talk and action to save life on this planet from a fate worse than death AND yet here we are again repeating ourselves only with the hell on earth now much closer and its severity now much more devastating. Then and now (very much substantiated by the recent War-on-Want's Minerals Transition Report) the biggest essential to save us has been and still is REDUCTION IN CONSUMPTION AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY especially in the UK's first world wealth status, so why is there so little in your expenditure and plans which relate to this only real life saver and why it's so important for us all to continue the present lockdown - or a lesser version - as long as possible and no real plans seem to have been made to set-up ward and street-led committees to deal with this enormous permanent change in lifestyle? (Same as asked at Community Scrutiny 3/6/21)

(Thanks to Dawn Adey and management team for the very detailed Corporate Investment Report which makes interesting reading of the Council's risky new multi-million pound role as Capitalist Commercial Property Investors to cover for this Tory government's decade long policy to withdraw the major part of central finance support.)

Q (2) In view of the Council's placing such vital importance in doing everything in line with combating the potential sixth extinction facing us all in the name of present and fast developing Climate and Environmental Emergencies, how is it that this report does not have at the prominent front of it a clear statement of ethical strategy and policies which SHOULD UNDERPIN all investments made e.g. policy not to invest in fossil fuel procurement or usage, to invest preferably to support local food production and local businesses, etc.?

Q (3) Would it not be preferable for this Council, particularly following the previous mantra of Liberal Democrats to follow the Layfield Commission Report of 1979 and vigorously demand local income and sales taxes to make local Councils more self-financing actual governing authorities, and therefore to go looking for things upon which charges could be raised or buying shares or ownership of profitable local well-needed businesses where good returns are certain?

Best wishes, Alan Debenham

The Portfolio Holder gave the following response:-

Q1 As a Council, our Carbon Neutrality Climate Resilience plan which was adopted recently was a broad combination of short and longer term actions, including Waste, Food and Farming, Natural Environment and Water as well as Energy, Transport and Industry. As a District, we were committed to growing our economy for the benefit of all in a sustainable manner – sustainable both in terms of the environment as well as innovative, climate aware economic growth. We were bound by National policies on lockdown, and would continue to work with local and regional partners to support recovery as identified in the Somerset Recovery and Growth plan.

Q2 The Commercial Investment strategy was one of multiple income generators for the council. The strategy encompasses many different target sectors, including renewable energy, which were assessed by our specialist team when

appraising and recommending acquisitions for the Council to consider. Projects within other programmes including Housing, Heritage and Regeneration included net carbon zero targets ensuring that they were designed with climate change impact from the outset. This included both in construction and in operation. These projects would create local jobs and support growth for local businesses, which would in turn support the local supply chain. The Coal Orchard development which would soon complete in Taunton town centre was targeting regional and local businesses for the commercial space and we looked forward to being able to reveal the first occupants soon.

Q3 Whilst we were subject to central government cuts as every district, we continued to be successful in applying for funding initiatives and thanks to the hard work of officers have been successful in receiving separate grant awards from Homes England, Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Transport which would help us to deliver projects in the district that support local business and climate change initiatives (Seaward Way, Coal Orchard, Toneworks, Norton Hillfort, Active Travel / East St pedestrianisation, EV charging point roll out).

13. **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.

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

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

15. **Future High Street Fund Grant**

Resolved that the Executive approved the recommendations within the confidential report.

16. **Revised Sale Price of Land**

Resolved that the Executive approved the recommendations within the confidential report.

(The Meeting ended at 7.20 pm)