

**Wednesday, 30th June, 2021,
6.15 pm**

**The John Meikle Room - The Deane
House**

Members: Libby Lisgo (Chair), Dave Mansell (Vice-Chair), Simon Coles, Kelly Durdan, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Richard Lees, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Andy Milne, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Andy Pritchard, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Ray Tully and Sarah Wakefield

Agenda

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee held on 3 June 2021.

(Pages 5 - 8)

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee held on 3 June 2021.

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 temporary legislation (within the Coronavirus Act 2020, which allowed for use of virtual meetings) coming to an end on 6 May 2021, the council's committee meetings will now take place in the office buildings at the John Meikle Room, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton. Unfortunately due to capacity requirements the Chamber at West Somerset House is not able to be used at this current moment.

Following the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), the council meeting rooms will have very limited capacity. With this in mind, we will only be allowing those members of the public who have registered to speak to attend the meetings in person at the office buildings, if they wish. (We will still be offering to those members of the public that are not comfortable in attending, for their statements to be read out by a member of the Governance team). Please can we urge all members of the public who are only interested in listening to the debate to view our live webcasts from the safety of their own home to help prevent the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

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|---|------------------------|
| <p>5. Community Scrutiny Request/Recommendation Trackers</p> <p>To update the Community Scrutiny Committee on the progress of resolutions and recommendations from previous meetings of the Committee.</p> | <p>(Pages 9 - 10)</p> |
| <p>6. Community Scrutiny Forward Plan</p> <p>To receive items and review the Forward Plan.</p> | <p>(Pages 11 - 12)</p> |
| <p>7. Executive and Full Council Forward Plans</p> <p>To review the Forward Plans of the Executive and Full Council.</p> | <p>(Pages 13 - 18)</p> |
| <p>8. Future of Flook House, Belvedere Road</p> | <p>(Pages 19 - 26)</p> |
| <p>9. Verbal Update - Executive Cllr PFH Session - Cllr Derek Perry (Sports Parks and Leisure)</p> | |
| <p>10. Verbal Update from PFH on the Introduction of Parking Electronic Permits & P&D - Cllr M Rigby</p> | |

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

JAMES HASSETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. 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

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

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SWT Community Scrutiny Committee - 3 June 2021

Present: Councillor

Councillors Simon Coles, John Hunt, Richard Lees, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Andy Pritchard, Vivienne Stock-Williams and Ray Tully

Officers: Andrew Randell, Marcus Prouse and Chris Hall

Also Present: Councillors John Hassall and Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

1. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

Councillor Mansell was nominated as Vice-Chair by Councillor Lithgow, which was seconded by Councillor Pritchard.

Councillor Mansell was duly appointed as the Vice-Chair for the municipal year.

2. **Apologies**

Apologies were received by Councillors Johnson and Milne.

Councillor Farbahi attended as a substitute for Councillor Johnson.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no new declarations of Interest.

4. **Public Participation**

Alan Debenham provided the following statement to the Committee:-

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?

The Climate Change Portfolio Holder provided a response thanking Mr Debenham for his question and setting out the mineral transition report and the transition to renewables, reducing energy consumption and the impact. The responsibility for planning and regeneration to increase housing in the town centre was recognised. There has been a change in attitudes towards consumption and the Council had changed attitudes around lifestyle and behaviour changes.

5. **Community Scrutiny Request/Recommendation Trackers (verbal update).**

A verbal update was provided and recommendations would be tracked and provided as a monthly update for members of the Committee.

The committee noted the update.

6. **Community Scrutiny Forward Plan**

The Chair encouraged requests for future items from members of the committee. The following items were requested to be added to the forward plan and considered at a future committee:-

- An item on pay and display car parks was requested to have a better understanding of the consultation process and the decisions as a result of this process.
- A future item on bus service provision was requested.

7. **Executive and Full Council Forward Plans**

The Executive and Full Council Forward Plans were considered and noted by the Committee.

8. **Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Finance Report**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which set out the (CNCR) Finance position. The report has been provided at the request of Scrutiny Committee.

Since approval of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience (CNCR) plan in October 2020, 24 actions were completed during 2020/21 at a cost of £73,939.

Many of the initial actions in the CNCR plan had little or no cost attached to them; budget expenditure is therefore not a direct measure of success in progressing climate achievements. This report focuses on expenditure rather than response activity for 2020/21. Funds allocated to Climate Change are ring fenced to that activity and have been carried forward across budget years.

The CNCR budget for 2021/22 is fully allocated against the activities already approved within the Directorate plan.

The CNCR plan was an extensive list of potential activities. It contains a number of cross cutting actions and open-ended commitments. To support delivery the team, led by the Portfolio Holder (PH), review the actions to form a prioritised list which features in the service plan for the External Operations and Climate Change Directorate. Without a prioritised list of activity, the team could become conflicted in trying to deliver in an unfocused or uncoordinated way.

The commitments list within the service plan is challenging, there is a Considerable amount of work on this list. Any draw on the team outside the agreed business plan will impact delivery performance.

Somerset West and Taunton Council allocated £500,000 for the delivery of the CNCR plan in October 2020 with the following delegations for expenditure:

“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.”

Expenditure and allocations are tracked by the Assistant Director and Portfolio Holder (PH) in their standing fortnightly meetings. This meeting Recorded any financial decisions.

Purchase orders, payments, and internal transfers are managed within the Council's finance system. The actual expenditure for the year 2020/21 was set out in the report and the underspend that was carried forward to 2021/22.

During the debate the following comments and questions were raised:-

- Allocation of the budget for the Climate Change Action plan and the Somerset wide budget was requested a number of months ago, allocating the budget was felt necessary to clarify further information for Councillors.
- Increasing charging points and tree planting were supported by the Committee.
- What was required to achieve carbon neutrality was requested to be set out to gain an understanding of the scale of the challenge to make a greater difference on carbon targets.
- The figure of £50k to transfer the fleet to electric pool cars was questioned, alongside how the saving of maintenance of the previous fleet would be used and what budget allocation was previously being used for this purpose.
- Funding for waterless urinals in Taunton and West Somerset didn't include public toilet provision made by Parish Councils.
- Competing for funding bids were considered a positive factor going forward in achieving funding to tackle Climate Change.
- Working closely with other organisations such as the Somerset wildlife trust was ongoing.
- The feasibility study for carbon neutrality for property assets such as The Deane House was recognised as important, it wasn't always the best solution to pursue the option of solar PV installation. The background of Unitary meant all decisions needed to be considered in detail with the uncertainty in mind.
- Implementing carbon neutrality options which had the greatest impact was emphasised to achieve the best effect for the value of improvement in meeting carbon targets alongside improvements in technology introduction.

- The principle of the CNCR budget allowed pump priming, reduced costs would be declared as underspends, as a result of any improvements that were procured by the CNCR budget.
- The CNCR plan was adopted in October, the Council was still at an early stage in the development of this. A joint function with Sedgemoor would be leading by a joint recruitment of posts split 50/50 for the roles. The CNCR budget was reviewed on a monthly basis.
- The Council had been unable to successfully recruit to the Ecology Strategist post.
- There would remain long term tenants in The Deane House paying commercial rates for the property even if the future remained uncertain for the location of the New Council after 2023.
- Contributions relating to refurbishing costs for local conveniences were encouraged in all areas of the district. Greater communication with town and parish councils was encouraged.
- There was no reported antisocial behaviour issues with the introduction of e-scooters but it was recognised that there had been instances of misuse.
- Those looking to charge their cars would pay to do this in Council car parks.
- The wider climate impact on communities were considered.
- It was recognised greater communications were required, under the risk assessment on page 13 it was set out that the need for prioritised risk for carbon reduction options in the CNCR plan. A response was provided that this was appended to the report with a statement of completed actions and action owners in External Operations.

The Community Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

9. **Discussion on Councillors to invite as Executive PFH Cllrs (verbal update)**

The Chair welcomed future requests from the Committee for items at future meetings and Port-Folio Holder attendance.

The Committee considered and noted the update.

(The Meeting ended at 7.42 pm)

SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON COUNCIL
 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TRACKER 2021/22

| Date of Cttee | Scrutiny Recommendation | Decision Maker /Directorate Responsible | Final Decision/ Response to recommendation/ | Date of response | Implemented? | Officer Comments/Update |
|---------------|-------------------------|---|---|------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | | | |

Total Recommendations for 21/22:

Agreed: 0

Agreed in Part: 0

Not Agreed: 0

TBD:

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY

| Meeting | Draft Agenda Items | Lead PFH/ Lead Officer | Executive Report? |
|----------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|
| 30th June 2021 | Belvedere Road Public Space/ Flook House (1) | Cllr M. Kravis / C. Hall | Yes |
| RD: 18th June | Executive Cllr PFH Session - Cllr Derek Perry (Sports Parks and Leisure) (3) | Cllr Derek Perry | No |
| | Verbal Update from PFH on the Introduction of Parking Electronic Permits & P&D - Cllr M Rigby (2) | Cllr M Rigby for Car Parking / S. Noyce | No |
| | | | |
| 29th July 2021 | Single Homelessness Accomodation Strategy | Cllr F Smith/ M. Leeman | Yes |
| | Execuative Cllr PFH Session - Cllr Fran Smith (Housing) | Cllr Fran Smith | |
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| 26th August 2021 | | | |
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| 30th September 2021 | | | |
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| 28th October 2021 | Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review | Cllr C. Booth / S. Weetch | Yes |
| | Executive Cllr PFH Session - Cllr C Booth (Community) | Cllr C Booth | |
| | <i>Avon and Somerset Police</i> | | |
| 24th November 2021 | | | |
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| 6th January 2021 | Car Parking/ Introduction of Parking Electronic Permits and Pay & Display | Cllr M. Rigby / S. Noyce | No |
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| 27th January 2021 | | | |
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| Executive Meeting | Draft Agenda Items |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 21 July 2021 | Belvedere Road Public Space |
| venue = | 2020/21 Financial Outturn |
| Exec RD = 9 July | Financial Strategy 2021-2023 |
| Informal Exec RD = 8 June | Corporate Performance Report |
| SMT RD = 26 May | Corporate Volunteering Policy and Procedures |
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| 18 August 2021 | Single Homeless accommodation strategy and delivery plan |
| venue = | Employment Land Feasibility Study in West Somerset |
| Exec RD = 6 August | Firepool Design Guidance and Masterplan |
| Informal Exec RD = 6 July | Levelling Up Bid |
| SMT RD = 23 June | |
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| | |
| 15 September 2021 | Financial Performance 2021/22 Q1 |
| venue = | Corporate Performance Report |
| Exec RD = 3 September | Tower Street |
| Informal Exec RD = 3 August | |
| SMT RD = 21 July | |
| | |
| | |
| 20 October 2021 | Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Feedback |
| venue = | Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide |
| Exec RD = 8 October | |
| Informal Exec RD = 7 September | |
| SMT RD = 24 August | |
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| 17 November 2021 | Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review |
| venue = | General Fund 2022/23 Draft Budget Update |

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Exec RD = 5 November | Housing Revenue Account 2022/23 Draft Budget Update |
| Informal Exec RD = 5 October | |
| SMT RD = 22 September | |
| | |
| 15 December 2021 | Financial Performance 2021/22 Q2 |
| venue = | Corporate Performance Report |
| Exec RD = 3 December | |
| Informal Exec RD = 2 November | |
| SMT RD = 20 October | |
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| 19 January 2022 | |
| venue = | |
| Exec RD = 7 January | |
| Informal Exec RD = 30 November | |
| SMT RD = 17 November | |
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| Budget - 9 February 2022 | Housing Revenue Account 2022/23 Budget |
| venue = | General Fund 2022/23 Budget |
| Exec RD = 28 January | |
| Informal Exec RD = 4 January | |
| SMT RD = 8 December | |
| | |
| | |
| 16 February 2022 | |
| venue = | |
| Exec RD = 4 February | |
| Informal Exec RD = 4 January | |
| SMT RD = 8 December | |

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| 16 March 2022 | Financial Performance 2021/22 Q3 |
| venue = | Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategy 2022/23 |
| Exec RD = 4 March | Corporate Performance Report |
| Informal Exec RD = 1 February | |
| SMT RD = 19 January | |
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| 20 April 2022 | |
| venue = | |
| Exec RD = 8 April | |
| Informal Exec RD = 8 March | |
| SMT RD = 23 February | |
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| Items to be Confirmed | |
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FULL COUNCIL

| Meeting | Report Deadline | Draft Agenda Items |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 27 July 2021 | 15 July 2021 | Review of the Commercial Property Investment Activity and Performance Report |
| | | Skatepark Petition Update |
| | | Community Governance Review for the Unparished Area of Taunton - Publication of Terms of Reference |
| | | Decisions taken under the urgency rules |
| | | Motion from Cllr Wakefield |
| | | Future High Street Fund Award |
| | | Political Allocations (after by-elections) |
| | | |
| 7 September 2021 | 25 August 2021 | Single Homeless accommodation strategy and delivery plan |
| | | Firepool Design Guidance and Masterplan |
| | | Employment Land Feasibility Study in West Somerset |
| | | Financial Strategy 2021-2023 |
| | | Corporate Volunteering Policy and Procedures |
| | | Levelling Up Bid |
| 7 December 2021 | 25 November 2021 | Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review |
| | | Tower Street |
| | | Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town - Feedback |
| | | Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide |
| | | Annual Review of the Commercial Property Investment Strategy |
| | | |
| 8 February 2022 | 27 January 2022 | |
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| 24 February 2022 | 14 February 2022 | Housing Revenue Account 2022/23 Budget |

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|----------------------|----------------------|--|
| Budget Only | | General Fund 2022/23 Budget |
| | | Council Tax Resolution 2022/23 |
| | | NO MORE ITEMS |
| 29 March 2022 | 17 March 2022 | Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategy 2022/23 |
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| 10 May 2022 | 28 April 2022 | Annual Council Meeting |
| | | Council Committees for 2021/2022 and their Terms of Reference |
| | | Appointment of Representatives on Outside Bodies |
| | | To authorise the sealing or signing of documents to give effect to any decisions taken |

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Community Scrutiny 30th June 2021

Future of Flook House, Belvedere Road

This matter is the responsibility of: Cllr Marcus Kravis, Chair of Member Working Group

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

Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is the report of the Member Working Group which was created by the Executive to consider options for Flook House, it provides feedback on their considerations and puts forward a recommendation to progress these further.
 - 1.2 Following on from the report to Executive in December 2020 the portfolio holder agreed to set up a Member Working Group (MWG) to consider the future of Flook House and the immediate surrounding area. During this time expenditure on compliance matters has continued.
 - 1.3 The report does not make a specific, costed recommendation, instead it identifies preferences from the Member Working Group. A key recommendation being to retain the Flook House building, this is a significant diversion from the previous report.
 - 1.4 The MWG had no budget to engage specialists or architects and this has hampered their ability to create a shortlist of costed options.
 - 1.5 A number of decisions we made by the portfolio holder during the term of the group, these include a decision to demolish the old toilet block, and a decision to offer up lease extension of up to 12 months for new of existing tenants that don't currently claim a protected status.
- 2. Recommendations of the portfolio holder:**
- 2.1 That the Executive retain Flook House for its historical interest and potential future social value.
 - 2.2 That the Executive establish a new project as part of the business planning process for 2022/23. Taking forward the feasibility works for potential development of the area including the retention of Flook House as part of the longer term solution.

- 2.3 That Executive support a new budget of £125,000 as part of the business planning process for 2022/23 to provide project management resource, engage architects, and the other necessary specialists to produce a costed business case.
- 2.4 That Executive continue the Member Working Group to support the project and pfh, if 2.2 and 2.3 are approved.

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. The longer term solution seeks to produce a financial return to support the costs of operating Flook House.
- 3.2 Further tenants leave, or we fail to attract new tenants during the period of uncertainty. This is mitigated in part by the extensions to existing leases and the offer of new short leases, whilst it does not bring the certainty some would require it allows for tenants and future tenants to plan.
- 3.3 Without a costed business case it is unclear if financial sustainability can be achieved and therefore the property may continue to operate at a cost to the tax payer. There is a related risk of inadequate scope within budget to support the necessary expenditure.
- 3.4 Whilst the paper focuses on the opportunities no work has been undertaken to establish the deliverability of a scheme in this area. It may be determined upon further work that the site is unsuitable or unaffordable for delivery. There are potential 4 key considerations in addition to this area being outside of the current site allocations. These being heritage, the flood zone of the area, some of the land being designated as public open space, and the intensification of the frontage further enclosing the cannon of properties on Station Road.
- 3.5 Existing tenants may have hold some reasonable concerns over some of the options being considered resulting in them leaving. If approved consultation with them over the future use of the Flook House building will be necessary.
- 3.6 The Member Working Group gave consideration to running a competition for local architects in order to move the project along in the absence of having a working budget. This posed a number of procurement challenges that required further investigation but may remain an option to keep costs down.
- 3.7 For the reasons set out in the report the Member Working Group were unable to produce a costed business plan. Whilst the future of the building forms part of the recommendation the ability to fund the capital improvement works identified in the previous report remains unresolved, but the need for the work has not gone away.

4. Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 Considerable discussion on the future of the Flook House building was had at Scrutiny and Executive committees with a Member Working Group being created as a result. The challenge faced by the group was to consider the future of the building and the immediate surrounding area against the backdrop of rising capital costs, the maintenance needs of the building and reducing tenancies and therefore income. The original report was brought at a time when a decision was needed to invest £22,000 on compliance works. These compliance works have now been commissioned.
- 4.2 As a result of the pandemic and the closure of Somerset West and Taunton Council offices, the parts of the building used by SWT have been empty throughout lockdown. At the same time improved technology has been implemented for employees making the transition away from that space for the Council's own requirements easier.
- 4.3 The group set out to establish how the building might be used to increase income and make it self-financing. Whilst there are many options for the space the ability to make it self financing are reduced by the standard of that space and the costs of operating within a building of that age. Tenants currently pay a below market rate for their space and future tenancies are unlike to change that position.
- 4.4 There have been government grant opportunities for public buildings over the time of the groups operation, however it was not considered that Flook House met the criteria for these grants. Whilst the building is in public ownership is it not a publicly accessible building, and to make it one for the purposes of the grant would be difficult and pose issues for existing tenants.
- 4.5 The group established early on that they wished to see the Council retain Flook House and in order to do so there would need to establish other income streams within the surrounding land (although this isn't necessarily the only option) to fund both the capital improvements and the revenue costs.
- 4.6 The high level options for Flook House considered by the group were:
- Demolish – not supported
 - Dispose – not supported
 - Convert for housing – not supported due to complexities of the building
 - Continue to let – supported
- 4.7 The preference to continue to the let Flook House was supported on the basis that the group wanted to keep the building and the other options to do so would be difficult and costly to implement. There was considerable discussion regarding the use types sought, and the tenants and tenancies that would be preferred as there are a range of options including the current use types through to a community hub, Town Council

offices, art gallery / studio space, etc. It would be for the portfolio holder with the views of the MWG to consider the uses of the Flook House space based on the interest received.

- 4.8 The group recognise that further work would be needed to establish which uses would bring value to the Council in terms of social benefit as well as finance. Marketing of the space would also be needed to establish the demand and assess income expectations for the Council. It was decided that lease extension and new leases would be offered whilst a more in depth review is carried out as per the recommendations. It is for this reason that short term leases and extension are to be offered whilst a further review is underway.
- 4.9 Members of the group identified that financial support may best be achieved by developing the land around Flook House for housing. The budget requested would allow officers, with the ongoing support of the group, to engage architects and take pre planning advice on the type and density of scheme that might be supported. Without this information it is difficult to establish likely construction cost and resale values to cover the capital works, or rental values to cover the ongoing revenue costs of Flook House.

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.
- 5.2 Increase the number of affordable and social homes in our urban towns, rural and coastal communities; including those built by the Council

6. Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 The initial report to Executive in December 2020 was brought forward on the basis of officer recommendations to limit costs to the taxpayer. This report includes recommendations from the Working Group that, if supported by the Executive, would add a further financial pressure to the Council, and has yet to evidence the financial viability of Flook House.
- 6.2 The estimated initial feasibility project costs are significant when compared to the estimated £220k capital investment required to bring the Flook House property up to a higher standard. It is understood though that the project is to consider the potential for residential development of the area in order to raise funds that may be reinvested to

improve the Flook House asset. The two aspects need not be linked as development of the area may prove to be a positive option regardless of the how Council chose to spend any income. The wider development may be financially beneficial and Council may choose to divert those funds to activity of a greater priority. This would need to be considered in the round with other asset management priorities or indeed other capital investment needs across the Council's strategic priorities and services.

- 6.3 The impact on rental income in the short term is unclear. Rents currently stand at £12,070 per year which is a reduction on the previously reported figure and is reflective of the reducing occupation of the building. The previous reported figure was £14,810 per year.
- 6.4 If Members wish to support the retention of this property a capital budget in the region of £220,000 is still needed to improve the asset, as identified in the previous Executive report. If the feasibility project is to be approved it would be advisable to undertake a range of condition surveys to establish if this estimate is over or understated.
- 6.5 The funding required to deliver the proposed project is not currently included within the approved budget for the year. In order for costs to be affordable, other budgeted costs and officer time would need to be de-prioritised, or additional funding identified from other sources (e.g. earmarked reserves) to cover costs and potential additional officer capacity. Alternatively, the provision of resources to undertake the feasibility project could be considered as part of the development of the operational plan and budget for 2022/23. However, Members are advised to consider the financial strategy, and existing scale of financial challenge identified within the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 6.6 Any business case brought forward for investment in a residential scheme for the surrounding area would need to demonstrate a robust business case for assessment by officers and ultimately Council.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Both the short and longer term solutions attempt to retain tenancies within Flook House. Consideration should be given to the ability to delivery any of the necessary work with tenants in situ. Should the building need to be vacant the legal status of the tenants will need to be reviewed and action taken accordingly.

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 the previous 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 2.1 the Council needs to consider a more through property inspection to gain a more robust costs for building enhancements.

- 8.2 The Council should seek to create properties with the lowest affordable climate impact. The financial case will need to establish that affordability level whilst not losing sight of the need for the development to pay for the capital and revenue costs of Flook House.

9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 9.1 There are community safety and antisocial behaviour issues that occur in and around the property. This report makes no changes to that situation.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

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

11. Social Value Implications

- 11.1 The project would look to achieve social value if approved.

12. Partnership Implications

- 12.1 There are no identified implications of this report.

13. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 13.1 There are no identified implications of this report.

14. Asset Management Implications

- 14.1 The recommendations will have resource implications, whilst a budget is also requested for this work the activities are not identified within the Directorate plan and therefore places a new pressure on whichever directorate is assigned to deliver the business case. The proposal to put this into the business planning process for 2022/23 resolves the immediate pressure.

- 14.2 Agreement needs to be reached on which directorate is best placed to lead on this project if approved. It would be reasonable for this to be placed with Development and Place as a development scheme but they, like External Operations, have fully committed resources and are dealing with larger schemes. This is a matter for consideration as part of the business planning process.

14.3 The proposal does not provide direction on maintenance or improvement works for Flook House which remain an outstanding financial consideration. The property will continue to be maintained in accordance with the necessary compliance assessments and works that are identified through that process.

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 the future project, if approved, would require consultation with the existing tenants as well as wider consultation on any development proposals.

Democratic Path:

- **Community Scrutiny – 30th June 2021**
- **Executive – 21st July 2021**

Reporting Frequency: One off

Contact Officers

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