

SWT Executive - 21 December 2022

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis, Francesca Smith, Andrew Sully and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: James Barrahan, Chris Hall, Andrew Pritchard, Marcus Prouse, Sarah Povall, Graeme Thompson, Alison Blom-Cooper, Richard Doyle, Paul McClean, Richard Sealy and Sophie Jones

Also Present: Councillors Janet Lloyd and Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

149. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Derek Perry and Mike Rigby.

150. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 November 2022 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 16 November 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

151. 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, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Darch	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Sully	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Wakefield	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

152. **Public Participation**

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

153. **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.

154. **Wellington Place Plan - Approval for Public Consultation**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were very supportive of the report.
- Councillors agreed it was a very exciting project.
- Councillors were impressed with the level of community interest and engagement.
- Councillors queried whether phosphates would have an impact on the project.
The Project Officer advised that phosphates would not impact on the railway station but that it might have an impact on the wider development.
- Councillors urged officers to give plenty of advance notice of when public workshops were due to take place.
- Clarification was sought on the population figures used within the appendix.
- Councillors highlighted different aspects of the project, which included bus station provisions, north link road, allotments and use of the pavement area by the old sorting office.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 1) Approved the Draft Wellington Place Plan for public consultation for a four-week period and that the Assistant Director Strategic Place and Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make minor amendments to the Draft Place Plan prior to the public consultation.
- 2) Noted that, following consultation and any subsequent revisions to the documents, it was intended that the final Wellington Place Plan would be considered by the Executive for endorsement as a material planning

consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the area of the Plan.

155. **Connecting our Garden Communities - final approval**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors highlighted that there had been a lot of interesting responses to the consultation.
- Councillors were impressed with the level of local knowledge contained within the responses.
- Councillors highlighted that many of the responses suggested that people preferred the off-road cycling routes and councillors queried whether that was due to the time of year the consultation had been carried out.
The Project Officer had investigated a breakdown of who had responded and agreed that maybe the time of year had impacted the results and that he wanted to ensure that all routes were safe for all users.
- Councillors were pleased to see the document being integrated into policy and the joined-up thinking of transport strategies and planning policy.
- Councillors were happy to see improved cycle routes included and were keen to see them rolled out across the whole district and county.
- Concern was raised on the lack of 20mph speed routes in certain areas of the town.
- Concern was raised that there were no routes going across the motorway to the south of the area and that the project should be aspirational to include south routes as well as north routes.
- Clarification was sought on where the priorities were located within the document.
- Councillors agreed that it was a very ambitious scheme to cover Taunton but that there was some concern on how the project would be funded.
The Project Officer advised that the funding was the major hurdle of the project and that they were reliant on securing funding from Central Government and other routes.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Approved the Connecting our Garden Communities Plan for adoption: a) as a material planning consideration in the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes across Taunton Garden Town, and b) as corporate policy to inform future policy and project development and funding bids within Taunton Garden Town.
- 2.2 Agreed that the Director of Development and Place in consultation with the Economic Development, Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder be authorised to approve and make minor amendments prior to the final publication of the Connecting our Garden Communities Plan.

156. **Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 2 2022/23**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors requested an update on the current situation for call handling times.
The Assistant Director for Customer advised that the situation was still challenging but that improvements were being made and the statistics were under constant review.
- Councillors highlighted how well the statistics were doing compared to the corporate plan.
- Councillors requested an update on phosphates.
The Director for Place advised that although the indicator was red, there was a lot of work being carried out in the background to release credits for applications that had met the criteria set by the sub-committee.
- Councillors queried what progress had been made on the work to encourage customers to use digital channels instead of using the phone, as that seemed to be the suggested solution to call handling waiting times.
- Councillors queried who was on the Nutrient Board.
The Assistant Director for Planning advised councillors of the membership.
- Councillors queried the breakdown of what properties were being used regarding the indicator for homelessness.
The Director for Housing advised that the housing first properties were being used and that there was a combination of properties being reallocated from the HRA stock, all of which were one bed properties for single accommodation.
- Councillors highlighted that there were many companies that did not have a phone number that customers could use and when they did, call waiting times could be well over 40 minutes, therefore they agreed that the council had achieved very high targets set in comparison.
- Concern was raised on the communal area fire risk assessments and how many homes had been impacted.
The Director for Housing advised that the details were within the report and that the risks had been rectified very quickly by housing officers.
- Councillors highlighted the digital connection survey results and that it had found that tenants had increased their connectivity.

Resolved that the Executive noted the Council's performance report.

157. **2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2022)**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Councillors queried whether there was still a challenge on the turnaround times on void properties.
The Director for Housing advised that the turnaround times had improved compared to across the sector and advised that the Void Team also dealt with approximately 20 temporary accommodation properties, which when compared to Housing Associations, who did not have temporary accommodation, meant the team had performed very well. Sadly, the team were seeing more major voids coming back to the council which meant there was an increased cost due to the works required to get the property back into use.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Noted the HRA's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2022/23 financial year as at 30 September 2022.
- 2.2 Approved the transfer funds from capital reserves to repay debt and to release the voluntary repayment of debt budget to offset the variance on depreciation charges

158. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public - Agenda Item 11 - Appendix F Only**

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (Agenda Item 11 – Appendix F only) 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).

159. **2022/23 General Fund Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2022)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors agreed that the report gave a very positive situation for the council to be in.
- Councillors thanked officers for their hard work on carrying on with business as usual alongside work to prepare for the New Council.
- Councillors requested clarification on the recommendation for the Somerset Waste Partnership.
Clarification was given.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Noted the Council's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2022/23 financial year as of 30 September 2022.
- 2.2 Approved the transfer of £1.294m of revenue funds previously planned to finance the capital programme in 2022/23 to be returned to General Reserves reflecting updated capital financing plans.
- 2.3 Approved the transfer of £500k Treasury Management surpluses to general reserves.
- 2.4 Approved the transfer of £440k to the Somerset Waste Partnership Earmarked Reserve, and delegate authority to the S151 Officer to adjust the amount transferred at year end based on final outturn for the SWP surplus.
- 2.5 Approved a virement between funds for the Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) scheme that was not implemented.

(The Meeting ended at 7.45 pm)