

SWT Special Full Council - 3 March 2022

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Dave Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Ed Firmin, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, John Hassall, Nicole Hawkins, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Marcus Kravis, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Dave Mansell, Simon Nicholls, Craig Palmer, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Paul McClean, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Kevin Williams, Jo Comer, Marcus Prouse and Clare Rendell

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

The meeting was opened with a moment of reflection for Ukraine given by Adrian Prior-Sankey, a Taunton Town Centre Chaplain.

101. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors T Deakin, H Farbahi, A Govier, A Hadley, B Hall, J Lloyd, A Milne, C Morgan, N Thwaites, A Trollope-Bellew and T Venner.

102. 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 L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Barr	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Blaker	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
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 H Davies	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC & Bishop's Hull	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Palmer	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Peters	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & 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
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	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 Andy Pritchard further declared a pecuniary interest on agenda item 7, Community Governance Review of the Unparished Area of Taunton and Adjoining Parishes, as he had been paid for some work carried out in one of the adjoining parishes, so therefore left the meeting.

103. **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

The following members of the public spoke on agenda item 7, Community Governance Review of the Unparished Area of Taunton and Adjoining Parishes:-
Somerset County Councillor Rod Williams:-

He asked the Council to listen to the comments made by the members of the public with an open mind. He believed the first consultation had been unsatisfactory with far too little information included and that it had not been distributed to the relevant parishes. He asked what the relevance was for a phase two consultation when the first consultation had not been listened to. He believed it should just be for the Unparished Area of Taunton. He stated that the Local Community Networks would be an important part of local services going forward. He urged Somerset West and Taunton Council to act in a democratic way and to listen to the local parishes.

Ian Talbot from Staplegrove Parish Council:-

Q1 Please could you explain the "Post Card Drop" which was referred to in the Working Group minutes. What part was it supposed play in the consultation process and why did it not take place?

Q2 Reference was made in paragraph 9.50 to evidence being "heard" on identity etc. Was oral evidence given? The arrangements for consultation did not mention oral presentations. Where was this evidence in the report?

Alan Debenham from Staplegrove Parish Council:-

These proposals were completely out of context with the whole thinking behind this "define the new Town Council boundary" project, as I see it, and I'm one all for making the boundary fit modern town population spread but only if that's what residents want and can prove it. Yes, in the name of residents' democratic involvement, I think any proposal to radically change any parish's boundary in favour of modern town expansion must be backed by a clear majority (minimum 56% say) of affected residents supporting this change, otherwise it should not even be considered. If there was an expression of interest from certain residents within a declared area, with say at least 4 residents sending a signed letter request to the parish clerk, then there should be a simple 'street poll' taken by an independent official to determine whether or not a certain area should be placed either in or out of the new Town Council's boundary. We should not have Councillors nor employed officials, however much they are interested, putting forward new town boundary proposals unless they are proven by poll/s to be democratically approved by local residents living in that particular area.

Jason Woollacott from Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council:-

Cheddon Fitzpaine had built a very good community which included the three new housing estates that had recently been built. He understood why certain areas were being included in the review but did not believe that applied to the area of Cheddon Fitzpaine. He did not believe that the previous responses submitted by the residents of Cheddon Fitzpaine had been listened to in the first phase of the consultation as many of the local residents had expressed that they did not want to be part of the 'Greater Taunton' review. He wanted to represent and defend the area of Cheddon Fitzpaine.

Jo Pearson from Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council:-

I was the Parish Clerk to Cheddon Fitzpaine (CFPC) from 2011 until 2021 – retiring nearly a year ago. I strongly disagreed with any proposal to reduce the whole of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish down in size for the following reasons.

The Parish Council, Parish Councillors and myself had worked tirelessly to unite the 'new' estates into the Parish, and I believed have successfully done this. A bi-monthly newsletter had been hand-delivered by volunteers to each household; approximately 700 houses in 2011, and 1,100 to date.

The CFPC survey suggested 99% of parishioners had stated they wished the Parish Council to remain. SWT Council had a duty to follow the wishes of this community.

The growth in the community was noted by the Church Commissioners in 2016, who provided the funding for a home/office, and Pioneer Ordinand, who had been resident within Northwalls estate for four years; she had worked tirelessly to engage and unite the new residents into local Parish life. Cheddon Fitzpaine Primary School was full, the Church well supported, and the Memorial Hall all provided a wide variety of activities; This did not happen by accident, but by active interaction between the Parish Council, the establishments, and the local residents. None of this work would be carried out by the new Town Council.

Please note, that should the Parish be reduced in size to 309 residents as quoted in SWT Working Party Report, that those residents had already held all the positions as Chairman/Secretary/Treasurer/Trustees etc, over the past 50 years, and there would not be enough people left within the Parish to administer these roles.

The word 'Land Grab' was countered by Cllr Mike Rigby at the CFPC meeting in early December 2021 as 'untrue'. I disagreed; I absolutely felt that SWT was claiming a Land Grab, to claim all the CIL money. At this time, the two developments coming forward would provide approx. £1m in CIL money to the Parish of CFPC (having a Neighbourhood Plan qualifies for 25% of the total CIL available). This money was required for projects that had already been planned, including the ongoing commitments to the Maidenbrook Country Park.

I beg all District Councillors to put politics to one side, and to vote to keep Cheddon Fitzpaine in its entirety as it was now.

Alan Paul from Comeytrove Parish Council:-

My question was about what Parish councils (and the Town council) might be taking on if they took on devolved services, and how the Unitary could achieve savings by economy of scale if there was as much devolution of services as the Fothergill Business Case envisaged. It was relevant to all the Parish councils involved in this Consultation and the Unitary Council that would subsume SWT . I realise that it was also an SCC issue but they had so far not addressed it in the Local Government Advisory Board meetings that I attended. Here's the question :-

Imagine that one of SCC's services was to deliver Mop Handles. The 4 District Councils delivered Mop Heads. If the new Unitary decided to deliver whole Mops, there would be savings through economy of scale. But if all the Town councils and many larger Parish councils agreed to deliver Mops of varying standards and the Unitary had to deliver mops (probably of inferior standard) to the rest of the County, there could be well over 20 or 30 Councils all delivering Mops. The result could be that the service of Mop delivery costs a lot more than before the Unitary.

SCC had promised that devolved services would be "cost-neutral" and claimed that they were not trying to 'dump' costs onto Town and parish councils. How might this be done whilst still achieving the savings promised in the new Unitary ? Was it not likely that Parishes which took on devolved services would see the parish precept rocket, whilst those who decided not to take on devolved services would receive an inferior level of services directly from the Unitary ?

Somerset County Councillor Giuseppe Frascini:-

He raised concern that the views of the local residents were not being listened to. He believed that the Somerset West and Taunton Council administration were acting on a political gain.

He was aware that a Town Council was part of the Unitary Business Case and was important to the Unparished Area of Taunton. He did not agree that a 'Wider Taunton' area was in the best interests of the local residents.

He gave details on the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine area and concern on their local services being delivered. He raised concern on the council tax precept and that it would not cover the local services for any parishes that were reduced in size such as Cheddon Fitzpaine.

He urged that the councillors voted on a review of the Unparished Area only.

Somerset West and Taunton Councillor Dixie Darch on behalf of Kingston St Mary Parish Council:-

She requested on behalf of the Parish that with the exception of the areas described at A (viii and ix) above, the area of Kingston St Mary Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.

104. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

The Chair of the Council did not have any announcements to make.

105. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council advised Full Council that there would be a vigil being held in the town centre of Taunton on Saturday 5 March 2022 on behalf of the people of Ukraine and all were welcome to attend.

106. **To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

No questions were received in regards to Council Procedure Rule 13.

107. **Community Governance Review of the Unparished Area of Taunton and adjoining parishes – results of first stage consultation and draft recommendations**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Chair of the Working Group gave a detailed presentation of the work they had achieved and presented the map of the proposed area for the phase two consultation.
- Councillor S Buller left the room.
- Councillor D Darch proposed a recorded vote, which was duly seconded by Councillor L Baker. The vote was taken and carried.
- Councillors thanked the Working Group for all their hard work on the project and for working closely with the local parish councils.
- Councillors supported the actions of the Working Group and the reasons why certain areas were being included or excluded from the phase two consultation.
- Concern was raised on Cheddon Fitzpaine and that it would be left as too small an area for a Parish and would also lead to a large increase of their precept to be able to provide services in that area.
- Councillor S Buller returned to the room.
- Councillors agreed that a Town Council was needed for the Taunton area.
- Concern was raised that with the inclusion of the wider areas, that it might lead to a delay in the final creation of a Town Council.
- Councillors gave details of the background of the project and urged both councillors and officers to take action now to create a Town Council for the area.
- Councillors highlighted that it was Somerset West and Taunton Council's (SWT) responsibility to create a Town Council and that they did not want it left to the New Unitary Council.
- Councillors requested clarification on the 'gunning principle'.
Clarification was given.
- Councillors queried what would happen if the recommendations were not passed at the meeting.
The Deputy Monitoring Officer gave advice that it would mean that the decision could not return to Full Council for six months but that the Working Group would continue with their project work and would consult with the New Unitary Council.
- Councillors agreed that a Town Council should be created, as Taunton was the County Town which was located in the centre of the District. It was also important that the residents for that central location had proper representation.
- Councillors wanted to see the review carried out in a legal manner.
- Councillor J Hunt left the meeting.
- Councillors believed it was the wrong time to carry out a review but that SWT had been forced into action due to the creation of the New Unitary Council.
- Councillor C Palmer left the meeting.
- The meeting was adjourned at 8.10pm.
- The meeting restarted at 8.20pm.
- Somerset County Councillor, Rod Williams, apologised for the comments made in his public statement at the start of the meeting.
- Councillors agreed that the project should not be a political decision, but what was best for the local residents of Taunton.

- Concern was raised on the inequity of the local parishes compared to Taunton.
- Councillors wanted to ensure that all the local parishes were listened to and included in the phase two consultations.
- Councillors thanked the public speakers for their comments at the start of the meeting.

The recommendations, which are detailed below, were put and **CARRIED** with thirty-four for, four against and four abstaining:

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 2.1 That the Council confirms that it has considered and takes into account the responses received to the first stage consultation on the community governance review of the unparished area of Taunton and eight adjoining parishes together with the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group as detailed below and in this report.
- 2.2 That the Council adopts and agrees to the Community Governance Review Working Group's preferred option for Taunton and the area under review for the purposes of conducting the Stage 2 Consultation. The draft recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group to be subject to a second round of consultation are as follows:
 - A. That a single parish be created to serve the currently unparished areas of Taunton and that in addition:
 - i. Comeytrove Parish Council be abolished, and the entire area of Comeytrove Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
 - ii. The Killams Green area, currently within Trull Parish Council area, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
 - iii. The part of the forthcoming development in the south-west corner of Taunton that currently falls within Trull Parish should be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
 - iv. The boundary of Trull Parish to the north-west of Cotlake Hill be altered to follow the green wedge around the Sherford urban area, with the small area to the south of that boundary that is currently within the unparished area of Taunton becoming part of Trull Parish.
 - v. The area covered by the Maidenbrook Ward of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council, including several sites earmarked for housing development in the near future, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
 - vi. The urban parts of Staplegrove Parish, including the entirety of the forthcoming development in the north-west corner of Taunton, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
 - vii. The slim part of Staplegrove Parish jutting to the west of Silk Mills Lane be included within the boundary of Norton Fitzwarren Parish.
 - viii. If the proposed changes bring about a remaining Staplegrove Parish area of fewer than 150 electors, that remaining area be merged with Kingston St. Mary Parish.
 - ix. A small southern portion of the Kingston St. Mary Parish area, representing that part of the proposed Staplegrove East development

that falls within the parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

- x. With the exception of Galmington Trading Estate and a small section south of the A38 near Rumwell, no part of Bishops Hull Parish should become part of the proposed new Taunton Parish, and the small triangular residential area at the cross-section with Wellington Road, currently within the unparished area, should become part of Bishops Hull Parish.
 - xi. The Hankridge Retail Park, Creech Castle and the associated Toneyway Road, currently within West Monkton Parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish, which should run along the railway to the M5.
 - xii. The boundary between Norton Fitzwarren Parish and Bishops Hull Parish, just north of Mill Cottages, be amended to follow the route of the railway line.
 - xiii. Further consideration be given to whether the current boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine parishes between Maidenbrook and Yallands Hill south of the Country Park should be amended, for example by following the A3259 westwards to Maidenbrook Lane, in the light of any comments from the respective parish councils.
- B. That the new parish be named 'Taunton Parish' and that a parish council be established to serve the new parish with effect from 1 April 2023.
 - C. That with the exception of the area described at A(xi) above, the area of West Monkton Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.
 - D. That the area of Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.
 - E. That the first elections to the proposed new Parish/Town Council for Taunton should be held on the ordinary day of elections (the first Thursday in May) in 2023.
 - F. That the Council established to serve the proposed new Taunton Parish should have a council size of at least 20 councillors, with the final number to be determined in the context of the proposals to be developed in regard to the warding arrangements within the new parish.
 - G. That the proposed new Taunton Parish be warded and that draft proposals for the warding arrangements, and those of any other warded parishes in the area under review, be developed for inclusion in the second stage of consultation.
 - H. That no change be made to the number of Parish Councillors of any of the other continuing parishes within the area under review.
- 2.3 That a revised timetable for the second stage consultation and the remaining stages of the community governance review be agreed as set out in paragraph 11.3 to this report, including meeting(s) of the Working Group and Council, if necessary, to agree the final content of the second stage consultation.
- 2.4 That subject to 2.3 above, authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer and Monitoring Officer or Deputy, after consultation with the

Community Governance Review Working Group and the Leader of the Council to agree the detailed arrangements for the second stage consultation and to take any other action necessary to progress the community governance review in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance.

2.5 A plan illustrating the proposed changes to parish and ward boundaries that would result from implementation of the draft recommendations above is set out at Appendix A to this report. In addition, full details of the Working Group's considerations, the reasons for each of its recommendations and detailed maps illustrating each proposed change are at Appendix B to this report.

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors I Aldridge, B Allen, M Blaker, C Booth, N Cavill, S Coles, C Ellis, E Firmin, S Griffiths, J Hassall, N Hawkins, R Henley, M Hill, D Johnson, M Kravis, R Lees, S Lees, L Lisgo, M Lithgow, D Mansell, S Nicholls, D Perry, M Peters, H Prior-Sankey, M Rigby, F Smith, F Smith-Roberts, A Sully, R Tully, S Wakefield, D Wedderkopp, B Weston, K Wheatley and L Whetlor.

Those voting **AGAINST** the **MOTION**: Councillors L Baker, M Barr, D Darch and V Stock-Williams.

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting: Councillors H Davies, R Habgood, S Pugsley and G Wren.

(The Meeting ended at 8.40 pm)