

# Full Council Meeting – 29 September 2020

## Report of Councillor Mike Rigby – Planning and Transportation

### Performance – Planning Applications and Appeals

Please see the table below for the performance from April to July.

### Planning Committee Training

To date the following training has taken place:

- The Role of a Councillor on Planning Committee – 11th June 2020
- The fundamentals of the Local Plan system and the new district-wide Local Plan – 25th June 2020
- The Use of Planning Conditions – 3rd September 2020

The following topics are outstanding and will be covered over the coming months:

- Planning White Paper
- Types of application including CLUED
- Planning Obligations including S106 agreements and CIL – on hold due to the current proposed changes
- Appeals process and awards for cost
- Viability – a training session took place last year, a follow up session is currently being arranged for November 2020.
- Heritage Assets
- Design Guide

The Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee are due to attend the training session that is being delivered by the Planning Advisory Service in October which is titled: How to Run a Good Planning Committee.

The training that is being provided is aimed at helping Members understand the planning process and their role on planning committee. The topics that will be covered will be high level but aimed at Members understanding what their role is in the decision making process.

### Team Structure

With a few changes in the team in relation to planning officers, please see appendix 2 for a map showing the district and who will be covering each area.

### Vacancies

Planning Specialist – advertised previously but the suitable candidate turned the offer down due to uncertainty regarding the unitary discussions. The role will be re-advertised.

### Wellington Station

Further discussions have been held with DfT and Network Rail, seeking clarity about their requirements for this SOBC within the Restoring your Railway framework, the scope of which looks to be different to that set out in DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance (WebTAG).

The final brief is set to be agreed with the consultants in the week beginning 14th September, after which work will commence. The final SOBC is scheduled to be complete by December.

An alternative site location for Wellington Station has been identified by WSP, adjacent to Longforth Farm (allocated in the Local Plan for employment). Initial work suggests that this location is likely to meet track and signalling requirements; while the associated infrastructure and access can also be accommodated.

Discussions with the land agent for Longforth Farm have begun positively.

### **Employment LDO**

The final LDO is set to go to Executive on 16th September; and then Full Council on 29th September to be formally adopted as Council policy

### **Local Plan 2040**

SWT conducted a public consultation on the 'Issues and Options' stage of the Local Plan earlier this year from 13 January to 16 March 2020. We are producing the Consultation Report of this in two parts. [Part 1](#) is available on our website and it contains the results of the questionnaires. Part 2 will summarise the more detailed comments that we received and is timetabled to be available in October 2020.

The next step of the Local Plan would be to progress with further evidence gathering and to produce a Draft Plan for further consultation. However, 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.

Furthermore, 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 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

### **Active Travel – East St**

An online consultation to gather feedback from all members of the community is now live. A decision is awaited from the Department of Transport on the part 2 funding which would support the temporary closure of East St under the current TRO. With the potential re-tightening of Covid19 measures, retaining as much

space to allow social distancing may still be required. The consultation asks for opinions on both the benefits and the issues created by the closure. In addition, ongoing discussions are taking place with disability groups on how the closure has affected those with mobility and other issues, and how SWT working in collaboration with SCC can mitigate them.

### **Active Travel – officer support.**

From 1st October SWT will have a dedicated Active Travel officer. Their remit will involve developing existing outline proposals into detailed delivery plans, working closely with cycling, walking and disability groups to ensure any plans are inclusive and support, and seeking out funding opportunities to support schemes across the district.

### **Car Parking**

Members will be aware that car parking charges have now been reintroduced. The suspension of charging served its purposes of helping key workers, reducing Covid transmission and, more latterly, supporting our businesses as they emerged from lockdown. Work is now beginning on how to implement our manifesto commitment to provide an hour free in our car parks. Expect further reporting on this soon.