

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Motions to Council – Assessment Form

On receipt of a Motion from a Councillor, the Governance Team will carry out an assessment as to its contents to establish whether there are likely to be significant consequences to the Council should the Motion be carried at the subsequent Full Council meeting.

The first question to be addressed will be:-

“Can the Motion, if approved, be implemented without the need for any resource (financial and otherwise) to be identified outside existing budgets or staffing capacity?”

If the answer is ‘yes’, then the Motion can proceed towards discussion and resolution.

An example of a Motion which would fall into the above category would be where the Council is being asked to lobby the Government, Somerset County Council or other body on a particular issue. If the motion is carried, the action required will usually involve no more than a letter being prepared and sent to the intended recipient.

However, as in the case of the recent Motion on ‘Climate Change’, the answer to the above question would clearly be ‘no’.

In such circumstances, detailed analysis of the wording of the Motion will be required to identify what will be needed if the Motion – when it comes before Full Council – is carried.

Such analysis will include:-

- What additional resource would be required to ensure the Motion (if approved) could be implemented?
- What needs to be done to identify the level of resource necessary both in financial and staff terms?
- Are any approvals needed to provide these resources?
- Will this require reports to be submitted through Scrutiny and the Executive?
If a Supplementary Estimate is required, Full Council approval will be required too.

If such analysis is required, the Governance Team will arrange for the attached pro-forma to be completed and this will accompany the relevant Motion onto the agenda of the Full Council meeting so all Members are aware that further investigation will be required before the Motion – even if it is carried – can be implemented.

Motions to Council – Assessment Proforma

(To be used in circumstances where it appears the wording of a proposed Motion will commit the Council to providing further financial or staffing resources which cannot be met from existing budgets)

Brief Details of the Motion -

Motion – Cllr D Mansell

- 1) Declare an ecological emergency.
- 2) Address ecological issues alongside climate emergency actions and ensure that opportunities to gain co-benefits from addressing both the climate and the ecological emergencies are maximised.
- 3) Add ecological implications alongside those for climate and sustainability in committee and council reports.
- 4) Where possible, embed climate action and ecological initiatives within all council work areas, including COVID-19 recovery projects and programmes.
- 5) Promote woodland planting and rewilding in the right places and with the right species, peatland restoration, natural flood management, wild flower meadows, and habitat creation and restoration. As well as being important for biodiversity, these actions can often have an important co-benefit of storing carbon, so helping to address climate change.
- 6) Reduce energy and material consumption by promoting waste reduction, reuse and recycling, product durability, energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. Avoid consumption that threatens further destruction of globally important wildlife habitats and the use of single-use plastics without effective and on-going recycling in place.
- 7) Work with local, county, regional and national partners to increase wildlife habitats, green infrastructure and natural capital in Somerset West and Taunton.
- 8) Ensure that addressing the climate and ecological emergencies and nature recovery are strategic priorities for planning policies and design guides for new development, including by identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity gain.
- 9) Manage Council services, buildings and land in a biodiversity-friendly manner, including by reviewing use of harmful chemicals, such as pesticides, and taking opportunities to create new wildlife habitats.
- 10) Provide advice for local communities on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital into Neighbourhood Plans and other initiatives.

11) Encourage residents to take biodiversity measures in their own homes by, for example, wildlife gardening and home composting.

12) Ask the Chief Executive to propose a sum, within the budget setting process for 2021/22, to allow the production of an ecological emergency action plan and annual progress report. Undertake consultation with stakeholders on policies and projects for the plan. Report annually to Council Committees and Full Council on progress, continuing work and future projects to address both the climate and ecological emergencies.

Questions to be addressed

- ***What additional resource would be required to ensure the Motion (if approved) could be implemented?***

Answer – To support debate of the Motion an assessment of the impact of the motion is recommended. The additional resource required to undertake this work prior to debate is estimated to be 1 x Strategy Officer for a period of 4 months with a revenue budget of £25,000 to commission work outside the professional competencies of the officers. An approximate sum of £50,000

- ***What needs to be done to identify the level of resource necessary both in financial and staff terms?***

Answer – The officers with the competencies to undertake this work are currently fully committed. Those officers would need to pause their current activity to be reassigned or additional staff brought in to undertake this specific piece of work – that work would include a resource assessment for implementing the Motion if passed.

If the assumption is made that there are some synergies with the CNCR Plan, but acknowledge ecological outcomes were out with that plan, should the Motion pass the resourcing bill could mirror the Climate Change resource bill i.e. 1 x Programme Manager, 1 x Project Manager and a revenue budget of circa £75k – 150k to commission specialist reports. A new revenue cost of £250k - £350k not including the revenue impact on supply change costs, service change or lost income.

- ***Are any approvals needed to provide these resources?***

Answer – Neither the sum to commission impact studies nor the estimated cost of supporting the motion if passed are within the existing council budget.

- ***Will this require reports to be submitted through Scrutiny and the Executive? If a Supplementary Estimate is required, Full Council approval will be required too.***

Answer – Absent an assessment of the impact of the Motion the likely costs, both direct and indirect, are unknown.

Likely timescale involved –

The officers capable of undertaking a review to understand the implications of this motion are currently committed to existing activity aligned with the Council's response to Covid and delivering against the Corporate Plan. It will not be possible to provide an assessment of the implications of the Motion prior to Full Council on 29th September 2020.

To understand the impact of the Motion impact an assessment should include:

1. An Impact assessment on contractors (including supply chain and through life assessments)
2. An Impact assessment on existing Council contracts e.g. Street Cleansing (Weed treatments), Leisure (Chemical usage and discharge consents) and Somerset Waste Partnership
3. An Impact assessment on existing Council services and operations
4. A legal assessment on planning implications.