

SWT Scrutiny Committee - 6 January 2021

Present: Councillor Gwil Wren (Chair)

Councillors Libby Lisgo, Ian Aldridge, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Dave Mansell, Derek Perry, Phil Stone, Ray Tully, Nick Thwaites and Keith Wheatley

Officers: Andrew Randell, Marcus Prouse, Dawn Adey, Joe Wharton and Andrew Pritchard

Also Present: Councillors Mark Lithgow, Peter Pilkington, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor, John Hassall, Janet Lloyd, Mike Rigby and Sarah Wakefield

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

107. **Apologies**

No apologies were received.

108. **Minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (to follow)**

Resolved that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 2 December be considered at the next meeting.

109. **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 N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted

110. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

111. **Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Scrutiny Committee 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 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan be noted.

112. **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.

113. **Full Council Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Full Council 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 Full Council Forward Plan be noted.

114. **To consider reports from Executive Councillors**

Councillor Rigby introduced the Executive report for Planning and Transportation.

The report covered an update of the Local Plan Review Consultation, Wellington Station Business Case, and Interim Policy Statement on Planning for the Climate Emergency.

A further update was presented in relation to Phosphates and the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site. Further summaries were provided in relation to the East Street Pedestrianisation, active travel cycling schemes and the Planning Committee.

During the debate the following comments and questions were raised.

- Discussion took place in relation to the performance of the Planning department and concerns had been expressed in relation to targets being met.
- It was recognised there was further work to be done but improvements had been made to meet targets. It was recognised this had taken a while due to training and mentoring required.
- Issues around section 106 funding had been discovered and work to resolve this was ongoing.
- The number of applications in the pipeline continued to be at a good level even though the Covid-19 pandemic, developers continued to progress developments

in the pipeline along with larger developments such as the Coal Orchard development continuing but with some delays.

- The length and the process at Planning meetings continued to be a concern.
- Future site visits for Planning Committees were questioned and the potential to arrange these in instances where required and considered beneficial.
- Transport and infrastructure projects had were questioned such as the Wellington Railway Station and Wellington to Taunton Cycle path.
- Staff in the Strategy Team had been working towards the Covid-19 response and Unitary bid. Therefore the work on the Local Plan and the timeline of this had slipped. An adopted local plan was considered unlikely at the end of the quadrenium.
- The adoption of any plan by the new authority was considered unlikely due to the change of ambitions of a new council.
- Zero Carbon ambitions as part of the Planning Policy would be considered, interim Planning Policy guidance around this would be explored by the Planning Policy Department.
- District Heating with new developments was considered to ensure renewable and low carbon energy standards.
- Garden Town plans were discussed along with attracting funding to create sustainable transport.
- Training for Parish Councils for Planning matters was requested, this would be picked up following the meeting to see if something could be arranged.
- An update was requested around the phosphate impact on developers and the planning process. A calculator would be completed and signed off within a few days so developers are aware what there developments are responsible for and mitigation measures can be determined and agreed.
- Concerns had been expressed on the impact on local businesses and small constructors.
- The new facilities at Ham treatment works were mentioned, together with historic planning permission which suggests that these might be connected to phosphate extraction. It was suggested that Wessex Water be invited to meet with councillors to provide an update
- Section 106 funding and the overall loss of funding was requested.
- Loss of access to sums of money from the 106 was a loss to communities that couldn't afford to lose this funding.
- The Committee thanks Councillor Rigby for his participation.

Councillor Pilkington introduced his Portfolio Holder Report.

The Assistant Director for Operational Delivery provided a presentation in respect of e-scooters, procurement of electric pool cars, vehicle charging points and Housing retrofitting.

During the debate the following comments and questions were raised.

- The key priorities of the Portfolio Holder in getting the Council towards Carbon Neutrality by 2030 were questioned.
- There was confidence in the work undertaken, key actions in prioritising Carbon Neutral projects was requested.
- The strategy highlighted that transport and build infrastructure would make the biggest impact in Carbon Neutrality ambitions.
- A scorecard would be developed on quantifying the impacts and track the progress towards carbon neutrality.

- Putting the climate change emergency at the centre of what the authority does and how progress in other areas of Council business was questioned. It was acknowledged progress was still to be made in fitting this in across the organisation.
- A rolling programme to involve Western power works required for the installation of charging points was encouraged.
- The vision and urgency of the addressing emergency was questioned. Stopping carbon emissions by 2030 was demanding due to the late nature of the goal.
- A role for local authorities in private sector housing retrofit was encouraged alongside a review of renewable energy in the HRA and on local transport.
- Differentiate what happens from a Council perspective and Somerset wide basis was important. Solar PV and local energy generation was part of the programme alongside engaging with all agencies and developers.
- It was recognised more communications and visibility was required in some instances of the carbon neutrality programme. A specialist officer to address community engagement was requested to help move the ambitions forward to help with the visibility.
- Getting main Housing Developers on board was essential in addressing carbon neutrality
- Support for Parish Councils to work together and collaborate to support was encouraged. Parish Councils were engaged and had similar initiatives to address climate change. County initiatives had created momentum.
- The working group would be created but there was no start date in setting this up currently.
- 6000 residents had registered to use e-scooters since the launch. E-Scooters would be extended further to other areas across the district.
- There had been no recorded accidents from e-scooters since the launch.
- There had been disappointment in charging points not being installed in all car parks.
- There had been capacity issues in introducing more charge points in car parks but there was ambition to introduce more this year.
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The Scrutiny Committee noted the Executive Reports

115. **Access to Information - Exclusion of Press and Public**

Resolved that:- The Scrutiny Committee Recommended that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the ground that it involves 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).

116. **Heritage Project Update**

The Assistant Director for Major and Special Projects alongside the Heritage at Risk Project Manager provided an update in relation to a recent opportunity in relation to a Heritage project.

The history and issues around the project were set out alongside the risks and recent approach around the project.

The committee expressed concerns around the risk of the project and the liabilities if the project was undertaken.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the update.

(The Meeting ended at 9.29 pm)

