

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Scrutiny Committee – 3 March 2021

### Establishment of a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

This matter is the responsibility of the Scrutiny Committee of Somerset West and Taunton Council

Report Author: Marcus Prouse - Governance and Democracy Specialist

#### 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider and decide whether to establish a Task and Finish Group investigating the topic of Council Housing Zero Carbon Retrofit and, if approved, to also establish the Terms of Reference for said Group (Appendix A).
- 1.2 As per the Somerset West and Taunton Council Constitution, the Scrutiny Committee may appoint Task and Finish Groups. At the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Scrutiny Committee the Committee resolved that:
- 1.3 *“A Task and Finish Group on funding sources and approaches for a zero carbon retrofit programme for SWT’s council housing is further investigated with a further report brought back to the Scrutiny Committee to decide on establishment, with Terms of Reference.”*

#### 2.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Scrutiny Committee resolve to establish;
  - a) A cross party Task and Finish Group for Council Housing Zero Carbon Retrofit to investigate this topic in further depth and to report back to the Scrutiny Committee within four months (if possible).
  - b) The Terms of Reference for the Council Housing Zero Carbon Retrofit Group (Appendix A) are approved.
- 1.2 Note: If the above recommendations are not approved the Task and Finish Group will not be established.

#### 3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 There are no risks identified with establishing this Group, or associated with the Corporate or Directorate Risk Registers, although the 2030 Carbon Neutrality target is identified on the Corporate Risk Register.

#### 4.0 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 As its title suggests a Task and Finish Group is set up for a specific purpose to undertake a review and report back within a defined timescale.

- 4.2 Task and Finish Groups allow Councillors to look at an issue in which they have a particular interest in more detail. They can take a variety of forms, from a detailed review to a short, sharp concentrated focus on a high profile issue. The length of a review and its scope will define how frequently a task group meets, but it is usual to have at least one meeting at the start for planning, and one (possibly two) at the end to settle the report's findings and recommendations. They offer the opportunity to use a variety of more diverse working methods (working flexibly to adapt to the needs of different reviews), including making visits, and use of interviews and publicity events to encourage community participation and public engagement in scrutiny.

For example, the task and finish group can gather evidence through a variety of ways, such as:

- written evidence
  - oral evidence and interviews with external and internal witnesses
  - site visits
  - visiting other organisations - partners, user groups, other councils
  - research
  - talking to people who are affected by the issue
- 4.3 Once the evidence has been gathered, the task and finish groups will produce a report to be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committee outlining details of the review process, evidence gathered, conclusions and subsequent recommendations. The Scrutiny Committee can then consider the report and decide whether to recommend the report on to the Executive, or Council as appropriate.
- 4.4 The final decision of whether to form a Group rests with Members of the Committee but it is recommended that Councillors undertake careful consideration of the advice of the relevant Director when seeking to establish. The Chair of Scrutiny has established in communication with the Housing Portfolio Holder, Cllr Fran Smith, that this group would not be duplicating the work of the Housing Development Member Working Group resolved to be established by Council in December 2020, but would be seeking to look at separate issues.
- 5.0 **Links to Corporate Strategy** – This topic is potentially considered to have some links to the Corporate Strategy as outlined in Appendix A – Terms of Reference, namely Priority Theme 1 on Our Environment and Economy - Objective 1: *“Work towards making our District carbon neutral by 2030 - deliver projects based on a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan that work toward this goal”*.

Consideration when setting up a Task and Finish Group should be given to:

- External or national priorities,
  - Priorities identified within the SWT Corporate Strategy and in key policies such as the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan (CNCR), (consideration should be given to which priorities may benefit from the intervention of scrutiny, for example, overview of progress against milestones or specific policy development in a priority area);
  - Key decisions to be taken and the Executive and Scrutiny Committee's Forward Plan;
  - Evidence from recent public consultations or a trend emerging from Councillors' case work which may be the subject of scrutiny.
- 6.0 **Finance / Resource Implications** – No direct financial implications as a direct result of establishing this Group. There will be resource implications for the Governance team in providing secretariat support to this Group and in writing the final report.

- 7.0 **Legal Implications** – None as a direct result of establishing this Group. The final report and any decision will need to consider the principles of decision-making.
- 8.0 **Climate and Sustainability Implications** – None as a direct result of establishing this Group.
- 9.0 **Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications** - None as a direct result of establishing this Group.
- 10.0 **Equality and Diversity Implications** - None as a direct result of establishing this Group. Members of the Group are responsible for making the recommendations in the final report (Officers are not part of the decision making process) and in so doing must observe the equality and diversity policies of the Council.
- 11.0 **Social Value Implications** - None as a direct result of establishing this Group.
- 12.0 **Partnership Implications** - None as a direct result of establishing this Group. The Scrutiny Procedure rules state that “*The Scrutiny Committee, or any of its Task and Finish Groups, shall be entitled to appoint non-voting co-optees.*”
- 13.0 **Health and Wellbeing Implications** - None as a direct result of establishing this Group.
- 14.0 **Asset Management Implications** - None as a direct result of establishing this Group.
- 15.0 **Data Protection Implications** - None as a direct result of establishing this Group.
- 16.0 **Consultation Implications** - None as a direct result of establishing this Group. Task and Finish Groups offer the opportunity to use a variety of more diverse working methods (working flexibly to adapt to the needs of different reviews), including making visits, and use of interviews and publicity events to encourage community participation and public engagement in scrutiny.
- 17.0 **Scrutiny Recommendation(s)** – N/A

#### Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny – Yes**
- **Cabinet/Executive – No**
- **Full Council – No**

#### List of Appendices

Appendix A	Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group
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#### Contact Officers

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