

SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WRITTEN ANSWERS TRACKER 2021/22

Date of Cttee	Scrutiny Cttee Request for information	Decision Maker /Directorate Responsible	Response to request for information	Date of response	Scrutiny Officer Comments/Update
30/06/21	Q) to Cllr Perry PFH - Why are the fountains not on in SWT Parks?	Cllr Perry – Parks and OS	The fountains are not working as the pump has an issue with the bearings. They have under gone various repairs and all was working really well for a few weeks, then the bearings went, we have ordered a new pump as they don't make the bearings anymore for this pump.	23/09/21	Cllr Lloyd – more information on Wellington
6/01/22	<p><i>Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue and Capital Budget Setting 2022-23 including Dwelling Rent Setting 22-23, MTFP Update and 30-Year Business Plan Review</i></p> <p>Q) It was asked whether all new build properties the Council were building would be to a zero-carbon standard. Officers responded that they would provide a response to this after the meeting.</p>	Housing Directorate / Response from Chris Brown (Assistant Director of Development and Regeneration)	Paragraph 10.12.4: Of the 347 affordable homes in the development pipeline 115 homes will be zero carbon in occupation on the first letting and all other homes will be zero carbon if customers use green tariffs or when the grid decarbonises. All homes will provide significantly lower fuel bills to customers than other similar sized Council homes.	09/01/22	Please see footnote below for fuller response and points of clarification.*

<p>23/3/22</p>	<p><i>Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Regeneration</i></p> <p>Q) It was asked whether if the site was sold to a housing association they would be able to obtain grant funding to build homes sooner than the Council would be able to and whether this could be done to avoid leaving the land fallow. Officers responded that they would provide a written response as to whether this would be possible. Valuations for the site were currently being sought.</p>	<p>Housing & Communities / Response from Chris Brown (Assistant Director of Development and Regeneration)</p>	<p>Officers have held a meeting with Homes England and they have confirmed that as SWT have followed a process whereby the decision to decant and demolish the properties has been taken in isolation to the decision to develop a new replacement scheme on the site by the council or RP the scheme could receive grant without the need for a fallow period. The sale of the land to an RP is therefore not a requirement should the council wish to develop the site. Officers are now exploring if the same interpretation is acceptable when using Right to Buy Receipts under the councils 1:4:1 agreement with Government. The approach the council has followed to gain approval for demolition in advance of proposing a future use for the same site has maximised the potential for subsidy and early delivery of a new scheme.</p>	<p>13/05/22</p>	
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*Clarification on 6/01/22

The Council is progressing two alternative building specifications to deliver the zero carbon affordable homes standard in the district. The two specifications are very similar but have a few variations which affects how swiftly they can be considered as zero carbon homes in occupation. The approach taken by the Council has been strongly influenced by the London energy Transformation initiatives (LETI) guidance prioritising a fabric first approach and minimising power usage and then considering the use of non-fossil fuel to heat and power the homes. The key variations between the councils two specifications are presented below:

- Both standards prioritise the fabric of the building by delivering a high specification of insulation which in turn reduces the power required to heat the homes.
- The higher standard which is applied to Seaward Way, Oxford Inn and Zero Carbon Pilots includes a very high specification for air tightness which further reduces the power required to heat the property.
- The NTWP (North Taunton Woolaway Project) homes have a more standard air tightness target which means although they will require significantly less power to heat than a new build property built to the required building regulations they will not be as efficient as those homes with very high standards of air tightness.
- Both specifications have on site power and heat generation through Air Source Heat Pumps supported by photovoltaic panels and battery storage.
- All homes are powered by electricity and there is no gas supply. Therefore, the only fossil fuel used to heat or power the homes is delivered through the national grid which is not currently fully decarbonised.
- The higher specification of airtightness combined with its onsite power generation allows the properties to consume on average no more power than it generates and is therefore zero carbon on the first letting and from then onwards. Each property will mainly use the energy it has generated and any energy it uses when it cannot generate sufficient power (night-time/winter months) will be drawn from the national grid. However, the power drawn from the grid will be offset by the property's sale of excess non fossil electricity to the national grid when it generates more energy than it requires (daytime/summer).
- The second specification does require slightly more power than it can generate onsite and therefore does not have sufficient energy to offset all the power it uses. It therefore draws on the national grid to supplement its power needs. This specification achieves 80% of the gap between standard building regulations new build homes and zero carbon in first occupation homes. The gap is small and will close overtime as the grid decarbonises.
- The government is committed to decarbonising the national grid by 2050. As the grid is decarbonised all homes will benefit from the fossil free power. Customers houses in the slightly lower specification could voluntarily sign up to green energy tariffs and by doing so they could claim their home is carbon neutral in occupation from that date.
- For social landlords both specifications achieve the 2050 zero carbon standard but one requires higher investment and greater skills in construction. Currently the councils zero carbon specification has been published in a Good Homes Alliance best practice guide and SWTs second specification will be published in the next edition of best practice (subject to funding being available to the Good Homs Alliance)
- As the council considers the retrofit of its homes and its emerging strategy it faces similar considerations such as: How well can we insulate existing dwellings to minimise power consumption? What is the optimum level of air tightness an existing dwelling can achieve? What is the cost benefit of providing onsite renewable heat and power compared to decarbonised power through the national grid? What is considered a reasonable fuel cost to a household to avoid fuel poverty?