

Taunton Shadow Town Council - 3 November 2022

Present:

Councillors Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Tom Deakin, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Marcia Hill, Robert Isaacs, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Sue Lees, Brian Larcombe, Libby Lisgo, Derek Perry, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Ian Talbot, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston and Keith Woodmason

Officers: Alison North, Meg Stokes, Dan Webb, Tony Bryant, Paul Fitzgerald, Paul McClean, Kevin Williams, Reg Williams, Tom Woodhams and Scott Wooldridge, Jo Comer and Marcus Prouse

Also Present: Councillors Mike Rigby, Sarah Wakefield and Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

1. **Appointment of Chair**

Prior to the commencement of the meeting a minutes silence was held in memory of the late Councillor Anthony Trollope-Bellew.

RESOLVED that Councillor Tom Deakin be appointed as Chair of the Taunton Shadow Town Council.

2. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

RESOLVED that Councillor Brian Larcombe be appointed as Vice Chair of the Taunton Shadow Town Council.

3. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Baker, Booth, Cavill, Fothergill, R Lees and Peters.

4. **Terms of Reference**

All Shadow Councillors had been advised of an urgent item to be considered at the meeting – Terms of Reference. This was suggested to be a revised Item 3, taken after the Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair. Physical copies were available at the meeting and was attached to the Agenda online as an addendum.

The Governance Specialist introduced the item and took members through the document.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- Further detail was sought on the Programme Board and its relationship with the Shadow Town Council, including how SWT is involved.
- Officers advised that the later Agenda item would provide more detail on the Board workings but that the exercise was a collaborative one as set out in a letter from the County Solicitor to SWT.
- *The Senior Responsible Officers affirmed that the Board would work very closely with the Shadow Council over the next few months.*
- Clarity was sought over the contents of the letter from the County Council including a reference to an officer/member group.
- *Officers provided reassurance on the journey so far which had been significantly collaborative to this point. The letter was setting out how officers from the programme board would be attending the Shadow Town Council meetings to capture that feedback and provide advice and guidance throughout. The Programme Board itself was an Officer construct to take forward the milestones in the Project Plan.*
- A query was raised as to the duration of the body and the Chair confirmed that this would be in place until the Town Councillors were elected, and from 1st April the Shadow would become a vested body to which all Shadow Councillors would be temporarily appointed.

RESOLVED to Adopt the Terms of Reference for the Shadow Taunton Town Council.

5. **Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, District, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Darch	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	SCC & SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	SCC & SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Farbahi	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr Marcia Hill	All Items	SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC & SWT & Bishop's Hull	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Isaacs	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Larcombe	All Items	Comeytrowe & Lyme Regis	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	SCC & SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & SWT Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke
Cllr F Smith	All Items	SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	SCC & SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr I Talbot	All Items	Staplegrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Wakefield	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr B Weston	All Items	SWT & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr K Woodmason	All Items	Comeytrowe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet & SALC	Personal	Spoke

- A query was raised over whether all Councillors on the Shadow Council needed to alter their declaration of interest forms to take account of being a member of this body and Officers agreed to seek advice on this point and advise members accordingly.
- Officers were also advised to look ahead to the 1st April and how the Interest arrangements were to be managed in the period between then and the election as Parish Councillors did not always operate in the same way as District Councillors are used to.

6. Public Participation

No members of the public had requested to participate in proceedings.

7. Adoption of Procedure Rules

The Governance Specialist introduced the item and set out that that following advice from technical advisors the Society of Local Council Clerks and looking at other Council examples, e.g. Weymouth, the Shadow could simply follow the meeting procedure rules of a parent body. The use of these procedure rules would guide Councillors and allow business to be expedited in an established and efficient manner.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- Councillor Whetlor, attending as a Director of the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC), raised concerns that the District Council procedure rules did not explicitly apply to the Parish Sector.
- *The Chair confirmed that these rules were purely an interim measure for the Shadow Council period and part of the creation of the Town Council will be in looking at those procedures for Vesting Day.*

RESOLVED that;

1. That although the Shadow Town Council is not a formal decision making body, it will as far as possible follow the meeting procedure rules applying to Somerset West and Taunton Council.

8. Introduction to the Implementation Plan / Project Governance (Verbal Update)

The Governance Specialist introduced the item and took Members through a number of Slides, alongside the Programme Manager Dan Webb.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- Clarity was sought over the term capabilities and the project terminology such as MoSCoW.
- *This meant Must haves, Should haves, Could haves, Won't have now and new capabilities were meant as a better way of doing things, end of the project where something is adopted that works.*
- Councillors requested a glossary of terms and suggested the LGR joint scrutiny glossary may be a good place to start. Consideration for the needs for accessibility to residents also needed to be considered.
- Concern was raised about the existing parish clerks in that they needed to be assisted and helped through this.
- *A meeting had been set up with the Parish Clerks and they would be assisted through this process.*
- A query was raised in relation to naming in that this was Taunton Parish Council, but could it be re-named by us as a shadow/vested body in April or by the town council in May?
- *It was confirmed that the naming of the Parish could be amended at the first meeting after the elections e.g. the AGM.*
- A query was raised as to how would this process and body influence the aspirational elements of what the new council was likely to be? It was stated that some of this work could not wait until the elections but had to be something that was passed across to the new council. There was going to be increasing public expectation as this started to gather traction.
- *The aspirations for the new town council would be reflected in the stakeholder engagement work that Officers wanted to develop a strategy as part of. Members needed to be cognisant of balancing with the timescale that was in place, and there was a lot to be done to ensure the Town Council would be safe, legal and functioning by the 1st April. It will be for the elected councillors to put forward their visions, aspirations for the town council.*
- A discussion was held on the asset transfers and what that included, in terms of the Re-Organisation Order and any further conversations building on from that.
- A view was posited that the Shadow body would be building on the framework, however, fellow Councillors needed to understand that the list of assets had been defined and agreed, and future conversations would be primary roles for the elected town council once in place.
- A query was raised as to what happened to the everyday local business between now and April the 1st? Were the parish councils still dealing with this?
- *Those parishes primarily affected by the Re-Organisation Order should still be functioning and fulfilling their roles until the 1st April.*
- It was commented that stakeholders had a big part to play in creating the vision, but the Shadow Body needed to restrict itself somewhat to the framework issues.

- Comment was made on the Vision Statement and whilst it was understood and agreeable that the Council going forward was safe and legal it was considered important to add 'and creating a viable future for this organisation'.
- Rather than a comment on financial stability the phrasing had been interpreted as ensuring any body was 'fit' for the future.
- Some concern was raised that the statement as originally presented was not sufficiently visionary or aspirational.
- Comment was made that 'safe and legal' couldn't just mean that the Shadow handed over to elected members, it was important to caveat that it must be functioning e.g., if public conveniences are transferred on the 1st April, they can't be locked and unclean etc.
- It was requested that the Vision Statement was to be added to the forward plan for the next meeting.
- In thinking more broadly about Assets within the town such as Firepool, what involvement would there be for this body if any?
- *All land assets, property, services etc will automatically transfer to Somerset Council on the 1st April however there were some specified within the Reorganisation Order made such as allotments, parks, public convenience etc which would become the responsibility of Taunton Parish.*
- Clarity was sought over the Town Clerk role and whether that was a different qualification to a parish clerk role, were the Council able to support any parish clerks in getting this qualification and what would be the time frame for this?
- *It was a specific qualification covering both roles, but the second part of the question would need to be worked through individually. Councillors could appreciate the sensitivities within the public meeting. Officers were looking to start the recruitment process as soon as possible. Job descriptions are in draft and are ready to go but there was a need to work through individual circumstances and those affected first.*
- Councillors suggested it would be helpful to have an information pack including a list of assets, the budget and FAQs circulated as soon as possible.
- It was suggested that that the website, as a hub of information for our residents would be better set up sooner rather than later.
- Councillors queried whether there was a need for working groups to sub-divide the work, but this was not felt necessary.
- A query was raised as to whether the Shadow body would be charged with helping develop the mechanics of the committee structure templates the new body would use?
- *It was confirmed that this would be a role and will be part of the new council as of 1st April.*

RESOLVED that the Taunton Shadow Town Council;

1. Noted the update on the Implementation Plan progress and project governance and provided comments.

9. **Taunton Shadow Town Council Forward Plan**

The Governance Specialist had made a note of the Programme Vision Statement request to come back to the next meeting. An overview of the areas to be covered at the next meeting was given such as Risks and Issues.

The Forward Plan was noted.

(The Meeting ended at 7.30 pm)

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