

Council Meeting – 30 July 2019

Report of Councillor Peter Pilkington – Climate Change

Section 1 – Introduction

Having been elected on May 2nd as Councillor for the Ward of Old Cleeve and District in the newly formed District Council of Somerset West and Taunton I subsequently put myself forward for the Executive Portfolio for Climate Change, something I have been championing for the last two years at West Somerset District Council with my Electric Car Charging Point and Car Club Initiatives. I hope to achieve much more in this area for the wider District over the next four years.

I have been pleased to see that the issue of Climate Change and the Climate Emergency the Shadow Council declared earlier this year be built upon in the opening months of this new administration. At every meeting I have been too it has been apparent from members of the public and Councillors how high a priority this matter must be for us all now and how it effects almost everything we do as a Council. This will need to be uppermost in the policy making process and I am sure in our forthcoming Corporate Plan.

I will be attending the University of Exeter Multidisciplinary Plastics Research Hub meeting on Friday 26th July in Penryn and hope to report back to Councillors on what I find. The former Taunton Deane Borough Council signed up to be an industrial partner with the University of Exeter in an 18 month project under The Exeter Multidisciplinary Plastics Research Hub (ExeMPLaR) last year following the Plastics Conference at Queen's College set up by Councillor Farbahi. The Creative Circular Economy approach to eliminating Plastic Waste is potentially game-changing and the benefits for our environment very important.

Section 2 – Appointments

I have also been appointed Chairman of the Harbour Board and Flood Board and I am also a member of the Exmoor National Park Authority and various other committees' forums.

It has been a busy three months with lots of training for various committees and familiarisation of the "new way of working" which is ongoing.

Section 3 – Climate Change Strategy & Carbon Neutrality

Work has recently begun on a Climate Change Strategy with our newly formed Climate Change Officer Team headed up by Brendan Cleere. This will hopefully be a working document by the autumn. We are also working on a countywide Climate Change Strategy at the same time and have formed a task and finish group to oversee this process.

In February 2019, the SWT Shadow Council passed a motion declaring a Climate Emergency and committing to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. A £25,000

budget was approved for development of a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan.

All five Somerset Councils have now passed similar motions (though specific details vary a little). The motion passed by the County Council committed to “facilitate stronger Somerset-wide action through collaboration at a strategic, community and individual level; and...to work with partners...to identify ways to make Somerset carbon neutral by 2030 taking into account both production and consumption emissions”. Arising from this, the development of a joint Somerset-wide Climate Change Strategy has been proposed, that will identify measurable ways in which to make Somerset carbon neutral by 2030, be developed by a joint Strategic Management Group and be overseen by a Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group as well as a Joint Cabinet Portfolio Holders Group.

The Somerset-wide Strategy will focus on evidence gathering; development and assessment of Strategy options and recommendations; and the development of high level action plans for County-wide issues. It is anticipated that a draft of the joint Somerset-wide Strategy and an early indication of Action Plans will be completed by Autumn 2019, with the final Strategy and Action Plan complete in time to feed into budget setting for the 2020/21 financial year. Councils across Somerset are also committed (through their respective climate emergency resolutions) to developing authority-specific strategies and detailed action plans. These strategies, whilst containing commitments and actions relevant and specific to each district, will also complement the joint Somerset Strategy, particularly where a co-ordinated response to tackle the climate challenge would be more effective.

Work on an SWT-specific Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan will begin whilst the Somerset-wide work is in development and be completed following the Somerset wide work, so that it can take account of the evidence and high level strategy and action plans agreed through it. It is anticipated that a draft SWT-specific Strategy and indicative Action Plan will be completed alongside or shortly after the draft Somerset-wide Strategy in autumn 2019, and the final Strategy and Action Plan will be completed by summer 2020.

Councillor Mansell and Whetlor were endorsed as our Council’s representatives on the County Wide Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and I look forward to working alongside them as the Portfolio Holder.

Section 4 - Electric Vehicle Charging Points

I will soon be in a position to release some funds from our Community Charge Point Installation Fund to enable our village halls and parish councils to install electric vehicle charging points in our more rural areas.

Councillor Peter Pilkington