

Full Council Meeting – 7 July 2020

Report of Councillor Sarah Wakefield – Environmental Services

My portfolio is External Operations, Contracts and Services. It includes matters such as licensing and bereavement services and also the Somerset Waste Partnership, of which I am a member of the Board (along with Cllr Dave Mansell). I am also a member of the board of Somerset Building Control Partnership and will attend meetings of the Somerset Rivers Authority, the Harbour Board, Somerset Waste Board, SWT Flood Group and will attend Watchet Harbour Advisory Committee meetings.

I have been getting up to speed with the work of some of these boards and of the teams within SWT. I have had personal briefings from Andrew Pritchard, SWT's Director of External Operations and Climate Change and with Mickey Green, CEO of Somerset Waste Partnership. I have also had a detailed briefing from Chris Hall in particular relating to coastal erosion matters. He has helped me prepare to introduce the Agenda item today relating to the collapse at Blue Anchor. These briefings have been long and detailed and most helpful and I am grateful for their time and expertise shared with me.

Councillors may not be aware that in addition to the published meetings, the Executive have regular briefings from our CEO and Directors (twice weekly now though three times a week for some weeks into mid-May since Covid first started to impact) and informal executive meetings too prior to the public formal Executive meetings. These meetings, which are time consuming, enable portfolio holders to understand what other portfolio holders are working on and progressing and to have a close understanding of issues being dealt with and worked on by our officers on a day to day basis.

In terms of actions within the portfolio, I have emailed all Councillors regarding household waste collections and have taken up their points and had them answered. I have fed back the answers to the Councillors who raised them. I have attended a board meeting of Somerset Building Control Partnership and gained an understanding of how this works across SWT, Sedgemoor and Mendip Councils providing a shared statutory service which enables it to be cost effective for all three councils rather than a loss making service. I have started work on reviewing our public toilet facilities across the council area with a view to devising a policy for maintenance and upgrading them and to ensure that we have more changing places facilities within our district. These are specially designed with hoists and changing beds to allow people with more severe disabilities to be able to be toileted safely whilst out and about with their families, friends or carers - at present we only have one such facility which is in Wellington.

Councillor Sarah Wakefield