

SWT Annual Council - 26 May 2020

Present: Councillors Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Paul Bolton, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, Martin Hill, John Hunt, Marcus Kravis, Andy Milne, Richard Lees, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Chris Morgan, Simon Nicholls, Craig Palmer, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Peter Pilkington, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Phil Stone, Andrew Sully, Nick Thwaites, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: Dawn Adey, James Barraah, Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, James Hassett, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell and Amy Tregellas

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

1. **Election of Chair**

Resolved that Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey be elected Chair of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

2. **Appointment of Vice Chair**

Resolved that Councillor Simon Coles be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

3. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors H Davies, D Durdan and T Venner.

4. **Declarations of Interests**

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

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Barr	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr M Blaker	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Bolton	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC & Bishop's Hull	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Milne	All Items	Porlock	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Morgan	All Items	Stogursey	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Palmer	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Peters	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A	All Items	SCC & Taunton	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Wedderkopp		Charter Trustee		
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

5. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

The Chair of the Council made the following announcements:-

- The Chair reminded all Councillors that they were required to complete their Related Party Disclosure forms.
- A moments silence was then undertaken at the behest of the Chair for the memory of former Councillor and Mayor of Taunton Deane, Peter Horsford and for the former Councillor of West Somerset, Neil Parbrook.
- The Chair advised the Council that the last few weeks had been very different due to the Covid Pandemic and the lockdown guidance.
- She advised that previous to the lockdown period, she had been to many events across the whole district and that she was getting the sense that the community was pulling together as the new area of Somerset West and Taunton.
- The Chair highlighted that the charity fundraising events, run alongside the Mayor of Taunton, had been going well, but sadly had ceased due to the Covid Pandemic.
- She thanked everyone for a wonderful year as Chair of Somerset West and Taunton Council and looked forward to another year serving as Chair.

6. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:-

- She highlighted what an incredible first year it had been for the new authority.
- Amazing work had been achieved during the first year to support residents, businesses and visitors.
- The Leader was regularly asked what it was like to be the Leader of the Council. Her phrase in response had been 'challenging but exciting'.
- Councillors wanted to make a difference for their communities and the past year had delivered many benefits for the local residents.
- The journey to bring the two areas together had been challenging but had created a stable council that was fit for purpose.
- Working together as a Council had achieved some great things and had left a lasting legacy that would change resident's lives for the better.
- She had implemented the Corporate Strategy for the next four years, which had imbedded the Liberal Democrat manifesto.

- A variety of other strategies had also been implemented but it had also been a year of action.
- Coal Orchard regeneration, bringing Firepool into community use, Taunton Independent Quarter had been pedestrianised, Seaward Way in Minehead and Dulverton Leat had also been supported, along with the works on the East Quay Wall in Watchet and support to reopen Wellington Railway Station.
- Being a Councillor wasn't just about business and infrastructure, it was about the impact on individual lives and the community. With that in mind, another positive had been the purchasing and building of new houses in the area to be able to offer affordable homes to local families.
- Climate change had been the main thread of all of their achievements.
- Life had changed recently due to the Covid Pandemic and the Council had been at the forefront of the work carried out to protect and support the community.
- The Leader had huge admiration for the staff of Somerset West and Taunton Council, who had brought humanity to the forefront, worked efficiently and shown pride in the area.
- How did we move forward to a new normal?
- The Leader wanted to work together with other authorities to get the high street back open and to continue to engage with the communities going forward.
- A paper had been written on the committee system and would be brought for discussion as we needed to look at how we adapted and committees took a lead role in that work.
- How did we support the most vulnerable in the community?
- One of the main successes during lockdown had been the way the Council had supported the homeless with the use of Canonsgrove.
- There would always be financial challenges and the need for central and voluntary support, but there would be a time where we would need to change and take the positives from this crisis to make the future even better for the generations to come.
- She looked forward to working together throughout the upcoming year to achieve even more than the first year.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors requested that the Portfolio Holder reports were brought to the next meeting of Full Council.
The Leader advised that the reports would be brought to the next normally scheduled meeting of Full Council, which was 7 July 2020.
- Councillors queried when the portfolios would be aligned with the new directorates and requested when they could meet the new Directors.
The Leader advised that she was looking into aligning the portfolios with the new directorates and would bring back an update to Full Council. She also advised Councillors that the new Directors would be hosting the Member Briefing scheduled for 1 June 2020 and would introduce themselves during that session.
- Councillors queried the change in the committee system and what the timing on that would be and how would all Councillors be consulted.

The Leader advised that they had kick-started the process but that the Covid Pandemic had slowed any progress being made. The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources advised he was keen to look at the many different models that could be used and to have an open discussion with all Councillors. He also highlighted that the work would be carried out alongside the Community Governance Review.

- Councillors were pleased to hear that the Community Governance Review was moving forward.
- Councillors queried how the work on the committee system would link with the Constitutional Working Group.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources advised that they would need to work closely together as the work would need to align with the Constitution.

- The Chair of Scrutiny requested that the Scrutiny Committee be more involved in the work on the forward plan items.
- Concern was raised that the Council's emphasis was still focused on Taunton and that it needed to be on the whole of the area.

The Leader took on board the comments made and that it had been a challenge bringing the two areas together, but that work was happening across the whole area.

7. **Election of the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee**

Resolved that Councillor Gwil Wren be elected as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor Wren thanked the Council for voting him as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and he admitted that it had been an interesting first year. He thanked his Vice-Chair, Councillor L Lisgo, for her support and his fellow committee members and officers for their support and hard work over the past year.

8. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

9. **To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

Councillor R Habgood asked the following question in accordance to Procedure Rule 13:-

Reports to Council

He made a formal request to see all of the Portfolio holder reports submitted to Council relating to their outside body memberships for the last municipal year (to be clear to outside bodies that were reserved for Portfolio Holder).

The reports were all due in during April, according to the Council's governing documents. The constitution called for a minimum of one report annually. I asked that if no report had been submitted that it be recorded and reported as nil. I also asked for the attendance records of Portfolio Holders at the above

meetings to be made available to all councillors and to be put into the public domain.

The Leader responded: The Executive were being democratic and transparent with holding member briefings and other working groups. She advised that Portfolio Holder reports were brought to the last Full Council meeting and she would look to add outside body attendance records to those reports going forward. Clarification was given that Portfolio Holder reports only go to normal scheduled Full Council meetings and not special meetings of Full Council.

10. **Council Committees for 2020/2021 and their Terms of Reference**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to see that work would be carried out on the different committee structures that could be implemented to assist with the workloads of each committee.
- Councillors requested that equalities were involved in all committee work.
- Councillor N Cavill, J Lloyd, G Wren and E Firmin all advised they would like to be added as substitutes for the Planning Committee.

Resolved that Full Council:-

- a) Noted the Committee structure as set out in articles 6, 7, 8 and 9 in the Constitution;
- b) Noted the size and terms of reference of those Committees as set out in the attached extract from the Constitution;
- c) Approved the numerical political allocation as attached; and
- d) Approved councillor appointments to Committees.

11. **Appointment of Representatives on Outside Bodies**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Councillors highlighted a few vacancies that were still showing in the papers included in the agenda.
The Group Leaders advised that they would allocate representatives to those vacancies outside of the meeting.

Resolved that Full Council agreed the Appointments of Representatives to Outside Bodies for 2020/2021.

12. **To authorise the sealing or signing of documents to give effect to any decisions taken**

Resolved that Full Council approved the list of officers delegated to sign and seal Council documents as per the Constitution's Scheme of Delegation.

(The Meeting ended at 7.12 pm)