

Corporate Priority Area	Ref	Annual Plan Commitments 2020/21 <a href="https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/">https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/annual-plan/</a>	31 March progress update	RAG
Our environment and economy	1	The Council is acutely aware of the need to invest in our local economy to help it recover from Covid 19. There are a number of initiatives in train and none more significant than <b>Firepool</b> . We are working on a business case that will guarantee the delivery of a regenerated Firepool and within an accelerated period.	<p>We have been busy throughout the year developing the revised masterplan for the entire site, into a phased, block by block program for delivery. This block-by-block approach allows SWT to control the pace of development but also respond to changing market conditions, such as the economic impact of Covid19 which is likely to have an impact on the Housing market.</p> <p>The impact of the phosphates notification from Natural England has been to slow down the publication of the Local Development Order for the entire site, which would have in effect acted as a planning permission for the whole. To expedite a solution to this issue, we are working on individual planning applications for the elements of the site that are not caught by the phosphates restrictions.</p>	Green
	2	We will approve a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan for the District and progress further actions that reduce the Council's and the District's carbon footprint, supports biodiversity and increases resilience to more extreme weather events;	<p>During the year SWT was recognised as a leader in responding to the climate emergency by the not-for-profit charity CDP. The Council achieved a score of "A-" (Leadership) for its 2020 disclosure. The disclosure identifies the ways in which we are working to mitigate and adapt to the projected impacts of climate change.</p> <p>In October, the Council approved its Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience (CNCR) Action Plan and the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy, final draft versions of which were used to complete the 2020 disclosure. The score demonstrates that through these documents, SWT has a clear understanding of future climate risks and district-wide emissions. The Council has set emissions reduction targets and has been making strides with implementing our action plan.</p> <p>SWT also declared an ecological emergency, complementing the climate emergency declaration made in February 2019, to give equal importance to ecological issues alongside climate emergency actions</p>	Green
	3	Using funding from our successful <b>Warmer Homes Fund</b> bid, we will commence installing improved heating systems and energy efficiency measures within 175 SWT council owned homes as well as provide advice, support and access to	This project has been placed on hold during the Covid lockdown period in order to keep our tenants and our staff safe by temporarily limiting non-emergency work on our properties. Procurement has however been undertaken and the programme is able to commence when Covid restrictions ease	Amber
	4	We will commence a pilot <b>to create wild meadows</b> initially on Council owned land in Taunton, Minehead and Wellington. Sowing will take place in late Autumn 2020.	60kg of wildflower seeds have been sown in Minehead, Taunton, Wellington, Wiveliscombe and Milverton. This includes larger meadow areas such as Seaward Way, Culvercliffe in Minehead and Hawthorn Park in Taunton, as well as boundary sowings wherever possible on recreation areas and open spaces. Additionally, SWT has enabled Town and Parish Councils across the district to give their open spaces a boost during National Tree Week by offering 223 trees with stakes, ties, and guards as part of its commitment to working towards carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030.	Green
	5	Building on the extensive work that took place during 2019/20, we will produce a <b>draft Local Plan to 2040</b> , undertake consultation before submitting the final Plan to the Secretary of State for consideration	The timetable of the Local Plan has been affected by the pandemic as well as the consultation and future decision around the future of Local Government in Somerset. Whichever unitary scenario emerges, a Local Plan would need to be produced to cover the whole of the new Local Planning Authority area. The background work and consultation so far on the Local Plan 2040 will still be of relevance to any new Local Plan for a unitary authority. Furthermore, the Government's Planning Reform proposals and change to the calculation of housing need will impact upon the content and scope of the Local Plan so we need to review what this means for our Local Plan. We have been progressing with background work on assessing sites and evidence base to feed into the Local Plan as it develops in whatever form.	Amber

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	6	We will approach completion of our regeneration project at <b>Coal Orchard</b> , Taunton;	Substantial progress has been made, despite the challenges of the pandemic. The programme to regenerate one of Taunton's prime riverside quarters, which includes a mix of apartments, retail, workspace and restaurants, and incorporates a riverfront plaza with a stepped terrace to make the most of its position on the River Tone, is due for completion in May 2021. SWT's delivery partner for the project received a top accolade from an independent organisation raising standards in the construction industry. Midas Construction, part of the Midas Group, received a Certificate of Excellence from the Considerate Constructors Scheme for its care and respect towards the community, the environment, the site appearance and the work force.	Green
	7	We will jointly commission, and complete, a Strategic Outline Business Case for the re-opening of <b>Wellington Railway Station</b> .	The SOBC was completed and submitted to the Department for Transport. An announcement is expected in May 21 from the Restoring Your Railway panel, about which schemes are suitable to progress to the next stage of project delivery.	Green
	8	We will undertake works that provide a long term solution for the integrity of the <b>harbour wall in Watchet</b> , that enables it to meet the challenges of rising tidal levels in the future..	SWT has completed the £1m project to rebuild the Splash Point sea defence wall in Watchet. It has been a huge effort by designers, contractors, and staff, firstly to make a temporary repair and then to provide a permanent replacement	Green
	9	We will deliver against the Economic Development Strategy including the completion of a feasibility study for an innovation centre in the District	<p>The SWT Economic Recovery and Growth activity is underway, with a focus on 'lockdown' and 'restart' phases throughout 20/21, supporting local businesses impacted by Covid 19 restrictions and safely reopening High Streets following periods of lockdown in particular, through the 'Safeguarding and creating jobs in bedrock sectors' and 'Employment Skills and Inclusion' themes.</p> <p>Longer-term priority activities focussing on 'Revitalise and Grow' phases are included in the recently approved Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan, including 'Infrastructure to enable growth' (e.g., cycling, walking and broadband infrastructure and flood risk projects) and 'Creating attractive places and homes' (e.g., Town Centre regeneration and housing retrofit projects).</p> <p>Phase 1 of the Innovation Park feasibility study has been completed and approved by the Council's Executive, following nearly 6 months of analysis of SWT's innovation assets and research and development businesses and clusters where SWT has some critical mass. The work is now moving into the early implementation phase of establishing the Governance and cluster and innovation board structures.</p>	Green

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A Transparent and Customer Focused Council	10	Building on improvements introduced during 2019/20, to our <b>housing repairs service</b> , we will be focussing on offering our tenants a time and date for their repair, during the tenants first call with us; same day or a later date at the tenant's convenience and on improving the proportion of repairs which take place on the same day in which they were requested	This project has been delayed by a focus being prioritised on delivering emergency repairs and non-emergency external repairs during the Covid lockdown period. The required IT and scheduling processes are nevertheless being developed to enable us to implement improvements to the service during 2021.	Amber
	11	We will improve how we engage with our residents, businesses and tenants by <b>modernising our communications approach</b> .	<p>We've recognised this year, more than ever, the importance of keeping our residents, business, visitors and other stakeholders informed and up to date with the latest Government advice and news from the Council.</p> <p>This year we have introduced a new e- communications tool that makes it even easier to stay connected, using our free subscription service, which can be accessed via our website.</p> <p>Residents, visitors and business owners can choose to receive regular newsletters by email; customised to their specific needs and interests. This has proven to be a very effective way of, ensuring that Government, Public Health and NHS messaging has been widely shared; included changes in restrictions, Test and Trace, vaccine roll out, re-opening our high streets as well as funding opportunities that have been made available by the government and the Council.</p>	Green
	12	We will undertake elections to the <b>Tenants Strategic Board</b> and enable this group with Mod.gov technology to better support them to fulfil their role.	Candidate online applications were closed 9th February 2021, 11 applications were received, 1 application did not meet eligibility criteria. 10 applications were submitted for 10 spaces therefore an election was not required. Induction of new members will take place in April 2021 and the first online broadcast meeting will be held in May 2021 to agree a forward plan of business.	Green
	13	We will continue to <b>review our processes</b> in order to improve the customer experience, including making more of our services available online for those who can and wish to transact in this way.	A further 15 online services have been launched during the year, enabling residents and businesses to transact efficiently with the Council at times convenient to them. We have also developed simple on-line processes, at very short notice, for the application and award of various Covid-related business support grants throughout the year, which have enabled businesses within the district to access over £65m of vital grant support from the Council.	Green
	14	We will introduce a <b>Member Equality Group</b> to be ambassadors for those within our communities who may be at heightened risk of discrimination, to ensure their voices are consistently given prominence in all that the Council does.	On 7 September, the Audit, Governance & Standards Committee approved a recommendation for the creation of a joint Member and Officer Equalities group as a mechanism for providing additional focus on equalities matters both internally and externally. The group starting meeting from October 2020.	Green
	15	We want you to be able to <b>follow and take part in the democratic decisions</b> that affect you in SWT. We understand that not everyone is able to attend council meetings in person, which is why we will continue broadcasting key meetings on our website so that you can watch them online at any time, from anywhere.	Council meetings moved to virtual meetings, being live streamed throughout the periods of local and national Covid restrictions to enable the democratic process to continue in an inclusive and transparent way.	Green

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Homes and Communities	16	We will complete 8 new units of social housing in Laxton Road, Taunton;	The 8 units have been completed and are now let.	Green
	17	We will build at least <b>6 new modular and energy efficient homes</b> for social rent;	The Councils' support for zero carbon homes has significantly increased over the past year. Approval and budget have now been secured to build 115 zero carbon homes. A procurement process for a constructor is underway.	Green
	18	We will commence the <b>construction of 47 good quality, energy efficient homes</b> as part of phase A of the North Taunton regeneration project;	Phase A commenced this year, with the demolition of 26 Woolaway homes which the Government has designated as defective, and the building of 47 new homes scheduled for completion by September 2022. SWT has now also approved funding to support all future phases of the North Taunton Woolaway Project, ultimately delivering a total of 227 new homes with affordable rents by 2027	Green
	19	We will increase the number of <b>homelessness preventions</b> within our area,	To increase the number of homeless prevention cases in our area we are adapting how cases are assessed by the Housing Options Service by introducing a robust prevention focussed triage system which identifies opportunities for early intervention to prevent homelessness. We can now refer cases to our Tenancy Sustainment Team who work with landlords and tenants to help preserve existing tenancies which are at risk, and our Private Rented Sector Team who work with landlords and letting agents to source suitable and sustainable properties for homeless households. This prevention focussed approach will reduce the use of temporary accommodation.	Green
	20	We will work with partners to put in place a stronger , more joined-up <b>process for rough sleepers</b> in our area.	<p>Early in the year we held workshops with partner agencies and homeless providers to consider how to improve pathways and support for homelessness. This evolved into the 'Better Futures for Vulnerable People in Somerset' report which was a Local Government Association (LGA) sponsored project and has been approved and adopted locally. One of the key outcomes for this has been the establishment of the Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board which has its first meeting in April 2021 and has a range of public sector partners and homelessness providers focussed on reducing homelessness and improving support for those affected.</p> <p>In March 2021, the Executive approved the Homeless Options Appraisal report which committed to ongoing support for homeless people accommodated under the 'Everyone In' initiative. This included a Homeless Accommodation Strategy which set out how we will find a long-term solution for those people currently accommodated at Canonsgrove as well as increasing and improving other homeless accommodation and support across the district.</p>	Green
	21	We will continue to work with developers to facilitate the provision of <b>additional Affordable Homes</b> ;	<p>The enabling team has continued to work with developers on increasing the share of affordable housing units and specialist housing units built in the district, with around 70 schemes in or approaching planning. The Council is also directly delivering social rented housing schemes.</p> <p>A budget for 54 zero carbon rented homes at Rainbow Way (off Seaward Way) was approved by Full Council and work is now progressing the plans. This is part of the Council's commitment to build 1,000 new homes across the district over the next 30 years, providing more housing to suit different members of the community.</p>	Green
	22	We will <b>review our voluntary and community grants</b> in order that they deliver value for our communities and align to the Council's priorities;	<p>We only undertook a light touch review due to Covid-19 however this gave us confidence that the current allocation provides value for money and is aligned with our corporate priorities. This was reported back to Full Council.</p> <p>A fuller review with a member working group will take place in 2021/22 to ensure that funds are best allocated to continue to reflect corporate aims as well as address new priorities such as Covid recovery.</p>	Amber
	23	We will identify, and deliver, a solution that improves <b>CCTV equipment and monitoring for Watchet and Minehead</b> ;	Existing equipment has been repaired and become operational again. We are working with partners to find the best solution for the long term which will look at integration with the rest of the CCTV suite.	Amber
24	We will implement a <b>Public Space Protection Order</b> in order to help fight against anti-social behaviour in Taunton.	We reviewed this in depth and following consultation with the Police, town councils and the portfolio-holder we agreed that the Police had more appropriate tools and powers and therefore a decision was reached not to renew the existing PSPOs for alcohol.	Green	

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An Enterprising Council	25	We will continue the programme of <b>acquiring income generating property assets</b> which will also help support the funding of service delivery to our communities;	Acquisitions are broadly in line with anticipated targets.	Green
	26	We will commence <b>collaboration with the Somerset District Councils to deliver a more efficient, sustainable, but locally accountable, system of local Government</b> in the county that will work better for our communities;	Somerset West & Taunton Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council and South Somerset District Council have together launched Stronger Somerset – an exciting and ambitious strategy to reform local government in Somerset.  Our proposal, and that of the County Council, has been submitted to Government for consideration. We anticipate receiving the Secretary of State's decision on the structure of local government in Somerset during Summer 2021.	Green
	27	We will <b>let further empty space within our offices at Taunton and Williton</b> , making better use of public resources and delivering extra income to the Council;	We have completed a lease to Avon & Somerset Police for part of West Somerset House, Williton. We have also agreed terms for the letting of the majority of the unallocated ground floor space at Deane House to the National Probation Service, building on the earlier letting of other parts of the ground floor to Avon & Somerset Police and Meridian Business Support respectively.	Green
	28	We will <b>review our land and property assets</b> to identify further opportunities to better support the achievement of the council's objectives (including service delivery, regeneration projects and community initiatives).	We have commenced a review of our land and property assets to actively look for opportunities to use, acquire or dispose of assets in order to support regeneration or community opportunities.  During the year SWT acquired the green space adjacent to Tonedale Mill, Wellington, following its designation as an Asset of Community Value.  Following the acquisition SWT has been working alongside Wellington Mills CIC and Transition Town Wellington to protect the Field as an open, green space for the whole community. The Council has also secured significant funding from Historic England to begin a programme of works to enhance both the archaeology and ecology of Norton Fitzwarren Hillfort. This is in addition to funding received in 2018 for SWT to acquire the site.	Green