

SWT Annual Council - 4 May 2021

Present: Councillors Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Paul Bolton, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Chris Morgan, Simon Nicholls, Craig Palmer, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, 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, Terry Venner, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: Dawn Adey, James Barra, Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, James Hassett, Alison North, Stuart Noyce, Sean Papworth, Andrew Pritchard, Joe Wharton, Jo Comer, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell and Amy Tregellas

(The meeting commenced at 12.00 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 Richard Lees be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors H Farbahi and P Pilkington.

4. Declarations of Interest

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 |

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|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| 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 H Davies | All Items | SCC | 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 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 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 N Thwaites | All Items | Dulverton | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr R Tully | All Items | West Monkton | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| Cllr T Venner | All Items | Minehead | Personal | Spoke and Voted |

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|-------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Cllr A Wedderkopp | All Items | SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee | Personal | Spoke and Voted |
| 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:-

- She thanked Councillor Simon Coles for all his work and support over the previous municipal year and welcomed Councillor Richard Lees to the role.
- A silence was observed for the passing of Mr David House, a former councillor of Taunton Deane Borough Council for the period 1999 – 2011.

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

The Leader of the Council did not make any announcements.

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

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

Resolved that Councillor Libby Lisgo be elected as Chair of the Community Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

8. **Public Participation**

Mr David Orr submitted the following:-

When this new Council was formed, many Councillors here today lamented that the 2 years in its formation had not addressed the issue of a Town Council for Taunton.

Here we are today with another 2 years gone by and we do not seem to be any closer to a Taunton Town Council. Why is that?

There is an urgency, as it is possible that by July 2022, there will be a One Somerset unitary and then Taunton will be without a Town Council, as well as losing the voice of this District Council.

I believe that the Taunton Town Council area needs to reflect Taunton as it is today and include all of the urban extensions approved i.e. out to Monkton Heathfield to the North and include the Staplegrove and Trull/Comeytrowe extensions too within its boundaries. To avoid a town split by a motorway, my

view is that the M5 should be retained as the ongoing settlement and development boundary to the East and to the South.

The existing Unparished Area (with the anomalous unparished wards) is clearly too small to constitute a modern Town Council area for Taunton and this easy option should, in my opinion, be excluded now.

The A358 Highways England least cost and least benefit "Orange route" proposal with a new M5 junction at Killams would have enabled cross-M5 development and brought significant noise and light pollution to affected communities.

Taunton Deane Borough Council championed the impacted communities and lobbied effectively to get Taunton to the better A358 scheme, with substantially higher economic and community benefits, that we have today.

By comparison, the County Council appeared to simply acquiesce in the original A358 "Orange route" proposal and, many of us felt, at best were neutral.

Impacted communities did not feel that the County Council were strong advocates for a better A358 scheme.

County Council Highways sits within the Economy, Community and Infrastructure Directorate. That Economics come before Community is, I feel, not an accident but reflects their priorities.

We cannot, for lack of planning and resource, now leave Taunton without any public body representing us within a unitary council that increasingly looks like "continuity County Council".

Without a Town Council, developers like Taylor Wimpey with 1,100 developable acres at Orchard Portman could exploit our lack of representation and shape Taunton into a Town split by a motorway. The County Council-based new unitary may again prioritise Economics over Community.

Who will stand up for Taunton then?

David Fothergill has assured me recently that One Somerset has a budget for the formation of a Town Council for Taunton.

Bridgwater Town Council was created in 2003 as successors to the Charter Trustees for the Town with the first elections held in May that year. 16 Members represent seven wards.

If Bridgwater managed this 18 years ago why can't Taunton do this now?

I would urge this Council to form a Shadow Taunton Town Council as a matter of urgency and include Taunton councillors (from parished and unparished wards) in an all-party body.

Thank you.

The Leader of the Council responded:-

Thank you Mr Orr, in relation to the creation of a Taunton Town Council, the work had been started on that and the timetable had been reported to recent meetings of Full Council and the Chartered Trustees. It was the biggest piece of governance work we would be doing in the next year and into the future. I appreciated that you raised the fact that One Somerset had included this in its business case but it was the district that was leading on this and it was included in the Stronger Somerset business case as well. Further information would be reported in future portfolio holder report updates.

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

Councillor Marcus Barr asked the following question:-

I would like to ask the Leader a question at the next opportunity at a Full Council meeting about Wellington Christmas lights.

If you recall Wellington Town Council was charged £24,000 to have our lights put up by Somerset West and Taunton Council in 2019.

The council then got a private company to do the lights for us in 2020 when they only charged £6,000, a massive saving of £18,000.

I would like to know from the Leader why Wellington Town Council was clearly ripped off.

The Leader responded:-

The Council employees were paid in accordance with the tartan handbook, their terms and condition were written primarily around day time working with supplements for working out of hours. This made out of hours working, which I understood was when most of the Christmas light installation occurred, very costly to the employer. External works (external to the council where an invoice was raised) such as described below were recharged on a full cost recovery basis.

There was no requirement for the council's workforce to be utilised by Wellington Town Council and as such Wellington Town Council had a choice in contractor, they chose to use our council's workforce and latterly to use an alternative contractor.

We would expect Wellington Town Council to request a quote for the work and agree the price in advance.

If they had found a more cost effective contractor and no longer wished to use this council's workforce then we supported that decision, it would be for Wellington Town Council to ensure that any contractor met with the necessary health and safety requirements and requirements for working in the carriageway. On the basis of the choice that Wellington Town Council had I don't think it fair to conclude that SWT or its predecessor council had acted unreasonably in their pricing.

10. **Council Committees for 2021/2022 and their Terms of Reference**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Councillors asked for clarification on the figures quoted for the compositions due to the by-election scheduled on 6 May 2021.
The Monitoring Officer gave clarification and explained that was the reason for the additional recommendation.

Resolved that Annual Council approved:-

- a) The Committee structure as set out in section A below
- b) The size of each Committee as set out in section B below
- c) The Terms of Reference of those Committees as set out in Section C
- d) The numerical political allocation as set out in Appendix H
- e) The Councillor appointments to Committees as set out in Appendix I
- f) That delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer to work on the committee compositions with the Group Leaders after the meeting of Annual Council.

Section A - Establishment of Committees for the 2021/22 Municipal Year

The Committees to be established for the 2021/22 Municipal Year were:

- Corporate Scrutiny Committee
- Community Scrutiny Committee
- Audit and Governance Committee
- Planning Committee
- Licensing Committee
- Standards Committee

Section B - Size and Terms of Reference for those Committees

| Committee | Size |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Corporate Scrutiny Committee | 15 |
| Community Scrutiny Committee | 15 |
| Audit and Governance Committee | 11 |
| Planning Committee | 15 |
| Licensing Committee | 15 |
| Standards Committee | 9 |
| Total Committee seats | 80 |

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

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Councillors requested an update on the Crime and Disorder Strategy.
The Portfolio Holder for Community advised he would provide an update and report back to Full Council.

Resolved that Annual Council approved:-

Agree the Appointments of Representatives to Outside Bodies for 2021/2022 (attached as Appendix A).

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

Resolved that Annual 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 1.10 pm)