

Subject Somerset West and Taunton Council meeting report
From Councillors <councillors@holford-pc.gov.uk>
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Cc Clerk <clerk@holford-pc.gov.uk>
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Report on meeting with Somerset West and Taunton Council (SW&T) members at Williton Council Chamber on 17/10 2019

SW&T Council members attending:

Cllr Loretta Whetlor – Chair of the meeting

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts – Leader of the Council & Executive member

Cllr Peter Pilkington - Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Executive member

Cllr Marcus Kravis - Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development & Executive member

Nick Bryant – Council Officer – Head of Strategy

Topics raised:

Problems with organisation - the problems Huw mentioned of redundancies and staff shortages as well as division of responsibilities. The Leader of SW&T Council is well aware and they are making progress to sort things out. Telephone contacts and lack of feedback were mentioned by many councillors.

Who's who on the Council and responsibilities – more information will be made available but not all people are in post. Four new divisional directors are being appointed at £100k salary each.

Planning, no paper copies and parish councillors are unable in some cases to access on-line plans and do not have the facilities to print out large plans – Planning will be made aware of the problem and a solution found.

Building control – is not under the control of planning and so little co-ordination at District Council level. It is run by a Local Authority Building Control Partnership. www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/SomersetBCP/ General view that it was not satisfactory.

Housing – SW&T have a policy to promote social housing and to actually build such houses rather than leave it to developers who do not meet the standards that are expected in full cost housing.

Planning and development – new local plans are being drawn up which will incorporate neighbourhood plans which are regarded as important.

Planning enforcement – no enforcement officers are currently employed directly and the service is provided by agency staff at a high cost equivalent to 1.6 officers. Attempts are being made to recruit. This is only a reactive solution which is not effective.

Broadband – not satisfactory and the topic was raised by a number of councillors. I ascertained that money allocated from Council tax, some £400,000 had not been paid to Connecting Devon and Somerset who have now terminated their contract with Gigaclear. (see below)

Locality lead - Every Parish Council should have a SW&T locality lead as a contact with SW&T.

Green policies. Every action and service provided by the Council will take into account environmental issues and take into account local views and preferences.

Mike Copleston

Broadband summary of latest position re Connecting Devon and Somerset

September 12 2019

In yet another major upset the Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) project has today taken the decision to end their contract with "full fibre" broadband ISP Gigaclear, which last year suffered significant delays that set some parts of their rollout back by around 2 years. Sadly efforts to agree a revised plan were not successful.

The news will no doubt be seen as a huge embarrassment for CDS, which over the years has become known for some questionable decision making. First there was a delay of almost two years following the 2015 collapse of their first attempt to secure a Phase 2 "fibre broadband" (FTTC/P) contract with Openreach ([here](#)), which was eventually followed in 2016 and 2017 by a series of new Phase 2 contracts with both Airband and Gigaclear.

*Gigaclear's original Phase 2 contract required them to build an entirely new 1Gbps capable **Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP)** network, which would cover 41,000 rural premises across various parts of the two counties by the end of December 2019 (complementing a separate commercial build). This was later extended to **June 2020** following Government approval to expand the network to a further 6,810 premises (total of 47,810)*

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Holford Parish Council

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