SW&T council budget meeting - 19/02/2020

The "sticking point" with the annual budget was the proposed 10% increase in car parking charges.

Legally a council cannot intentionally make a profit from car parking charges, any unintentional profit must be ploughed back into car-park related maintenance.

There is little parity between the old two district councils, and the new council. The old TD council had different operating procedures and charges to those of the old WSC. The proposed increase in charges took no account of this anomaly.

An amendment to the budget was proposed that car parking charges should be held back from the budget until such time as a strategy can be formulated that treats the whole of SW&T as one "district".

Debate almost followed the line of "profits from car parking charges can help to support Taunton park & ride facility, and support the use of public transport, which in turn would reduce the reliance on the use of private cars"!

I, and colleagues from the rural areas of the district were opposed to our electorate having to fund Taunton Park & ride, and improved public transport, when they have no such opportunity to access public transport, and are totally reliant on private car ownership.

We were informed by the Chairman of the Council that we could not submit an amendment to the budget, and that it would be voted on as it stood.

I told the council that a) I could not support the budget unless the council formulated a parking strategy that was fair for all, and b) that I felt that it was undemocratic to refuse the addition of an amendment.

A named vote was called for, and accepted. The budget vote was won.

Planning meeting - 20th February 2020

No photographs of setting. No site plans. It is not the policy of Somerset West & Taunton planning committee to arrange site visits. SW&T planning committee does however urge members to make site visits on their own.

I consider this to be potentially dangerous.

It puts individual members at risk, both physically, we know that there can be some quite irate applicants around, and legally, as a result of the contact with the applicant and what information may be passed between an applicant and the member of the planning committee.

There was an issue regarding a planning committee member talking to an applicant during a break in proceedings at the February meeting, and we have all been told that this must not happen unless we are accompanied by an officer!

 It calls into question unaccompanied site visits that obviously would not include an officer, and as such would put the planning committee member in danger.

Climate Change Group

A meeting was held on the 2nd of March.

Following a presentation looking at electric charging points for low carbon vehicles, it was agreed that a proposal be put before full council, that charging points should be installed at Blue Anchor. The charging points would be powered by Wind Turbines situated along the length of the sea front. Looking at the presentation, there would be three wind turbines.

We have been promised e-mail copies of the presentation, but we were promised copies of the last presentation, but never received them !

Fingers crossed.