

BRIEFLY ABOUT SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

The Council comprises 58 elected councillors. Councillors are elected to serve for a four year term of office and each represents a division which is a geographical area. The most recent county election was in June 2001.

The councillors through a democratic structure manage the Council's duties and services. The government has required all local authorities to modernise their democratic structures and change the way that councillors make and scrutinise decisions. The philosophy behind the changes is that of splitting councillors into a small group (or cabinet) who make the most of the day-to-day decisions and the majority who scrutinise the performance of the Council, the activities of the cabinet and review and develop policy.

The three models on offer to the County Council were:-

- directly elected mayor and cabinet (of councillors) model;
- leader with cabinet model;
- directly elected mayor and council manager (who would be a paid officer of the authority) model.

The public consultation process carried out throughout Somerset early in 2001 and in conjunction with the district councils revealed a clear majority in favour of a leader with cabinet model for the County Council. It is this model that the Council has now put in place. The public is able at any time to petition for a referendum to seek to have an elected mayor for Somerset.

At its meeting on 10 October 2001, the County Council approved the following structure :-a multi party cabinet (the Executive Board) of 10 members appointed by the Council

- a multi-party scrutiny committee of 12 members
- 6 policy panels of between 6 and 10 members to help assist some of the members of the Executive Board (the portfolio-holders)
- a standards committee of 3 elected members and 3 independent members and chaired by one of the independent members
- a multi-party regulation committee of 12 members.
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SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

The Somerset County Council employs over 14,000 people in its various departments and establishments and is the county's largest employer. It has a total spending of £347 million per annum (\$996 million).

Decision Makers - Full Council:

Who's on it?

The 58 elected members of Somerset County Council.

What does it do?

The full Council is responsible for:-

- deciding the democratic arrangements for the Council
- agreeing the policy framework for the Council and each year's budget
- adjudicating where there are disputes between the Executive Board and the Scrutiny Committee.

In addition, the Council has a wider responsibility given to it to consider any matter which it considers affects Somerset or its inhabitants.

The Council meets bi-monthly and members of the public are welcome to attend and speak (subject to certain restrictions).

Decision Makers - Executive Board:

Who's on it?

10 members including the leader and deputy leader, and including:-

7 Liberal Democrats

2 Conservative members

1 Labour member

each Liberal Democrat member of the Board has responsibility for a portfolio of services (except the leader). They are the "champions" for the service areas identified although decision-making remains the duty of the entire Board (or officers under the scheme of delegation) rather than being delegated to individual members.

What does it do?

The Executive Board is responsible for:-

- proposing to the County Council the policy framework and budget
- delivery of the Council's services
- discharging its functions in accordance with the policy and budget frameworks agreed by the Council.

The Board meets on a 3 weekly cycle, normally on a Monday morning.

Decision Makers - Regulation Committee

Who's on it?

12 members (political balance - 6 Lib Dem; 5 Conservative; 1 Labour)

What does it do?

Deals with the Council's regulatory responsibilities principally in the areas of planning control.

It usually meets on the first Wednesday of each month in the afternoon.

Overview and Scrutiny – Scrutiny Committee

Who's on it?

12 members, (political balance - 6 Lib Dem; 5 Conservative; 1 Labour). In addition, the Council has made provision for 5 voting non-elected members (3 church representatives and 2 parent governor representatives) to have membership of the committee although they only have an official role to play when the committee is considering education related matters. Members of the Executive Board are not allowed to be members of the Scrutiny Committee.

What does it do?

The primary functions of the Scrutiny Committee are to:-

- Scrutinise decisions taken by the Executive Board and "call in" decisions taken by the Board but not yet implemented;
- Consider the scopes and outcomes of BV reviews; review service performance.

The Committee meets on a 3 weekly cycle, normally on a Thursday morning.

Overview and Scrutiny – Standards Committee

Who's on it?

3 elected members (1 from each party group) and 3 independent members. The Committee is chaired by an independent member.

What does it do?

The Committee is responsible for the promotion and maintenance of high standards of probity across the Council. The Committee meets as and when required.

Policy Advice – 6 Policy Panels

6 Policy Panels

Who's on them?

Each Panel has between 6 and 10 members (and is politically balanced) and is chaired by the Executive Board member holding the relevant portfolio.

What do they do?

The policy panels support the work of the Executive Board portfolio-holders and are essentially sounding boards for the discussion of policy matters. They have no role in the taking of decisions.

They have the opportunity to meet on a 6 weekly basis in 'slots' cleared for them in the Council's calendar. They can also use these slots for other methods of working. The meetings are essentially for members only.

The six portfolios (policy panels) are Lifelong Learning; Culture, Inclusion & Access; Environment & Transport; Finance; Care & Safety and Community Development.

Policy Advice - Policy Commissions

Who's on them?

Commissions will comprise members and may vary in size according to the task in hand. Their memberships will be politically proportioned.

What will they do?

They will examine in detail specific Council policies and recommend new or changed policies to the Council. They will meet in public and will enable the wider community to have a greater say in Council matters by involving local agencies and interested parties in the development of policy.

They can only be established by the full Council and will be time-limited.

District Council

DISTRICT COUNCILS WITHIN SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

- Mendip District Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- West Somerset District Council

Services Provided by the District Councils

- Arts
- Building Regulations
- Car Parks
- Cemeteries & Crematoria
- Concessionary bus fares
- Council Tax & Community Charge
- Council Housing for rent
- Council House sales
- Economic Development
- Elections
- Food safety & Hygiene
- Highway maintenance (in some towns)

- Historic Buildings
- Housing benefits
- Improvement Grants
- Leisure & Recreation
- Licensing
- Local Plans
- Parks & playing fields
- Pest control
- Planning applications
- Refuse collection
- Sports centres
- Street cleaning
- Swimming pools
- Markets (in some towns)
- Tourism
- Tree preservation
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PROGRAM

Monday 22nd July 2002

Julie Clarke Head of Consultancy and Management Services, Property and Environment.

General introduction to the Somerset County Council and a program overview.

Monday 22nd July 2002

Nigel Farrow Corporate Director, Property and Environment

Main contract for maintenance services is being split into three separate contracts

- Design functions
- Maintenance of roads and bridges
- Refuse sites (all collection by district shires)

Recently there has been political pressure for funding normally allocated to roads to be redirected into education and health. Funding now is being sought (needs are defined in Local Transport Plan) to adequately maintain asset. Maintenance is largely reactive but this has also been addressed by increasing expenditure so maintenance levels can be increased.

Road Maintenance contract originally set up as an Alliance/Partnering situation with WS Atkins, however the situation has now changed - (initially engaged on cost + basis) and the contract now needs to be redesigned and a new contract is being established.

Maintenance Operator's contract is up for renewal (July 2003) and will be subject to many changes. Somerset will take on more responsibility for the asset management/traffic planning functions and operator's responsibilities will be better defined.

Nigel was interested in the approach used by DIER who evaluate the costs to the transport industry and eventually to the business or consumer who they service of poorly constructed pavements and surface roughness.

Contracts are being let in various forms including BOOT, Design and Construct and standard lump sum tenders.

District Councils have the authority to approve developments/planning approval but the consequences of the development can have major impact on future programs for infrastructure development timing, funding and maintenance.

Tuesday 23rd July 2002

Nisha Devani, Projects Support Team Leader, Environment and Property Department Papers from Nisha included Corporate Self Assessment, Seeing is Believing (how the Audit Commission will carry out Best Value inspections) and Comprehensive Performance Assessment- Précis of draft guidance

The framework for setting performance targets and monitoring & reporting improvements is largely the responsibility of the national Audit Commission by review and inspection of Council's operations.

Somerset County Council have various service agreements with other bodies such as District Councils of which standards are specified, audited and measured by SCC under their own processes set up by the various departmental teams.

The principals for doing future policy development will be dealt with through the Corporate cross cutting policy approach involving;

- Actions requiring policy are identified from asset management, service requests, political and community representation via the Executive Councillor, previous internal/external audits or legislative compliance deficiencies.
- These policy areas will be prioritised through the Council executive.
- The directorate to take responsibility is nominated and a cross departmental representation will be appointed (could include external specialists, concerned community members)
- The Panel will prepare their preferred solutions detailing all the issues of legislative compliance, cost benefit analysis of the proposal, asset management principals being addressed and proposed timelines.
- The completed report will be returned to the Executive Committee for it's endorsement/refusal in terms of general acceptance of the principals, check legislative compliance and provide official endorsement of the proposal as a policy for Council.
- Various elements within the policy requiring further work, community application, trial and development will be allocated to specific Scrutiny members .

Somerset Cleaning have cleaning contracts and catering contracts, which have similar application to Total Workforce. It was formed under CCT, one of five. The other four units have been taken over by external providers, but Somerset cleaning is still strong. When the CCT legislation was introduced, Somerset cleaning needed to become more efficient, remove inefficient work practices, supplied better equipment, brought materials at bulk prices. There was resultant impact on the community as many employees became redundant (1500) who were largely part time female workers. With the outsourcing of work, it was difficult for the community to know who they were talking to and what responsibilities they had to deal with their problems. Recently the road maintenance operator have noted on their vehicles 'on behalf of WS Atkins'

Tuesday 23rd July 2002

Tony Lucking, County Secretary, Committee & Member Services

The political structure recently imposed by federal government to modernize councils, have required the restructuring presently in place now at Somerset County Council which split 'Executive' members, who will take all decisions, from the 'Scrutiny' members who assist in developing policy and question the Executive about decisions taken. The traditional Service Committees of Crime and Transport do not exist. There is still a Procurement Committee developing a policy as well as a joint venture with Taunton Deane District Council, which is currently developing the Taunton town plan.

Wednesday 24th July 2002

Robin Bush County Council Chairman, Somerset County Council
Robin is the equivalent to the Speaker of the house, he is a member of the 'in power' Liberal Democrats and is the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Inclusion and Access. He is unsure how his relationship will evolve with the Directorates. Robin has a strong personal commitment to the arts and is generally recognised in his capacity of Chairman as being the main person to represent the county at official functions.

Wednesday 24th July 2002

Michael Jennings, Acting Chief Executive and Corporate Director Education
As the structure has not been finalized Michael is filling the Chief Executive's position in a temporary capacity.

Wednesday 24th July 2002 Essex Water

The water authority covering the Somerset area, were doing epoxy relining of a 75 mm DICL watermain. There appeared to be excessive build up of corrosion considering the main was only 10 years old.

Process, the main was brushed clean with a metal brush followed with a plug being pulled through. The line is CCTV and reported on condition. The epoxy is delivered to the nozzle head, which rotates and sprays the epoxy and hardener (combined at the nozzle). Epoxy takes 16 hrs to cure. The rate of travel controls the thickness, the pump for both epoxy and the pumps control hardener. The tappings are sprayed around and don't require recutting.

Thursday 25th July 2002

Councillor Jill Shortland, Executive Member for Finance
Explained the operations of her portfolio which also included sustainability. I have working documents pertaining to this portfolio.

Thursday 25th July 2002

Simon Hurrell County Property Services Officer, Andy Hall Corporate Property Asset Manager.

Discussed Somerset County Council's approach to partnering and its procurement policy. Also the principals of asset management being applied to the maintenance of assets in the County Council. Further information on disc and web.

Friday 26th July 2002

Day meeting with Justin Druce WS Atkins, John Burr and Phil Crack

I was provided with video of the Jet Patcher of which Atkins have several and for which they use to patch potholes, seal cracks, remove rutting and improve surface shape, repair edge breaks, surface overlay. Cost for jet patcher £1,000 per day, does 400m²/hr approx. A trailer version is also available which provides a greater quantity of materials and reduces the need to return to the depot, jet patcher can only run for 2 hrs without more materials.

Also I was introduced to the Langport Town revitalisation project and was shown Justin's tender methods for a current project using excel spreadsheet. Interesting aspect was how Justin had pages for plant, labour and materials and copied from these worksheets up into the main sheet. Some sundries added as a proportion of the main labour rate ie cover for survey and minor plant as part of labour rate.

I was taken out on a field investigation to look at the Langport project, to see the jet patcher correcting out surface rutting in a minor rural road, I was shown the operation use of the edge cutter which is a machine for trimming vegetation and soil off sealed edges, lifting the soil and grass and spreads the material back on the farmers land. Alternatively the material can be deposited in a following truck. Also shown an electrically powered vacuum suction unit that can make lifting large flat paving slabs a lot safer and easier. Unit is very light, has handles for 2 people to operate in a safe manner.

Justin explained that WS Atkins have included in a recent bid that they will operate a labour transfer to multiskill the workforce and also they have a scheme, which recognises individuals that do not take excessive sick leave, and they are able to reward employees. In the past WS Atkins have listed employees who have used large amounts of sick leave and they found this to have a negative effect on employees who genuinely were ill. This idea would have to be managed properly as employees may not take sick leave when they should to get the bonus and this could cause people to become further injured/ill if they had taken time off.

WS Atkins are currently engaged on a cost + contract, both parties are not very happy with the outcome.

WS Atkins are not happy because they are too bound to current resources and work methods and do not have the freedom to make better arrangements. They are continually getting clients endorsement and are not free to make major strategies and long term plans. The current arrangement may have been the best way to transfer responsibilities to the new operator.

Somerset County Council is not happy as they believe they have lost the principal control of the asset. At the time of inception 7 years ago, 1500 Somerset Works employees were transferred to AS Atkins. 7 employees were left with Somerset. Under the new contract the asset management, works programming and design will revert back to Somerset County Council and WS Atkins will operate on performance-based criteria.

I heard the comments about blue and white-collar contracts ie actual maintenance works using day labour as well as running, design and asset management functions. WS Atkins also have blue-collar only contract - complete operations functions only.

Total Workforce could be structured to delivered both white and blue-collar functions, but I consider it would not be supported and possibly would have the same problems that WS Atkins have now.

WS Atkins provide a large amount of equipment to maintain road surfaces during winter by spreading salt on iced surfaces. There are environmental concerns about the continued use and salt effect on the environment.

Ws Atkins employ 200 people on maintenance day labour and the current contract with Somerset is approximately £25 million. Their responsibilities included road maintenance, bridge maintenance, verge management Inc slashing, wall trimming and major capital work. As well as the maintenance Atkins tender for capital type projects. The client has criticised Ws Atkins for not developing enough innovation. From the cost + there is no real incentive to change work practices. At present WS Atkins have poor cost control and cost planning mainly from the introduction of the new software.

Justin may spend 3 months of his time preparing a bid for a contract with all the supporting information.

Recent change with WS Atkins is to pull back from 3rd party projects and concentrate on the prime customer Somerset County Council - perhaps this change has come about too late to be able to secure the next maintenance contract.

Saturday 27th July 2002

I went to the Yeovil swimming centre and photographed features of the Goldenstones aquatic centre. The building area is 70 metres x 40 metres with combined sex dressing areas, cubicles for families, singles. Pool included 1/ 50 metre pool, wading pool, management/entrance area, restaurant with outdoor eating area, spa, sauna, steam, massage spaces. Locker/shower layout is very functional.

Sunday 28th July 2002

I had meeting with Roger Wotton of South Somerset District Council where we discussed the development approval process and Roger explained how the Parish Councils need to be consulted regarding any development applications. There is an appeal process if the districts refuse an application. Within the Somerset County Council there are 5 District Councils and over 300 Parish councils.

Monday 29th July 2002

I spent the day with Manager, Mr Wayne Bennett of Dillington House, a separate trading unit of Somerset County Council. Dillington House offers a very high quality training experience, both day only or live in. Sometimes Dillington staff prepares courses or alternatively they only provide the facilities. They specialise in wedding receptions, adult education courses, conferences, professional development, and conventional training for organisations such as Somerset County Council say in computers. The historic building is extremely well appointed and provides a valued experience in both high quality accommodation, beautiful gardens, excellent service and high quality appointments such as the art on display. It is of interest that Dillington House can operate on a budget surplus in the vicinity of £100,000 pa and most surplus funds are

sunk back into the asset for more improvements. I attended a guitar duet as part of a guitar summer school performance, which are regular features of this establishment.

Tuesday 30th July 2002

Alan Hellier inspecting the Eden Project, Cornwall and a stately Victorian country home. The Eden project has created a massive tourist industry in an otherwise worthless clay pit. I was very fortunate to have the visit provided for by Somerset County Council and to have a special guide arranged to provide background information on the construction techniques used. It is amazing how a tourist feature such as the Eden project can be built in an otherwise environmentally damaged area. The theme of the plantings is how man has used various plants found from all over the world. The visitor numbers have far exceeded expectation. Even whilst the project was under construction it met its visitor number requirements. The dome structures have fitted the site very well and some plants are showing signs of distress, even had to have a section of vines removed due to disease. Soil depth about 750 mm deep and further condition of the soil is planned with worm farms. Unstable rock has been rock anchored and shotcreted over. Grass appears to be well covered to embankments. Approximately 20 m of fill spread over floor, some site water retained on the site otherwise pumped and treated before discharge to the sea. Main roof arches erected on site and craned into position, structure temporarily supported on scaffolding until self-supporting.

Wednesday 31st July 2002

Paul Yeomans, Project Manager, Highways Group, Environment and Property. Paul spoke to me about professional groups in the UK in relation to local government and there did not appear to be a similar group to National Works Officers/TAMS. Regarding local government, the Institute of Civil Engineers in the UK has direct contact with National Government and assists with the formation of national policy and planning of the road network. There are 10 different sub associations of which Paul is the Chairman of the South West Transportation Engineering Group. The ICE is looking into the reintroduction of trams to urban areas, very focused on sustainability which includes recycling bitumen, recycling pavement, personal transport including car pooling, cycling, environmental management around the roadway, new emphasis on signing for pedestrians which will hopefully will encourage people to walk rather than drive, making walking a pleasant experience, provided good lighting consider personal security issues etc. At Somerset County Council there are officers who assess pavement condition and develop asset management plans. The problem of planning and co-ordinating 'other authorities' in the road reserves need to be addressed. ICE have approached national government on this matter and not interested, more focused on pressure group concerns.

The ICE has extensive professional development mainly through their program of meetings.(program attached) New development with the specification of stonemastic asphalt. Good Internet site to look at is www.highwaysmaintenance.com

Wednesday 31st July 2002

Ian Daniels, Somerset Cleaning Services, a separate business unit of the Somerset County Council. Ian's position is deputy head of the service. SCS has over 360 cleaning staff, mainly casual part timers (70% part time) turnover for cleaning is £2.5 million. Under CCT approx 6 years ago the cleaning, catering and design and print services were put on a business footing and the operation has survived and managed to expand. All employees are engaged on contracts that reflect the head contract for which they are engaged to work. They are required to work for 44 weeks out of the year. SCS - the cleaning division have 260 school cleaning contracts and 4 colleges, Government contracts, District Councils, WS Atkins, Housing e.g. elderly. Initially the pay rates were frozen to assist in the formulative years and a bonus scheme has been operating and now they have dropped behind the National rates that they have abolished profit share. It is planned to now upgrade the rates to be in line with national rates, which will happen, in another year. SCS attribute their success to having Assistant Area managers who live and work in the local communities throughout Somerset county Council. They know the school staff personally, may have children attend school, have empathy with the local conditions. Onsite staff is trained by the Assistant Area Managers. All materials are warehoused through the Council and improved purchasing power. In the Colleges because they are not considered part of Somerset County Council asset Joint Employment Schemes have been established where SCS provide all the cleaning materials and jointly the College and SCS engage the employees. This has a cost advantage with the payment of VAT on wages and makes SCS very cost competitive. SCS can react very quickly to market changes, contracts won & lost. Major performance indicators are \$/m2 cleaned, £10.71/m2

Labour cost as % of income 79%; overheads as a percentage of total cost , 15% SCS is a nil cost business unit to Council. They are seen as a non-profit organisation, any surplus is retained for cost overruns and returned back to provide extra equipment. To counter the high use of sick leave at one school if an employee attends work for 1 full month without claiming, they receive a 10% pay increase. This scheme is offered to schools and only some have accepted this method.

The staff is very proud of their achievements. Their strengths are seen as;

- Can base their price on a service level agreement negotiated with individual schools.
- Huge financial back up and security for client compared with small operators.
- Further expansion into private schools is possible.
- Service Level Agreements gives a clear basis on which to agree service with customer and price accordingly.
- Future markets available with District Councils, Police Authorities, Government bodies.

Weaknesses

- Recruitment of any staff.
- Cleaning specification is currently out of date.

Future threats

- Pay rates become too high and customers are lost.
- Stringent and expensive police checks on employees
- Schools could manage their own staff

When engaging staff the following happens;

- Where they have worked previously.
- Drivers licence.
- Check citizenship.

- Engagement provisional (3 months)
- Medical over 60 years old.
- Police check

Somerset County Council have a stress management policy that helps manage stress claims and assists employees that are suffering stress (received an award).

Originally under CCT a Board of Directors was established.

Main function was to;

- Received financial reports of business units, general managers summary.
- Reports included staff numbers, contracts tendered, contracts won, general state of market, risk management assessment on major projects in terms of business capacity.
- Considered business plans of Business units Grounds Maintenance, Cleaning, Transport, Catering, Plant Pool (now only Cleaning/catering/printing is the 'in-house' business unit)
- Approved business opportunities.
- Approved major staff appointments and jointly developed policy such as profit share.
- Approved capital investment.
- Met quarterly.

Thursday 1st August 2002

Jason Jones, Waste Operations Co-ordinator Waste Services, Environment and Property

Sat in on a meeting with the operator, Wyvern is a business unit of Somerset County Council. Items discussed were;

Client informed contractor that there is £4.3 million available for minor works and land purchases around the refuse centres. Work will included concrete hard standing areas, improved signage, replace kerbing to prevent trucks cutting corners, public information boards, railings.

This funding will go toward assisting SCC compliance with EU standards. The National Government will threaten to take over sites if compliance is reached. The hard standing areas are to assist with the collection of white goods.

There is an urgent need to control householder-dumping volumes. Householder dumping is restricted to 1 tonne per project for demolition projects etc (measured on the weighbridge). Anything in excess of this a contractor will need to be engaged/private dumping is required at cost of £60/tonne. There is a need to partner with adjoining Councils as many residents use Somerset's facilities. The refuse centres are spread throughout the Somerset County Council. Householders need to sort waste prior to taking it to a centre. New recycling targets are 55% of all waste received (this is a national govt target). County Council are now buying land for future expansion.

Thursday 1st August 2002

Dave Perrin, Human Resources Manager, WS Atkins.

Dave ran through the transition and labour reform from Somerset Works to WS Atkins. There has been a major transformation, which initially started with redundancies whilst as Somerset Works and then with a labour development program under WS Atkins. Initially all employees were assured that all their current conditions, representation and employment security were to be retained at WS Atkins. Initially there were concerns about employee's future, but now everyone seems to be going ok. The maintenance contract/third party works is growing and employee numbers are increasing. The works depots are all placed around the Council, possibly in very small communities, all employees are related or come from the immediate area. Very strong association with community and want to see the best done, many employees come from farming labourers, no idea of all OH &S, traffic management etc but they have exceptionally good work ethics, used to working in all weather, dirty conditions and with the proper support and training generally make good employees. With the third part works employees report to the sites, the employees have been interviewed and selected from the entire workforce. To find a new Project Co-ordinator/Manager all internal staff would be considered first and anyone showing the right aptitude/motivation would be given every chance to succeed in the new position.

Friday 2nd August 2002

Howard Norman, Contracts Manager, Highways Management, Environment and Property Department.

1st July 1996 the contract commenced with WS Atkins, it was a cost + contract for maintenance works with attached schedules of rates (library of operations) for major capital type projects. They are similar to what we have developed for our capital works. They form a benchmark and are to be compared with actual performance after work is completed. If rates are largely exceeded, then a re-measure is required and costs looked at closely. The rates are adjusted for cost of living increases. These rates reflect the work practices used by Somerset Works before being taken over by WS Atkins. WS Atkins do all maintenance, minor maintenance and repairs and major capital projects. They have design capability and complete all the works required by Council. If WS Atkins return savings under budget over a 12-month period, 50 % is for the contractor, the remaining profit is returned into further works. There is a tendency to return to in-house contractors with better management so these savings remain in house. The public want Somerset County Council to take the statutory responsibilities ie insurance, legal etc and to be seen to be different to Contractor.

Somerset County Council have 5 Area Highway Service Managers who deal with public requests and audit maintenance and contract works. Somerset County Council has installed an asset management system and will soon have a customer service centre. Contractor to have a linked customer request system. Current expenditure Maintenance £15 million, Capital £8 million, Management/asset inspection \$2 million. Council have cut back funding to roads and spent money on education/health. Now roads are a high priority.

Under the new contract from 1st July 2003, Somerset County Council will recontract the works with greater definition of Employers Agent (asset owner) and contractor. Council will have more of the customer service functions, contractor auditing, performance measurement, strategic planning and contractor will have to decide on solutions and

take responsibility for the work. The current library of operations will become an official schedule of rates tender and lump sum maintenance contract. The design contract has just been advertised and has a large emphasis on innovation and partnering. Somerset will engage consultants to design major projects.

It is envisaged that the new contract will have strong bias to partnering as Somerset and WS Atkins believe it is the best option. Both agree the cost+ option possibly has been operating for too long.

Friday 2nd August 2002

Seminar on Procurement Practices. The seminar covered the theory behind Rethinking Construction, the benefits of partnering as a project delivery method, performance measurement and performance indicators, and evaluation of why measure and how irrelevant data can be, what is best value. Also Somerset County council's Corporate Property Asset Management Plan implementation was explained.

5th August 2002 Mr Philip Fry Public Liability Insurance

Since September 11th there has been a massive restructuring of insurance, Philip believes insurance was being grossly undervalued and now the policies are being coasted more realistically.

Premiums also have risen because the earning capacity from share portfolios is now very low. Regarding local government the risks for an insurer are continually increasing. Somerset County Council have recently recontracted their insurance and obtained 5 tenders. Somerset self insure property and vehicle damage for any one claim up to £150,000. Somerset has provision for personal indemnity for employees including legal fees (unless the employee has been defiant of the system). Each separate department will pay the first £500 on any claim.

Somerset County Council has a risk management budget where the organisation can be proactive and address items as being needing funds to modify and reduce risk in the two categories of property or personal security. The funds are managed through a committee with representation from OH & S, insurance broker, 2 largest department heads, 1 small department, and 1 county property surveyor. The committee will trial specified remedial and assess the results.

Fire risk assessment on properties, retired fire brigade officers inspects various sites and train existing staff how to correctly assess their own site.

By having the risk assessment committee with available funds the following benefits can be realised;

- Reduces insurance premiums.
- Gives a global perspective on what is happening elsewhere.
- Encourages identification of remedial not otherwise realised.
- Facilitates quick action/response.

Asbestos in buildings is managed by assessment and policy for identification and treatments. Schools engage subcontractors to carry out works, they are not well supervised and there can be contamination occurring through their unsupervised activities.

The Council Executive and Insurance Committee identify issues with officers and determine priorities and action.

Corporate Development needs to be supported with staff development & this enables the greatest opportunity to reduce risk.

The insurance committee and officers work very closely with OH &S committees and representatives and often will seek their advice.

The internal audit process is an extremely important aspect to risk management.

Monday 5th August 2002

Tony Turner, Deane DLO

3 main sections Building Maintenance (100 employees), Grounds Maintenance (65 employees) Street Cleaning (22 employees) Deane have one street sweeper, it is leased and has two operators working the machine 7 days per week, 10 hours per day.

Deane also has an Applied footpath sweeper that has;

- The option to walk behind or ride on trailer.
- Swing out boom for hard to get at areas.
- Water pumping attachment - very effective.
- Snow sweeping and ploughing attachments.
- Trailer for village relocations
- Glass crusher
- Bag storage for rubbish hand collection.
- Very manoeuvrable, good visibility and easily dismantable.
- Has two operators working the machine.

Deane DLO do not do major capital construction projects.

With Parks now all the asset management is part of Deane DLO, work is arranged on set rates with no specific job quoting. Employees are engaged on a bonus scheme that is working well for the organisation and employees - not too difficult to administer. Of their turnover of £1.6 million they have surplus of around £20,000.

Community consider it to be very important to have permanently stationed people on the street cleaning with wheelbarrow and staff permanently manning parks. Also there is a spot cleaning crew who attend to issues around the district area. There is now a trend to be pulled back within Taunton Deane District Council. Deane DLO is keen to retain their business identity and not to loose their gains in efficiencies. Throughout many district councils there has been a trend to sell off the housing asset. This will ruin the future of Deane DLO.

Deane DLO work closely with groups like Friends of Parks.

Taunton Deane District Council is considering setting up Deane DLO as a trust with a small executive board. This model has been working very well for some leisure centre management.

It has the advantages of;

- Allows access to external funding.
- Reduces taxation
- Allows to move outside restrictive and inefficient Council awards and work practices.

Recent audit by national audit commission took Deane DLO approximately 6 months part time for 6 people to prepare.

Monday 5th August 2002

Graham Parsons, County Estates Manager

Visted two farming tenancies on the County estates, which comprise about 8,000 acres. In the estate there are village housing, many farm buildings, which are now being used for other uses such as camping barns and houses (barns could cost around £100,000 +). I spoke with family wishing to know more about Tasmania with the idea of emigrating at some time. This department also manage Gypsie sites and "right of ways".

6th August 2002

Paul Harewood, Business Manager Somerset Training Services.

Somerset County Training has undergone large changes since CCT. They principally now provide training services for school leavers in courses such as office administration, engineering, IT and Community Care. Clients may come from school leavers on unemployment benefits (requirement to do the course). Work placements are organised and often students do not continue with their training. This makes it very difficult for Training Centre audits as performance is measured by retention of students and their achievements.

If the centre's performance is low the contract could be cancelled.

Other clients may come from mature unemployed group, they may need special training ie basic maths, English, personal development. This group needs very special approach and skills. The training is generally very unstructured and based more on a job club/ support group. Needs to be very informal or the clients will not respond and continue. Training needs to have relevance with their work ie reading development with magazines/newspapers they enjoy, writing information such as time sheets. Clients sometimes are accessed through local radio, flyers. Generally it could be a scoping sessions to find out what training opportunities are available and hopefully gain their interest for them to continue on a formal course. The funding generally allows for 6 months duration.

600 trainees per annum, only about 25 from County Council.

Somerset Training may access Technical Colleges for support tutoring and they will engaged the college on a daily basis.

Somerset Training is set up around the Government funding for unemployed school leavers. Sometimes engaged by external business for courses, which would cost around £1200 per course. Structure very similar to Tasmania.

Somerset Training's performance is greatly limited by the failing of the school systems. Often have to start with very basic learning.

Mendip has a prevocational training program for disillusioned youth where they try all various work areas , prevocational courses and support life skill training. Training in the work place is supported with work place mentors/workplace assessors for the students where it is tried to co-ordinate the training from the centre with the vocation training at work. The process for checking competencies, explaining the workbooks etc.

Wednesday 7th August 2002

Luncheon meeting with the Leader of Council, Cathy Bakewell

Introduction to Cathy Bakewell and official thank you to the Somerset County Council.

Thursday 8th August 2002

Martin Ellis Site Manager Dimmer landfill.

Current rate of collection of refrigerators 1000 per 8 months.

In one area of an established fill there is a small amount of gas mitigation, bores and degassing is in progress as all gas needs to be recovered. In the old site water build-up is a problem. Before gas can be collected, dewatering needs to happen by injector pump to dewater below the gas collection level. Old site has a depth of 60 metres, Department of Environment will allow 25% settlement of the site. Gas collection system is installed by Wyvern, private company Nevara supply generation equipment and operate and distribute electricity to the grid. Is seen to be a very worthwhile exercise. National and EU controls seen to be very restrictive and inefficient. Eg levels need to be within 10 mm tolerance - totally unreasonable. The site for this landfill site appears to be poorly located - saw evidence of ground water being discharged, therefore contamination is very possible. Landfill site surrounded by creek, high chance of contamination. Site surrounded by high quality farmland - could be accused of stock contamination. Seagulls are a large problem, net frames are available to stop birds at tip face and control wind blown rubbish. Site also has stockpile for refrigerators, which have to be degassed and stripped down before recycling. Also bins for waste and recycling for the public to drop off. When busy may fill 4 bins in an hour.

Landfill trenches are excavated into rural land, a 1 metre thick clay capping is installed to very high standards. A series of interconnected drainage systems are installed with manholes raised above the finished capped surface. Excavated material stocked piled for latter capping to cover the landfill. All major road infrastructure installed to service the landfill site and gas extraction will happen once landfill is complete. Established landfill area being trailed for willow farming - varied results.

Major green waste composting happening, Dept of Environment very concerned about smell from composting.

Thursday 8th August 2002

Carymoor Environmental Trust

At the Dimmer Landfill site, and in association with Waste Management Strategy, a joint venture has been established, Carymoor Environmental Trust. All the information about Carymoor can be found on www.carymoor.org.uk

Thursday 8th August 2002

Radio report Public Accounts Committee

Very concerned about the number of incidents the streets are being dug up for the installation and maintenance of public infrastructure - one incident where the same street has been excavated 300 times in the last 12 months. There are 15 phone companies, some installing their own network, separate authorities for water, power, gas neither are telling each other their program nor trying to co-ordinate their works together. Planning to use existing legislation and approvals for charging rates to force authorities to work together.

Friday 9th August 2002

Julie Clarke, Head of Consultancy and Management

Proposed visit to Charterhouse Training Centre, however traffic congestion was so slow we were unable to meet with the people. Had good discussions with Julie.

Monday 12th August 2002

John Batt, County Youth Service Manager.

Visited Taunton Offices and discussed general programs. Went with Ewan Black, Senior Youth Worker to the Bridgewater Roller Coaster youth centre. It was currently running a schools program and had young people casually meeting. The centre has recently been the centre for vandalism damage, but now with improved fencing and video surveillance the rate of damage appears to be changing. Somerset County youth services have found the youth who were originally involved in the development of the facility approximately 5 years ago are now the main offenders with vandalism. There are programs at the centre for helping young people be informed on issues of drugs and life skills. If certain problems are identified specific training will be arranged to target the problems. There is the need to be well co-ordinated with all authorities including social welfare, schools, police, fire brigade, health etc. Saw evidence of a submission for a youth program that targeted police information on high crime rates. Recent program is trying a new approach to prevent youth who repeatedly offend from being in public areas after a certain time ie curfew. It has been found the old fashioned swimming pools were a lot cheaper to attend, now new leisure/fitness centres built in their place have alienated the needy youth because entrance charges are too high for the new service (ie run as a business). Also visited the proposed the Hamp Centre which will be redeveloped for a youth centre.

Visited the Bridgewater YMCA. Had several interesting aspects;

Captain Pugwash, a program for the use and maintenance of the 10 miles of canal between Bridgewater and Taunton. The YMCA has their own boat available for hire. The centre also has accommodation facilities for 28 young people between the ages of 16 and 25. These facilities are bed-sitters, self-catering and supervised 24 hours per day. There are plans to develop another 12. The residents have to be assessed prior to being accepted, there is an individual program agreed and life skill training and personal development tuition will be programmed. The accommodation is seen as a stepping-stone to safely get the young people established and competent in looking after themselves and then moved on to more permanent arrangements. Continuing contact after leaving the centre is encouraged. Approximately at any one time 50% of the tenants will be unemployed, 25% in further education and 25% in employment. The natural mix is encouraged as the differing groups interact and assist each other. The YMCA is managed by a board of directors representing a broad range of youth support within the community. Various other programs being run to develop self esteem, communication, group work, transition to employment, IT development. The centres encourage youth to commence the Prince's Trust Volunteer Scheme www.princes-trust.org.uk Also a program to reach young people in rural communities and facilitate rural community development eg Watchett where they have developed employment opportunities, business mentoring. Somerset has a mobile youth centre, which is a trailer and can be positioned at various rural villages as the need may arise. Attended YMCA in Taunton, Taunton Victoria Park youth group (joint venture with Bernadoes and Taunton Deane District Council) and Wellington youth centre. At these youth centres, if

training programs are completed, formal certification can be attained and youth are supported positively. Old youth centre in Taunton has outgrown its usefulness, currently being sold and a central 'drop in centre' will be established - more in line what the youth want. Youth workers meet with young people in the street, at discos etc, youth workers attend under aged discos. Also workers will spend a large amount of time being proactive in the schools and usually are seen to be taking on a more preventative than reactive role.

Tuesday 13th August 2002

Discussions with Allan Hellier

Training plans are developed with individual employees at their time of position review. These plans are collated into a departmental database, evaluated in terms of priority and available funding for the whole Department. This approach appears to have merit as it is better for assessing appropriateness with regards to the organisational strategy and funding allocations.

Tuesday 13th August 2002

Nigel Kee ph 04158837180 WS Atkins Surfacing Manager.

Crack sealing is generally avoided because of the dangers to motor cyclists. WS Atkin's approach would be to plane and resurface any cracked areas.

PMB's are used exclusively in all sealing, whether stone mastick asphalt or resurfacing chippings.

Stone mastick asphalt is generally placed 35 mm thick, edges are planed between 1 and 2 metres from the kerb, It is composed of a single size aggregate (14mm), the binder will have cellulose fibre as well as PMB's. It is applied with a paver and rolled with a dual drum roller. The texture is very open and permits water to drain below the surface of the seal. Tarmack 'Masterpave' is a typical application. Life expectancy is 15 to 20 years on major carriageways.

Resurfacing generally binder with PMB's and chippings of 6mm in urban local streets otherwise 10 mm with 6mm rolled in (single coat emulsion).

Recently acquired a Phoenix chipper spreader which is fabricated at Chard, Somerset and is more efficient spreader than the truck boxes.

First resurfacing trials underway with the Jet Patcher this week.

Contacted Pheonix Engineering of Chard for their range of surfacing equipment including chipper spreader and hotbox attachments. Web site www.pheonixeng.co.uk.

Old way was to roll 25 mm stone chips into freshly placed asphalt, some repairs currently still being done.

14th August 2002

Dave White, Principal Safety Officer Somerset County Council

Possibly not as developed as our systems for identifying safety problems and dealing with safety issues. The stress management policy will definitely be of use to us.

15th August 2002

George Pittendreigh, Chief Architect Somerset County Council.

Attended a pre-completion site meeting with school staff to check on quality of finish required and ascertain if finishings and fittings were correct prior to client occupying building in two weeks. Interesting heating system used where a concrete slab has been laid, polystyrene panels positioned on concrete, water heating tubes are inserted within polystyrene blocks and then the tongue and grooved flooring placed over the blocks. There is no fixings of the floor sheeting. The skirtings hold the flooring in place, flooring appears quite rigid, can feel some slight movement, but would not be noticeable when carpeted. Regarding building maintenance, using timber fascia, barges will require major maintenance, possibly should have used cement sheet or metal fascias. Also noted the asphalt footpaths are finished with 50 x 150 precast concrete edging on 300 x 200 mm kerb mix, this appears to be overkill. Windows now being made with pvc frames - seen better for recycling, aluminium seen as not sustainable. The school were given all the information about sustainability in buildings but chose to remain conventional, to cut costs. Somerset County Council still employ Clerks of Works to check quality and project administration. Not reliant on the quality system producing the required result as we do and I believe they have better assurance that job will be completed within the terms of the contract.

15th August 2002

Grounds Maintenance section, Somerset County Council

Maintenance contracts for schools grounds maintenance is very prescriptive. Actual cuts, maintenance work is clearly defined for every school including the square metres of the area to be done. The County Council now have the opportunity to move into more long term strategy development. However they still have a lot of time to administer the various contracts and do auditing of sites. Same system as us with tree maintenance. All parks and road verges are mostly maintained by the district councils. The Somerset County Council has had a huge success with the maintenance insurance scheme of which I have a copy, where 94% of all schools are signed up under the scheme. This department do not have any spare funding for developmental work. All schools are funded from National Government direct (the building project was also funded) and they engage SCC to engage a contractor and supervise work. Variations are issued for changes to asset etc. All Fire Brigades, Old peoples homes, schools are maintained under this department. In the schools youth are encouraged to participate with landscaping designs, raised beds are provided so class rooms can have a small garden. At most schools there are after hours gardening clubs. SCC is engaged by the schools to provide a basic landlord type role and audit sites. As noted there appears to be a large doubling up of supervision/auditing functions which could be rationalised.

Summary

What has the time at Somerset County Council provided to me?

It has been a privileged opportunity to observe first hand the application of the National Government's white paper into local government reform and to understand and consolidate various aspects of this reform process that are applicable for our situation in Tasmanian Local Government. It has been worthwhile to see the way the organisation responded to CCT legislation, the follow up practices of Best Value out of which has developed directions for Procurement and now the application of Comprehensive Performance Assessment. During my time in the Somerset County Council I have spent a large amount of time with the separate business units concerned with delivering a wide range of the services for the County Council. The challenges I have observed that are most topical with these units are generally related to meeting acceptable performance standards now being measured under CPA. The change of the road maintenance contract with WS Atkins is of concern to both employees with Somerset County Council and those of WS Atkins. The new contract will be let within a fully competitive environment, but still a partnering approach to ensure "Best Value" and the changes required to be introduced by both organisations in meeting their operational targets will have major consequences. The rationalisation effect of Best Value principles such as policies for procurement and partnering will hopefully ensure the focus on the service delivery will not be lost.

Within Somerset County Council there is concern about the National Government's agenda for the development of Regional Authorities. There are some examples of what the future model may be here already. In the UK there are two authorities that have been established to take on the management of all services on a regional basis, with the district councils taking on more local implementation. Is this a possibility for us in Tasmania? To commence working towards a more effective and efficient local government service in the Tamar region, I can see great value in applying partnering principles with our adjoining Councils in the Tamar region and if possible this is a process I wish to be part of. The process will require well defined systems for which the partnership will need to operate under, specific measures for determining success of the venture, partner trust, specific members contributions, all possible activities that could be better serviced by what authority, works that are done better by one unit need to be done across the Councils by that authority, where greater plant utilisation can be achieved, where can employee upskilling/work culture be changed by using strategic work placements.

Within my sessions with the business units I have observed the true workings of the specifier/operator functions where the process is permitted to be more effective, as the operator has greater control over the total process. For example WS Atkins respond to problems identified by the specifier, they develop solutions and determine appropriate action, the specifier only gets involved if the solutions do not work. With Wyvern the solutions regarding waste management are being found in a very consultative and equally involved team approach. Dillington reports mainly through one specifier and is being run very effectively, it has a sound customer base and should continue to provide a good service. Somerset Training and Somerset Youth are very dependent on continued funding and contracts and may need to broaden their customer base. They still develop their own programs and determine the best way to respond to needs as they arrive.

