

## Minutes

of the Virtual Meeting of

## The Executive

### Wednesday, 9 September 2020

held via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Commenced: 2.30 pm Meeting Concluded: 3.45 pm

#### Councillors:

P Donald Davies (Chairman)

P Mike Bell (Vice Chairman)

P Ashley Cartman

A James Tonkin

P Bridget Petty

P Mark Canniford

P Caritas Charles

A Catherine Gibbons

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

**Also in attendance:** Councillors Nigel Ashton, Mike Bird, Steve Bridger, John Cato, Andy Cole, Peter Crew, Mark Crosby, Karin Haverson, Sandra Hearne, John Ley-Morgan, Marcia Pepperall, Terry Porter, Geoffrey Richardson, Mike Solomon, Richard Westwood.

#### Officers in attendance:

Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Sheila Smith (Director of People and Communities), Nick Brain (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Hazel Brinton (Corporate Services), Michèle Chesterman (Corporate Services), Gemma Dando (Corporate Services), Alex Hearn (Development and Environment), Paul Morris (Corporate Services), Mike Riggall (Corporate Services), Melanie Watts (Corporate Services)

#### EXE Chairman's Welcome

19

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this virtual Executive meeting.

He explained the procedures to be followed at the meeting and confirmed that decisions taken at this meeting would have the same standing as those taken at a physical meeting of the Executive in the Town Hall.

The Chairman reminded everyone that the meeting was being livestreamed on the internet and that a recorded version would be available to view within 48 hours on the North Somerset Council website.

At the invitation of the Chairman the Executive Members introduced themselves for the benefit of those in attendance and members of the public watching the meeting online.

**EXE 20 Addresses by members of the public (ESO 6 as amended by SO 5A) (Agenda Item 1)**

None

**EXE 21 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37) (Agenda Item 3)**

None

**EXE 22 Minutes of the meeting held on  
(1) 24 June 2020 (Agenda Item 4)**

**Resolved:** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

**(2) 29 July 2020 extraordinary executive (Agenda Item 4)**

**Resolved:** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

**EXE 23 Forward Plan dated 2 September 2020 (Agenda Item 8)**

Councillor Davies presented the forward plan.

**Resolved:** that the forward plan be noted.

**EXE 24 Month 4 Budget Monitor for 2020/21 (Agenda Item 9)**

The Head of Corporate Accountancy presented the report which provided a summary of the Council's financial performance for its revenue and capital budgets after the first four months of the year and included details surrounding the current issues, impacts and future pressures and risks affecting the Council as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as those issues affecting the Council's business as usual operational activities. The report contained information regarding financial support received from the government to date to fund some of the COVID pressures and also outlined the steps being taken to address a potential shortfall in order to deliver a balanced budget at the end of the financial year.

Members' attention was drawn to page 2 of the report which provided a reminder of the financial context reported to the Executive in July 2020 at which a potential net overspend of circa £5m had been forecast after allowing

for the additional government funding that had been announced. The majority of the budget issues identified at that time were related to COVID-19 impacts. Members were guided to the table on page 3 of the report which showed that the overall position had slightly improved with the budget shortfall or overspend now standing at £4.4m. However, it was important for Members to understand that this is was a net position and that the council's total budget pressures for the year would be significant. The table in the report identified that these stood over £18m but it was recognised that the Council would receive more grant income during the year to fund some of these pressures from central government

It was noted that a series of budget mitigations had been introduced to reduce the overall impact in the current financial year and discussions with central government with regards funding were ongoing. Members were made aware of a recently announced fund from the government to help compensate for losses from COVID-19 where Councils had suffered a significant loss of income in certain areas (such as car parking for example) with the provision of funding of 75% to compensate for those losses.

Section 3.3 of the report was highlighted which provided details of the issues affecting each of the Council's service areas and where these related to COVID activity or not. Reference was made to two areas which had seen increases in demand for their services, namely, the placement costs for children's social care and home to school transport activity. Section 3.6 of the report on page 14 was referred to which provided details of all of the Council's reserves and highlighted that the current balances were not excessive. Finally, Members' were guided to Section 3.7 of the report which covered the Council's capital programme up to 2025 which was reported as being the highest it has been for many years (£260m) following the recent inclusion of the housing infrastructure project.

Councillor Cartman thanked the Head of Corporate Accountancy and the Finance team for their hard work in compiling the report. He referred to the fact that the deficit was 2½% of the Council's net budget and whilst not significant in percentage terms even a 1% shift could result in over a £1m shortfall for the Council. He stressed that the budget contained many inherent risks and uncertainties more so than in previous years.

In discussing the report reference was made to the percentage of North Somerset residents receiving financial support to assist with the payment of their Council Tax and the First Steps Initiative. Members also discussed the number of Children Looked After and adult social care pressures. It was pointed out that a significant amount of the spending that had been COVID related had been on long term and short-term care packages and that government funding had not been sufficient to meet that need. It was stressed that there were exceptional financial and professional challenges facing the care sector and local care homes in particular.

**Resolved:**

(1) that the projected revenue and capital budget forecasts as detailed within the report, including the likely impacts that the Covid-19 emergency response may have on the Council's overall financial position in the short and medium term be noted;

(2) that the revenue budget virements with Section 3.4 of the report that have been approved during the year be noted; and

(3) that the amendments to the capital budgets as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report be approved.

**Reasons for the decision:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**EXE 25 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget 2021/22 (Agenda Item 10)**

Councillor Cartman presented the report which provided an update with regards to assumptions which underpinned the council's medium term financial plan, covering the 3-year period to 2023/24, which was approved in February 2020. Whilst it was important that the Council's limited resources continued to be allocated and aligned to the priorities identified within the Corporate Plan, the council recognised the need to review and reassess all aspects of its financial planning, particularly given the uncertainties and pressures which had arisen as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members' attention was drawn to Section 3.6 of the report on page 6 which referred to the Council taking a more transformational and innovative approach. The report proposed that the council's MTFP planning would be underpinned by and integrated with transformation and innovation themes. Each directorate would establish its own transformation programme which would seek to deliver service-related changes and initiatives at less cost. To support this approach a number of transformational workshops had been organised to consider how to deliver better quality, better value and improved services for the same amount of money. All Members were encouraged to engage in the process.

Members welcomed the fresh approach. It was acknowledged that there would be some incredibly difficult decisions to be made and it was vitally important that all Members were fully engaged.

**Resolved:**

(1) that the updated revenue budget projections as at September 2020 within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTPF) as detailed within the report be noted; and;

(2) that the process, next steps and timescale for finalising the MTPF for the period 2021 to 2024, and also for setting the revenue budget for the 2021/22 financial year be noted.

**Reasons for the decision:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**EXE 26 Adoption of Employment and Skills Inclusive Growth Strategy (Agenda Item 10)**

The Assistant Director (Placemaking and Growth) presented the report which sought approval to adopt the Employment and Skills Inclusive Growth Strategy which set out how the Council would work with partners, employers, residents and workers who commuted into North Somerset from elsewhere, to improve peoples' skills and enable them to access good quality employment, and support businesses to access a talented workforce that boosted productivity and aided inclusive economic growth.

Members were informed that the Employment and Skills Inclusive Growth Strategy linked to the wider work on economic recovery and renewal as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A key part of renewal would be providing opportunities for inclusive growth and wellbeing for people in North Somerset and the strategy was intended to help to deliver on that ambition. Members noted that the impact of COVID-19 had been very significant and the emerging impacts were very stark including substantially increasing levels of unemployment. This was having a disproportionate impact on certain sectors of the population including black and ethnic minorities (BAME), women, under 25s and those in precarious work.

Members were made aware of the five priorities in the strategy which were empowering young people to find their potential; addressing under-employment and facilitating progression pathways; ensuring into work support for those with barriers to employment and reducing inequalities; developing the workforce skills for jobs in emerging sectors and filling skills gaps; and creating the conditions for businesses to attract and keep the talent they need. It was noted that for every priority or objective there were tangible actions to take. The strategy would form part of and sit alongside some more strategic thinking about North Somerset's economic resurgence.

Councillor Canniford thanked the Assistant Director (Placemaking and Growth) and the team for an excellent and really useful piece of work that brought into sharp focus the task facing the Council and its partners. It was stressed that COVID-19 had made things difficult for many residents but had presented the opportunity to work with the Council's skills providers to ensure North Somerset residents were in a better place for recovery. It would enable those who were finding their employment more difficult or and wished to move into a different sector to look through the skills strategy to improve their opportunities.

**Resolved:** that the Employment and Skills Strategy (ESS) be adopted.

**Reasons for the decision:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**EXE 27 Endorsement of Weston Placemaking Strategy and Weston-super-Mare Place Identity (Agenda Item 12)**

Councillor Canniford presented the report. The Council had been preparing a Placemaking Strategy for Weston town centre to reposition its long-term vision and develop a package of projects and programmes that could be delivered along the way. The ambition was that the Strategy would support the Council and its partners to secure public funding and private investment to the town. A consortium led by Turner Works had been procured to lead a programme of engagement and prepare the Strategy. A key part of the project was also to develop a new brand identity to better broadcast the inherent value and future opportunities of the town to a broad audience including potential visitors, investors and new residents.

Members were informed that the strategy had been embarked upon because although Weston was roughly half of the population of North Somerset and well on its way to becoming the second biggest place in the region after Bristol it was showing signs of a lack of investment particularly in the market place. It was noted that cities and large towns were very complicated places and it was difficult to make changes in those places without single big signature investments which were inherently difficult to achieve. It was noted that town centres were already going through phenomenal changes as a result of fundamental economic forces around spending behaviours which had been radically accelerated due to lockdown and the pandemic. It was acknowledged that coming out of lockdown it would be necessary to think very differently about the future of town centres and high streets.

It was highlighted that the strategy in the report was completely aligned to the government's policy on its approach to funding regeneration in towns. A strong vision was essential and that vision must be built with a convincing and broad sign of community ownership with comment on brand identity.

Councillor Canniford thanked the Assistant Director (Placemaking and Growth) for the amount of work that had gone into the project and added that the Weston Placemaking Strategy was a really exciting, timely and quality piece of work that would help the Council re-focus its aims around Weston in particular with benefits for the wider district. Members were informed that there had been over 5,000 responses in the consultation undertaken as part of the project and a great deal of engagement with businesses and community groups and organisations.

Member's attention was drawn to the branding guidelines which could be used by event organisers and businesses with the aim of achieving common branding. The branding chosen had been the most popular in the consultation. Some benefits had been achieved from the project already with the government awarding funding for Weston general stores. This was acknowledged as a positive move forwards and it was hoped there would be full support from all Members for the project.

In discussing the report Members stressed the importance of connectivity and the working together and that this piece of work was vital and crucial not just for Weston but for the entire authority. Members supported the efforts to strengthen the offer and to celebrate what Weston had to offer. Members recognised that the key challenge was delivering practical interventions that could make a difference.

**Resolved:**

- (1) that the Weston Placemaking Strategy as the new vision for regeneration, placemaking and economic development for Weston town centre, superseding the "Prospectus for Change" document, subject to final graphical tweaks be endorsed;
- (2) that the council's participation in the Weston Place Agency and the Executive Member for Business, Economy and Employment and the Assistant Director Placemaking and Growth being nominated as the council's representatives for the first 12 months be endorsed and;
- (3) that the use of the new WsM place identity and guidelines for promoting place-based communications campaigns for Weston-super-Mare be endorsed.

**Reasons for the decision:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**EXE 28 Renewal of Existing Public Space Protection Orders (Agenda Item 13)**

Councillor Bell presented the report. Members were aware that Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were introduced across the district of North Somerset Council on the 20 October 2017 to deter individuals or groups of individuals committing anti-social behaviour in public spaces. Every three years, legislation dictated that these orders must be

reviewed. The review had identified the orders recommended for renewal (Appendix 1). The review process had also identified some additional PSPO requirements however these would be subject to public consultation and were therefore not considered as part of this decision but would be brought back to the Executive at the meeting on the 8 December 2020.

Members discussed the process of reviewing the orders through the Community and Corporate Organisation (CCO) Policy and Scrutiny Panel and All Member workshops. It was important to emphasise that the report related to existing PSPOs.

Councillor Davies thanked the Environmental Health Service Manager, Community Safety and Scrutiny for their work on the report.

**Resolved** that all existing Public Space Protection Orders in accordance with section 60 of the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be renewed.

**Reasons for the decision:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**EXE Oral reports of Executive Councillors (Agenda Item 14)**

**29**

At the invitation of Councillor Davies, the Director of Public Health provided an update on the current situation in North Somerset in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. He drew attention to the fact that all Members would have received a message from the Chief Executive indicating that COVID-19 numbers were increasing in line with other areas in the UK. Because of North Somerset's relatively low population base the rate had gone up a bit quicker than other areas and this was a cause of concern as a few more situations were developing particularly in care homes and schools. Members were assured that the Council was working with all of those settings alongside colleagues in Public Health England, the Health Protection Team and other colleagues in the Council in order to provide the right levels of support for all those settings to be able to manage those situations appropriately and to put in place any control measures which may be needed to control the virus and prevent onward transmission. Along with the rest of the country the growth in cases was primarily in young people (some of it related to foreign travel and some of it related to behaviours in terms of close proximity and large gatherings. Members were assured that the Council would continue to analyse the data in terms of cases coming through and making sure individual cases were followed up to try and reduce the spread to the networks those people were part of. He referred to the forthcoming announcement by the Prime Minister at 4.00 pm. It was essential to maintain social distancing, use face coverings in public spaces and follow good hygiene procedures whilst recognising that any one of us could quite inadvertently spread the virus quite quickly and easily particularly if engaging in situations where there was a high risk such as social gatherings and not complying with foreign travel restrictions.



Members noted that if everyone worked together and showed consideration to each other in terms of the risks not just to themselves but others and especially those vulnerable members of society it would be possible to prevent further spread of the virus. The increase in numbers should be viewed as a wake-up call that no-one was immune from the virus. It was also acknowledged that everyone should take responsibility to do the right thing. When discussing an increase in numbers of cases being predominately amongst young people Members received clarification that the group referred to was teenagers and those aged 20-30. Some concerns were raised with recent headlines in the press demonising young people for spreading COVID and that there were plenty of young people acting responsibly and within the guidelines.

With regards face coverings advice was sought on when to wear them and if they should be worn outside if it was not possible to maintain social distancing. It was considered to be good practice as an additional barrier and helped to signal to people to be considerate in terms of moving around others.

Councillor Petty reported of a recent incident of a fire at Winterstoke Road Depot, Weston super Mare. No-one had been injured but four vehicles had been damaged. The Fire Service had attended but the cause of the fire was not known at this time. Biffa had provided replacement vehicles and all crews were now working with the hope that there would be a good service for the remainder of the week.

Councillor Charles reported on the launch of the Citizens Panel which was part of the administration's commitment to put things in place to enable citizens to be more engaged in influencing the policy and decision making of the Council. He urged people who were interested or know of someone who may be interested to get involved as it was vitally important for their voices to be heard. He also referred to the re-opening of libraries in North Somerset and urged people to visit the Council's website or refer to the local press for opening times.

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Chairman

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