



Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Council

Tuesday, 19 September 2023

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 6.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 7.42 pm

Councillors:

Wendy Griggs (Chairperson)

Nigel Ashton
Mike Bell
Christopher Blades
Steve Bridger
Peter Bryant
Peter Burden
Mark Canniford
Ashley Cartman
Annabelle Chard
Caritas Charles
James Clayton
Jemma Coles
John Crockford-Hawley
Ciaran Cronnelly
Stuart Davies
Oliver Ellis
Catherine Gibbons
Jenna Ho Marris
Nicola Holland
Clare Hunt
Sue Mason
Hugh Malyan
Stuart McQuillan
Tom Nicholson
Ian Parker
Robert Payne
Marcia Pepperall
Bridget Petty
Lisa Pilgrim
Terry Porter
Michael Pryke
David Shopland
Luke Smith

Timothy Snaden
Mike Solomon
Helen Thornton
Joe Tristram
Richard Tucker
Annemieke Waite
Roger Whitfield

Apologies: Councillors: Peter Crew (Vice-Chairperson) Mike Bird, Andy Cole, Steve Hogg, Patrick Keating, Dan Thomas, Martin Williams and Hannah Young.

Absent: Councillor Marc Aplin.

Officers in attendance: Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Carolyn Fair (Interim Director of Children's Services), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Lucy Shomali (Director of Place), Mike Riggall (Information and ICT Security Manager) and Jane Horner (Programme Management Officer).

Partaking via Microsoft Teams:

Officers: Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Hayley Verrico (Director of Adult Social Services), Hazel Brinton (Committee Services Manager), Victoria Barvenova (Climate Emergency Project Manager) and Geoff Chamberlain (Head of Procurement)

COU Chairperson's Welcome

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The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the face-to-face meeting. She informed members of the death of ex-Councillor Mark Crosby, formerly Chairperson of Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel and expressed her sincere condolences on behalf of herself and the Council to his family.

COU Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

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None declared.

COU Minutes

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Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of 11 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

It was noted that Councillor Parker had attended the meeting but had arrived late and not sent apologies as stated in the draft minutes.

COU Support Services 2025 Commissioning Intentions

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Councillor Bell presented the report. He informed members of the background to the current contract which was due to expire in September 2025. He noted that a range of support services were currently commissioned through Agilysys which sub-contracted significant contract parts to a revenues and benefits solution and support services provider (Liberata Ltd) and further contracted parts to additional specialist providers.

He added that the report sought to restructure the commissioning. The council was looking to move towards a multiple provider model to offer best value for money and which would be incrementally implemented during 2023-2025. A strong options appraisal had been carried out over several years and would continue as the process went forwards.

In debating the report, members highlighted the following points: concerns around the council's level of interaction with residents; concerns about the contracting out of services in the past and the opportunities if services were brought back in-house; the preparation of an in-house option as a comparator for each part of the service; whether outsourcing was in the public interest; the limited number of market operators for some parts of the services being tendered; the positives of the Council Connect service; the timely adoption of innovative technology with more nimble contracts; that various solutions were possible and should be outcome not process driven.

Councillor Bell assured members that all options were being considered and that there were elements that the council was looking to bring in-house but there were no easy solutions. The council was aiming to both deliver the financial savings required but also the services and support which residents sought. He recognised that the current contract had not been flexible and responsive enough in the past when change had been required.

Resolved: that the Council approved the commissioning intentions for Support Services as follows:

1. To move toward a multi-provider model.
2. To stagger contract end dates so that existing services were re-procured incrementally.
3. To procure the revenues and benefits service using a government framework.
4. To develop an options appraisal for ICT provision to compare a shared service within the public sector vs. a commercial supplier offer.

COU 60 Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan update and progress report

Councillor Waite presented the report which summarised the council's progress with the Climate Emergency Action Plan. She noted that the report proposed some changes to the council's climate change governance. Several success stories were included in the report including decarbonising the council's estate and transport and the Bus Service Improvement Plan. She added that the council had participated in schemes offering energy saving grants to residents and net zero grants to businesses and had adopted the important Flood Risk Management Strategy. She highlighted the award of the Carbon Literacy Silver Award to the council.

She noted however that the council was off target to reach net zero by 2030 even though it had reduced its carbon emissions by 24%. She added that the report set out the council's pathways to net zero and how it intended to strengthen the governance of the Climate Change Action Plan.

In debating the report, members commented on the following matters: the extent

to which climate change and the reasons for it could be controlled; the long term capital investment requirements to reduce emissions from the council's own buildings; concern over children growing up in a climate of fear; affordability of measures given a shrinking economy; engagement with community to communicate the urgency and cost of the measures needed given the cost of living crisis; the requirement for an adequate transport system; whether service density of public transport would be encouraged through mixed use developments to encourage active travel; concerns over infrastructure for electric vehicles; rate of progression of climate change initiatives; the opportunities afforded to the council and the North Somerset area by addressing climate change issues; the source of match funding; the current public consultation on the council's Corporate Plan; consideration of a Citizen's Assembly approach and that initiatives should be in support of services and not at the expense of them.

It was noted that it was in the council's interest to modernise its own buildings so that they were fit for purpose and efficient to reduce ongoing energy costs despite the requirement to match grant funding.

In summing up, Councillor Waite acknowledged that some aspects were not in the control of the council and that planning housing around existing settlements was preferable to avoid unnecessary travel. She reiterated the need to engage with residents and anticipated bringing the next update report to the Council in six months to ensure it was robust. This would also allow the relevant scrutiny panel to be engaged. She welcomed the idea of a Citizens Assembly.

Resolved: that the Council:

1. Formally reconfirmed the commitment of North Somerset Council to achieving Net Zero across North Somerset by 2030, and to the delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan, in recognition of the criticality of the Climate Emergency.
2. Note the progress, actions and proposals recorded in the report (including improved governance) and recognised the need for an acceleration in delivery.
3. Endorsed the proposed creation of a Net Zero Pathway for North Somerset Council, to be reported to a future meeting of North Somerset Council.
4. Approve the delegation of authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate, Waste and Sustainability, to submit funding bids of up to £10m (including match-funding of up to £5m) to support the decarbonisation of assets owned by North Somerset Council.

COU 61 Portishead Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Canniford introduced the report and commended the town council on the work put in to draw up the Neighbourhood Plan for Portishead. He explained that once "made", the Portishead Neighbourhood Plan and its policies would sit alongside the current North Somerset Core Strategy, Development Management Plan and Site Allocations Plan. Alterations may need to be made once the new Local Plan had been adopted.

Resolved: that the Council “made” the Portishead Neighbourhood Plan.

COU 62 Corporate Parenting Report

Councillor Gibbons presented the report. She highlighted the training offered to members in the councillor resource area and outlined their responsibilities as Corporate Parents. She informed members that the pledge (“Our Promise”) made during the previous administration was being refreshed and invited members to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

COU 63 Proposed changes to quorum for Policy and Scrutiny Panels

The Assistant Director, Legal and Governance introduced the report and noted that there was a mismatch currently between the quorum required for Council and its committees and that required for the Policy and Scrutiny Panels. The recommendation in the report was that the quorum for both be brought into parity and set the quorum for all at one quarter of the committee and panel membership.

Resolved: that

(1) the quorum of Policy and Scrutiny Panels be amended to one quarter and the Constitution be amended accordingly.

COU 64 Petitions to be presented by Members (Standing Order No. 16)

None received.

COU 65 Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14)

(1) Motion for the Ocean and Rivers – Councillor Tristram

In introducing his motion, Councillor Tristram noted that 14 authorities had so far adopted the motion and that it was a shortened version of the model one which he would use for planning the report to bring back to Council within 12 months. He added that North Somerset depended on the Bristol Channel for tourism and therefore the sea and beaches needed to be of a standard which invited people to visit the area. Additionally, the rivers flowing through the area were important for drainage, fishing, and biodiversity.

Motion: moved by Councillor Tristram and seconded by Councillor Gibbons

“This Council notes that North Somerset is a coastal district that is also one of the most low-lying and flood prone areas in England. We depend on the sea for our livelihood through tourism, and on the land threatened by sea-level rise and river flooding for our farming and places to live and work. We recognise the importance of the marine and river ecosystems and our role as a stakeholder for them. We undertake to bring a report forward to Council within 12 months of this motion containing appropriate recommendations to ensure we play our part in ensuring

realising clean, healthy, and productive rivers and oceans alongside our existing commitment to tackle the climate emergency.

Resolved: that the Motion as set out in full above be approved and adopted.

**COU
66 Question Time (Standing Order No.18)**

Oral questions were directed to members concerned and the summary notes and topics involved are contained in Appendix 1

**COU
67 Chairperson's announcements**

The Chairperson encouraged members to visit the Council Connect Team to see their work. She advised that the new Members' Room was now available for use and asked members to urgently advise whether they would be attending the Winter Gardens to view the Weston Carnival so that that any unused places may be given to the council's foster carers and care leavers.

**COU
68 Leader's announcements**

The Leader noted that National Pride was being hosted in North Somerset at Grove Park in Weston on 30 September.

**COU
69 Chief Executive's announcements**

The Chief Executive echoed the Chairperson's condolences to the family and friends of ex-Councillor Mark Crosby on hearing of his death. She had written on behalf of the council. She also announced the death of ex-Councillor Howard Roberts and would be writing to express the council's condolences.

**COU
70 Forward Plan dated 31 August 2023**

The Leader presented the forward plan.

Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted

**COU
71 Policy and Scrutiny Panel Report**

None.

**COU
72 Reports and matters referred from the Executive - dated 06 September 2023**

None.

**COU
73 Reports and matters referred from the Policy/Overview and Scrutiny Panels other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda**

None.

COU 74 Reports and matters referred from the other Committees other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda

None.

COU 75 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto

(1) Avon Fire Authority

None – no meeting since previous Council meeting

(2) Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

None – no meeting since previous Council meeting

(3) West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee

None – first Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting to be held on 2 October. Councillor Bird had attended the meeting on 8 September as an observer. Councillor Ashton had been advised by the WECA committee clerk that North Somerset Council attendance was not possible on this occasion

COU 76 Urgent business permitted by the Local Government Act 1972 (if any)

None.

Chairperson

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**North Somerset Council
Council Meeting 19 September 2023
Question Time (Agenda Item 12)**

Question 1

From Councillor Burden

To Executive Member for Safety in the Community – Councillor Clayton

Public Space Protection Orders – Report to Executive

Councillor Burden asked the Executive Member to ask officers to forward a list to him of the people consulted on the new Public Space Protection Orders to be introduced particularly with reference to the limit on the number of dogs one person may walk at any one time. He asked also whether he and officers agreed with the statement in the government’s handbook on controlling irresponsible dog ownership that any measure brought in by the council in respect of dogs would not apply to working animals. As a supplementary question he asked the member for his understanding of the extent of the order which he believed covered land the public had access to and not just council-owned land.

Councillor Clayton thanked the member for his question and would contact officers regarding his question on consultation but as far as he was aware, dog clubs and owners were consulted on the proposed measure. He added that he understood that the limit of 6 dogs at any one time did not apply to working dogs on private land but applied to North Somerset Council owned land. In light of the member’s supplementary question, he would check what land the order covered.

Question 2

From Councillor Crockford-Hawley

**To Executive Member for spatial planning, placemaking and economy –
Councillor Mark Canniford**

Development of council-owned land in central Weston-super-Mare

Councillor Crockford-Hawley asked the Executive Member the following question: “Having been involved in several past administrations’ attempts to develop the vacant plots of council-owned land in central Weston-super-Mare, I look around and ask myself: what advances have been made? Answer: None, despite numerous computer-inspired pictures, consultant reports and London-based misunderstandings about how smaller settlements tick. Are we convinced that our model for development which encompasses all sites in one single large developer package is necessarily the right way to handle these former Homes England sites?”

Councillor Canniford thanked the member for his question and agreed that it had taken too long to bring the sites forward for development but added that land values and the building environment was currently very unfavourable to the council. He

added that he believed all opportunities should be considered around market sale, developer agreements, corporate joint ventures including offering all sites to one developer providing the council receives what it required in the town centre. He noted that whilst noting appeared to be progressing on the surface, a number of conversations were being held between officers and developers and designers and he would push harder for a more progress.

Councillor Crockford-Hawley asked that the Executive Member informed members of the conversations being held by officers.

Question 3

From Councillor Shopland

To the Leader - Councillor Mike Bell

Clevedon BID Election

Councillor Shopland asked the following question of the Leader:

“Who authorised the vote made by this Council in the Clevedon Bid Election and why weren’t the ward members, Clevedon Town Council or the traders’ views sought prior to the vote being cast?”

The Leader thanked the member for his question and noted that the matter of the Clevedon BID had been referred to the Secretary of State for review by both the council and other interested parties due to queries on the validity of the ballot. He added that officers had made recommendations to the relevant Executive Members in respect casting the council’s vote on the BID as had happened with previous BIDs in Clevedon and Weston-super-Mare in previous years and under previous administrations. The vote was cast in the council capacity as a rate payer under the BID and as BID levy payers. This was the reason for no consultation as the council was not casting its vote on behalf of others but on behalf of itself as levy payers.

Question 4

From Councillor Ellis

**To Executive Member for spatial planning, placemaking and economy –
Councillor Mark Canniford**

Nailsea Infrastructure

Councillor Ellis asked the Executive Member whether there would be a further meeting as promised following an initial meeting on 24 July between the Executive Member and the four Nailsea councillors to discuss infrastructure in Nailsea in preparation for the Local Plan to be signed off in October. He asked whether this meeting would be before the Executive meeting and with enough notice so that they issues could be worked through with everyone as he had not been consulted or agreed to any proposals so far.

Councillor Canniford thanked the member for his question and said he would pick the issue up the following day as there appeared to be some confusion but would arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

Question 5

From Councillor Charles

**To Executive Member for spatial planning, placemaking and economy –
Councillor Mark Canniford**

Placemaking

Councillor Charles asked the following question of the Executive Member:

“Would the Executive Member in his Placemaking brief consider developing with other Executive Members, Placemaking plans for the north that consider our differing demographics, needs and aspirations. In Portishead many see Bristol as our main social and economic hub and desire strong connectivity and links with the city across areas such as public and private transport, job creation and cultural and social links. Would the new administration dedicate itself to tackle the disconnect many feel in towns such as Portishead from what is perceived as a southern centric approach.”

Councillor Canniford thanked the member for his question and assured him that he would engage with all Portishead councillors. He noted that there was the Portishead masterplan which had both time and money invested but which had stalled at the Portishead Town Council. He would restart discussions and expand this to include other parts of the town in a placemaking. He noted the large investment in the town to bring the MetroWest rail link to Portishead and will continue to push to bring this scheme to fruition. He undertook to have further discussions.

Question 6

From Councillor Smith

To The Leader – Mike Bell

Digital engagement with the council.

Councillor Smith asked the Leader the following question: “According to the ONS, in 2018 10% of the UK Adult population and in the South West were digitally excluded/non-users with 91% of those being aged 55+. In ASH we have 14,672 carers (94%) are over 50 years old, and it is noted that the older the carer the more hours of care per week are performed. A main concern of WESTLINK is that it may exclude the elderly, the group most likely to use bus service, due to them being less digitally minded plus, there is countless criticism about the usage of online only consultations such as Clevedon Seafront”

Will the administration note that the digital only approach to delivering council services will exclude a large proportion of our residents in need of services and act to ensure that traditional methods are still simple, effective, and viable?”

Councillor Bell thanked the member for his question and noted that the council’s approach was digital first and not digital only because digital was more effective, efficient and saved the council money. He added however that this was not the only

channel of communication for residents to connect with council services but acknowledged that it was not always perfect. The council wished to improve customer experience and engagement and its understanding of residents' digital skills. A specific piece of work would look at digital uptake in the North Somerset and he asked members to look at the council's Customer Services and Digital Strategies. He encouraged members to let him know of examples where the council has not delivered alternative methods. In the coming weeks, consultation on the Corporate Plan and spending priorities would involve drop in sessions, face to face workshops, online and paper questionnaires.

Question 7

From Councillor Thornton

To Executive Member for Culture and Leisure – Councillor Solomon

Cleaning Uphill Wharf

Councillor Thornton asked the Executive Member the following question: "Can Cllr Solomon provide a date for when the report on the options for cleaning up Uphill wharf will be available?"

Councillor Solomon thanked Councillor Thornton for her question and replied that currently there was no date but he would contact the team the following day to set one up.