

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Council

Tuesday, 20 February 2024

New Council Chamber

Meeting Commenced: 6.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.01 pm

Councillors:

Wendy Griggs (Chairperson)
Peter Crew (Vice-Chairperson)

Marc Aplin
Nigel Ashton
Mike Bell
Mike Bird
Christopher Blades
Steve Bridger
Peter Bryant
Peter Burden
Mark Canniford
Annabelle Chard
Caritas Charles
James Clayton
Jemma Coles
John Crockford-Hawley
Ciaran Cronnelly
Thomas Daw
Catherine Gibbons
Jenna Ho Marris
Clare Hunt
Patrick Keating
Sue Mason
Hugh Malyan
Stuart McQuillan
Tom Nicholson
Ian Parker
Robert Payne
Marcia Pepperall
Bridget Petty
Lisa Pilgrim
Terry Porter
Michael Pryke
Luke Smith
Timothy Snaden

Mike Solomon
Dan Thomas
Helen Thornton
Joe Tristram
Annemieke Waite
Roger Whitfield
Martin Williams

Apologies: Councillors: Ashley Cartman, Oliver Ellis, Nicola Holland, David Shopland and Hannah Young.

Absent: Councillors: Andy Cole and Stuart Davies.

Officers in attendance: Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Claire Shiels (Director Children's Services), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Philippa Penney (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services) and Vanessa Andrews (Marketing and Communications Manager).

Partaking via Microsoft Teams:

Councillors: Richard Tucker

Officers: Mel Watts (Head of Finance), Bethany Swann (Young Director)

**COU Chairperson's Welcome
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The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting which was being livestreamed and would be available to view within 48 hours on the North Somerset Council website.

She reminded members that only those present in the Chamber would be able to vote but any members joining on Teams would be able to take part in the debate.

**COU Public Participation: John Martell - resident - use of motorcycles in bus
130 lanes in North Somerset area**

John Martell addressed members on the use of motorcycles in bus lanes. Mr Martell asked for support in allowing motorcyclists to ride in bus lanes in North Somerset. He outlined his previous experience as a biker for nearly 60 years. The main focus was on A370 to Bristol which included a number of bus lanes, most notably the Long Ashton bypass. Bristol City Council already allowed motorcycle use of bus gates and bus lanes throughout the city and gave encouragement to do so. Allowing such use would enhance road safety and be better for the environment.

**COU Public Participation: Steve Voller - resident - Banwell bypass scheme
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Steve Voller addressed members on the Banwell bypass scheme. He was speaking as the organiser of the Build Our Bypass scheme and was pleased to confirm that preparatory work had been seen to be underway. He gave heartfelt thanks to both present and past councillors who had supported the scheme for many years. The scheme would make a tremendous difference to Banwell in terms of reduced noise, pollution, safety, and atmosphere.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Voller for such a positive address.

COU 132 Public Participation: Debbie Apted - resident - public consultation on introduction of three-weekly residual waste collections

Debbie Apted addressed members on the public consultation on the introduction of three-weekly residual waste collections. As well as a resident, she was also the community lead for Plastic-free Weston-super-Mare which had over 200 members. Since the campaign's inception, awareness had been raised considerably and it was recognised that significant money could be saved rather than literally throwing money away. She gave examples of collaboration and suggestions for education for the community and undertook to share these with Councillor Waite.

COU 133 Public Participation: Michelle Michael - business owner and resident - premises adjoining the Premier Inn and going along onto Oxford Street which are under the ownership of the Council

Michelle Michael addressed members on the premises adjoining the Premier Inn and going along into Oxford Street which was under the ownership of the council. As well as a resident, she was speaking as Director of the Grand Pier and of collective family businesses relying on tourism. She spoke of a specific business which closed in 2017 due to fire issues and had recently transferred to the council along with others. This building was in a terrible condition and in highlighting this she also represented the interests of others in the surrounding areas whose properties had fallen into similar disrepair. These premises were an eyesore and was in a prime location on the seafront. She asked for immediate action to be taken and for short term and long-term plans for demolition and clearance.

COU 134 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

None declared.

COU 135 Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of 9 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

Councillor Burden stated his concern that the second part of the resolution relating to the Regional Flood and Coast Defence Committee had not been resolved. It was confirmed that the letter had been written to the Environment Agency. No reply had been received to date and an undertaking was given that this matter would be discussed at the next Council meeting.

COU 136 Chairperson's announcements

The Chairperson announced the news of the recent death of former Councillor David Jolley. Also, that of Ann Shopland, the wife of Councillor David Shopland.

She thanked councillors and officers for the extensive briefings and information sharing regarding the budget, enabling all to be fully informed for this meeting

tonight.

Councillor Crockford-Hawley was given the opportunity to talk of the birthday of this council. It would have been formed for half a century by the time council next met, first as Woodspring, then North West Somerset Council, and now North Somerset Council.

**COU13 7 Reports and matters referred from the Executive - dated 7 February 2024
EXE84 Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-2028 (MTFP) (Agenda Item 6 (1))
and Revenue Budget Update 2024/25 and Council Tax Setting 2024-25
(Agenda Item 7)**

With the agreement of the Chairperson, Councillor Bell presented the Executive finance references and council tax setting reports en bloc, that is: Revenue Budget 2024/25, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024-28, Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25, and Capital Strategy 2024-28, together with the Council Tax Setting resolution 2024/25. Members were reminded that a named vote would be required on the budget decision and that an update report had been published containing the precept demand from outside bodies not available at the time of the publication of the original report.

In presenting the Executive references and the reports, Councillor Bell acknowledged that it had been a difficult year to reach a balanced budget given the inflationary pressures on costs, continued increase in demand on resources and services, in-year mitigation pressures, together with the poor local government grant settlement. He was therefore pleased to be able to present a balanced budget that continued to support our core services for the community and delivered long term investments. It did not, however, shirk the difficult choices that had to be made.

The MTFP set out £6million of savings, efficiencies, and increased income for 2024/25, and a further £26million in future years. This gave an overall saving of £50million in five years. Councillor Bell thanked all staff for their hard work and dedication in helping to achieve these ambitious savings and efficiencies. He gave particular thanks to the finance officer team in overcoming the genuine difficulties in reaching this outcome.

Councillor Bell acknowledged the difficult decisions contained within these proposals that would impact at a time when many are already experiencing financial difficulty. The examples given were not things that the council would choose to do but were unavoidable given the challenges faced.

Councillor Bell voiced determination in making sure that the council did not follow the course of others leading into bankruptcy and would continue to lobby the government on the need for financial reform. Without that change, local services would suffer, and local authorities would disappear completely.

Councillor Bell highlighted some of the positive work including investment in schools, in highways and pavement maintenance, continuation of delivering high performing waste and recycling, leisure centres, and tackling inequality and anti-social behaviour. The council would work with town and parish councils and continue to tackle housing inequality, local environment and climate change, provision of family hubs, and social care. Councillor Bell also

highlighted improvements to bus services, the A38, Birnbeck Pier, and levelling up for Weston-super-Mare.

In discussing the Executive references and council report, members expressed support for the budget and financial strategy but also noted areas of concern regarding the impact to council services including housing, transport, medical care, children's centres, and libraries. There was agreement that this was a particularly difficult time for local government, and a call for all councillors to continue to lobby for change and to challenge their political leaders.

Members expressed concerns for future year savings whilst giving general support the budget. There was discussion of the option of bringing services such as home to school transport back in house, and the use of this as a comparator when looking to outsource.

Councillor Bridger highlighted the Safety Valve agreement and the funding that this would bring over the next five years which was a great achievement.

In discussing support for those who genuinely could not pay their council tax it was agreed that there would be a clear commitment in the budget for this. The government was to extend the support fund and there was also a call for a national council tax support system to mitigate dependency on where people lived.

Councillor Bell also confirmed that it was necessary to use reserves to balance the budget this year and was confident that this would set the council on an even keel for next year.

It was noted that Standing Order 22A required a named vote to be taken on the budget decision

Motion: moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Gibbons it was

Resolved: that Council:

1. Approved the 2024/25 net revenue budget for North Somerset Council services of **£217.647m**; and the Council Tax Requirement of £225.159m, being the value including town and parish council precepts, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. Approved the directorate gross income and expenditure budget allocations as detailed in the body of the report and as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
3. Approved the directorate gross income and expenditure budget allocations as detailed in the body of the report and as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
 - a. Which provides for an **average Band D** council tax charge in respect of North Somerset Council services for 2024/25 of £1,707.65 plus special expenses, where such charges apply, giving an overall charge of **£1,708.50**

- b. And provides for other major preceptors being, the Avon Fire Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset and the town and parish councils
4. Approved the refreshed Pay Policy for 2024/25 in accordance with the details set out in Appendix 5 of the report.

COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION

The Council resolves as follows:

1. It be noted that on 31st January 2024 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for 2024/25:
 - a) for the whole Council area as 81,014.7 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")] and ,
 - b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates as in the attached Appendix B.
2. Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2024/25 (excluding Parish precepts and Special Levies) is **£139,155,623**
3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:

a	Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils (<i>Gross Expenditure</i>)	457,538,852
b	Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act (<i>Gross Income</i>)	310,871,589
c	Being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act). (<i>North Somerset Council Tax Requirement, inc. special expenses, town and parish precepts and special levies</i>)	146,667,263

d	Being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts). <i>(Band D Council Tax for North Somerset Council including an average of special expenses and town and parish precepts)</i>	1,800.73
e	Being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached Appendix C) <i>(Area related expenditure, i.e. town and parish precepts and special expenses)</i>	Precepts 7,511,639.89 Spec Exp 69,410.00 7,581,049.89
f	Being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precepts relates. <i>(The Band "D" amount for North Somerset Council excluding "area" related expenditure, i.e. special expenses and town and parish council precepts)</i>	1,707.65
g	The amount of Special Expenses (expressed in Band D)	0.85
h	The total Relevant Basic Amount for North Somerset Council	1,708.50

4. Precepting Authorities

To note that the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area, as shown in the table below

Precepting Authority	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Police & Crime Commissioner	186.13	217.16	248.18	279.20	341.24	403.29	465.33	558.40
Fire Authority	56.95	66.45	75.94	85.43	104.41	123.40	142.38	170.86

- That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the table on the following page, as the amounts of Council Tax for 2024/25 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
- The Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2024/25 is not determined to be excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992

Named Vote as required under Standing Order 22A

For the Motion (42): Mark Aplin, Nigel Ashton, Mike Bell, Mike Bird, Chris Blades, Steve Bridger, Peter Bryant, Peter Burden, Mark Canniford, Annabel Chard, Caritas Charles, James Clayton, Jemma Coles, Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, Thomas Daw, Catherine Gibbons, Wendy Griggs, Jenna Ho Marris, Clare Hunt, Patrick Keating, Hugh Malyan, Sue Mason, Stuart McQuillan, Tom Nicholson, Ian Parker, Robert Payne, Marcia Pepperall, Bridget Petty, Lisa Pilgrim, Terry Porter, Michael Pryke, Luke Smith, Timothy Snaden, Mike Solomon, Dan Thomas, Helen Thornton, Joe Tristram, Annemieke Waite, Roger Whitfield, Martin Williams

Against the Motion (0):

Abstentions (0):

COU 138 Reports and Matters referred from the Executive, 7 February 2024 EXE86 Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25 (Agenda Item 08) (Agenda item 6(2))

Councillor Bell presented the reference from the Executive.

All finance items were discussed together en bloc (see minute no. COU 137 above).

Motion: moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Council Gibbons it was

Resolved: that the Council

- i. Approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25, as described throughout the report and shown in Appendix 1 of the report,
- ii. Approved the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25, as shown in Appendix 2 of the report
- iii. Approved the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2024/25, as shown in Section 3.5 of the report.

COU 139 Reports and matters referred from the Executive, 7 February 2024, EXE87 Capital Strategy 2024-28 and Capital Budget 2024-25 (Agenda item 6(3))

Councillor Bell presented the reference from the Executive.

All finance items were discussed together en bloc (see minute no. COU137 above)

Motion: moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Gibbons it was

Resolved: that the Council

- a. approved the capital strategy for 2024 to 2028 as detailed throughout the

report

- b. approved an increase in the capital programme of £9.789m for a new range of investment proposals as detailed in section 3.5 and Appendix 3 of the report, subject to confirmation of grant funding allocations
2. noted the additional borrowing impact within the capital programme of £2.6m for the period 2024 to 2028 as detailed in section 3.4 and Appendix 4 of the report, which will increase the council's overall borrowing requirement to £114.6m over the period
3. approved the amendments to the capital budget for 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report
4. delegated the approval for the detailed highways programme to the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods and Transport in consultation with the Executive Member for Transport and Highways.

COU 140 Corporate Plan 2024-2028

Councillor Bell presented the Corporate Plan which had been developed through comprehensive engagement with staff, members, and residents. He brought attention to the four headline ambitions and gave particular thanks to officers for their work in supporting community and budget engagement.

There would be ongoing monitoring of the Corporate Plan as a living document offering a good framework for engagement.

Motion: moved by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Gibbons

Resolved: that the Council approved the Corporate Plan for the period 2024 to 2028 as recommended by the Executive

COU 141 Award of Support Services Contract 1

The Chairperson referred to exempt appendices accompanying the report and reminded members that discussion of any matters contained within would be held in private session at the end of the meeting.

Councillor Bell presented the report noting that the existing contract was due to expire. There were drivers as to the mitigation of cost pressures and delivery of better outcomes for service users and the council. The process to date had been comprehensive including, market comparison, value for money, alternative delivery models including in-house, and shared service with another authority. The value was likely to be in the range of £35million to £65million pounds depending on the contract duration and inflationary uplifts.

Motion: moved by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Bridger

Resolved: that the Council

1. approved the appointment in principle of the Preferred Bidder for the provision of the Revenues, Benefits, Welfare, Exchequer and Civil Enforcement Administration services contract and
2. delegated the final decision for the contract award to the Executive Member for Corporate Services, in consultation with the Project Board (Chaired by the Director of Corporate Services), subject to the following:
 - Finalising the contract documentation for execution, and
 - Ensuring the costs and savings are within the financial envelope.

COU 142 Commissioning Plan for the procurement of an operator for the Tropicana

Councillor Solomon presented the report. Whilst the Tropicana was currently run by North Somerset staff, local authorities were increasingly moving away from this model of delivery. The council had great ambition for the future of the Tropicana as a cultural place to go with a prime position on the sea front.

Members discussed the preferred option of procuring an operator on the basis of a long full repair lease of fifteen years or more, and consideration of a specialist advisor for an entertainment partner.

Motion: moved by Councillor Solomon and seconded by Councillor Bell

Resolved: that the Council approved the Commissioning Plan for the procurement of an operator for the Tropicana as set out in sections 3.10 to 3.29 of the report

COU 143 Corporate Parenting Report

Councillor Gibbons presented the report which addressed engagement with and listening to children in care and care experienced young people. The full Bright Spots report had been sent to all councillors. There had been well attended engagement sessions and conversations with young people providing helpful feedback about language and how documents are written with proposed changes welcomed across the board. There was also an ambition to reinvigorate the Youth Parliament.

Bethany Swann, Young Director, joined the meeting remotely. She thanked those who had attended the latest Corporate Parenting Panel and the support for developing life skills and aspirations for young people across North Somerset. She encouraged all members to get in touch with any opportunities for making the work of the council more accessible for young people.

Motion: moved by Councillor Gibbons and seconded by Councillor Bell

Resolved: that the Council:

- Continues its commitment to the role of corporate parent to our children in care and care experienced young people, and
- Considers how the voices and experiences of children in care and care leavers are considered when making all key decisions

COU 144 Petitions to be presented by Members (Standing Order No. 16)

None.

COU 145 Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14)

None.

COU 146 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 147 Matters referred from previous meeting

None.

COU 148 Leader's announcements

None.

COU 149 Chief Executive's announcements

None.

COU 150 Forward Plan dated 1 February 2024

The Leader presented the Forward Plan

Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted.

COU 151 Policy and Scrutiny Panel Report

None.

COU 152 Reports and matters referred from the Policy/Overview and Scrutiny Panels other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda

None.

COU 153 Reports and matters referred from the other Committees other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda

None.

COU 154 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto

(1) Avon Fire Authority

Councillor Payne provided an oral update to the meeting. The Fire Authority had met yesterday to agree a budget, increasing the precept to 2.99% which

was the maximum permitted. Fuller detail would be referred to next month's meeting. The authority was looking at ways to defer the inevitable cuts in funding and remained frustrated with the central government funding model.

(2) Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Councillor Crew presented the report, observing that events had subsequently overtaken the report. There was discussion of the process for the voted increase in the precept, and also of the definition of the police now being at full strength. The new CCTV system was now fully operational.

(3) West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Joint Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ashton informed members that there had not been a recent meeting, the previous two being inquorate and then cancelled. He was not aware of any future meeting dates but undertook to pursue this with WECA.

COU 155 Urgent business permitted by the Local Government Act 1972 (if any)

None.

Chairperson

**North Somerset Council
Council Meeting 20 February 2024
Question Time (Agenda Item 12)**

Question 1

From Councillor Smith

To the Leader - Councillor Mike Bell

Clevedon Seafront

Councillor Smith asked the following question:

“I wrote to the leader around two weeks ago due to the AECOM Review stating that at Clevedon Seafront “...vehicles running over the [mini roundabout] is common and there is the potential for head on collisions...” I believe that due to the limited space, this breaches Section 188 of the Highway Code whereas, a T junction, as suggested is supported by sections 160, 200, 206 and 211. Additionally, the AECOM Review states that 84% residents dislike the feature, our own highways team have admitted it is a pointless feature serving no benefit to 80% - 90% of road users and the RAC has said that due to the limited space a T Junction may be simpler and cheaper. I believe that the simpler the road, the safer it is. Will the leader support me and stop this lacklustre idea?”

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Smith for his question and responded that he was always in favour of stopping lacklustre ideas. An officer had already responded to this question and the Executive Member was considering the issue in advance of the Executive meeting next month.

Question 2

From Councillor Robert Payne

**To Executive Member for Spatial Planning, Placemaking and Economy –
Councillor Mark Canniford**

Occupancy rates to shop units on the south of Waterloo Street

Councillor Payne asked the following question:

“Looking around Weston town centre, it is quite evident that there is quite a high occupancy rate of the retail units, particularly when you consider comparable towns, which is something we can be really pleased about. But one obvious exception to this: the shop units along the south side of Waterloo Street from number 2 to number 14, where of the nine units, only two are occupied. My understanding is that these are all owned by the same landlord who appears to be charging excessively high rents. Do you think there’s anything the council can do to engage with this landlord to try and bring these units back into useful occupation?”

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Payne for his question and replied that as the Council didn’t actually own these properties, it was difficult to intervene.

However, he had already asked for confirmation that the landlord was paying the appropriate business rates as this may be the only enforcement intervention that the council could make. In North Somerset, we could generally be pleased with our occupancy rates compared to other areas.

Question 3

From Councillor Thornton

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Councillor Hannah Young

Use of motorcycles in bus lanes in the North Somerset area

Councillor Thornton asked the following question:

“Can I ask if serious consideration can be given to our public speaker John Martell’s request for motor cyclists to be able to use bus lanes throughout North Somerset as they do in the Bristol City Council area?”

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Thornton on behalf of Councillor Young for her question and responded that he completely agreed and had already initiated a review as a result.

Question 4

From Councillor Charles

To the Leader - Councillor Mike Bell

Monthly communications update with geographical relevance

Councillor Charles asked if the executive member would consider providing members with a monthly comms update allowing us to know the geographical relevance and location of press releases.

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Charles for his request and agreed that it would be helpful to be provided to all councillors who could then choose to unsubscribe if they did not want to receive it. He encouraged all members to contact the comms team with any additional local comms suggestions that they may have.

Question 5

From Councillor Pryke

To the Leader – Councillor Mike Bell

Backbench engagement with the work of the council

Councillor Pryke asked Councillor Bell to consider the involvement of backbench members in the work of the council in matters such as car parking charges to gauge opinion other than solely as part of the public consultation.

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Pryke for his question and replied that he would ignore the political points but was happy to pick up on engagement with members. This was one of the themes that had formed part of the recent peer challenge with

the recommendation that a group should be established to look at just that. He took the opportunity to underline that engagement was a two-way relationship and that this was directly related to attendance.

Question 6

**From Councillor Williams
To the Leader – Councillor Mike Bell**

Weston-super-Mare floral clock

Councillor Williams asked the executive member to clarify the recent communications that stated the council had no prior knowledge of the work to the floral clock as he had seen two emails to the contrary.

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Williams for his question and responded that he couldn't comment directly on the comms as the information had been provided by officers in response to the question asked by the executive member. It was unfortunate that this had been raised directly at Council as a political point where it would have been more helpful to have worked together for agreement before the event.

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