

# Minutes

of the Virtual Meeting of

## The Council

**Tuesday, 23 February 2021**

Meeting Commenced: 6.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.29 pm

### Councillors:

David Shopland (Chairman)

Richard Westwood (Vice-Chairman)

Nigel Ashton

Mike Bell

Mike Bird

Steve Bridger

Peter Bryant

Gill Bute

Mark Canniford

Ashley Cartman

John Cato

Caritas Charles

Caroline Cherry

James Clayton

Andy Cole

Peter Crew

John Crockford-Hawley

Ciaran Cronnelly

Mark Crosby

Donald Davies

Catherine Gibbons

Wendy Griggs

Ann Harley

Karin Haverson

Sandra Hearne

David Hitchins

Steve Hogg

Nicola Holland

Ruth Jacobs

Huw James

Patrick Keating

John Ley-Morgan

Stuart McQuillan

Ian Parker

Robert Payne

Marcia Pepperall  
Bridget Petty  
Lisa Pilgrim  
Terry Porter  
Geoffrey Richardson  
Mike Solomon  
James Tonkin  
Richard Tucker  
Roz Willis

**Apologies:** Councillors: Sarah Codling, Hugh Gregor and Timothy Snaden.

**Absent:** Councillors Mark Aplin and Stuart Treadaway.

**Officers in attendance:** Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Lucy Shomali (Director of Place), Sheila Smith (Director of Children's Services), Hayley Verrico (Interim Director, Adults' Support and Safeguarding), Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Governance & Monitoring Officer), Richard Penska (Interim Director of Finance & Property), Vanessa Andrews (Marketing and Communications Manager), Michele Chesterman (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer), Sue Efford (Committee and Support Services Manager), Mike Riggall (Information and ICT Security Manager), Peter Spence (Corporate Accountant (Resources)) and Sally Varley (Service Leader - Strategic Planning and Governance).

**COU Chairman's Welcome**

**148**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this virtual Council meeting and explained some of the procedures to be followed.

At the invitation of the Chairman the Assistant Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer took a roll call of members to confirm attendance at the start of the meeting. Additional members joined the meeting after the roll call.

**COU Public participation, petitions, and deputations (Standing Orders 2(vi) and  
149 17, as amended by new Standing Order 5A) Petition: Clean Our Lake  
(Agenda Item 1)**

The Chairman drew members' attention to the petition from Sue Mason, a Portishead resident and town councillor and signed by 315 local residents, calling on North Somerset Council to dredge the lake at the Portishead Lake Grounds. The petition had been published with the agenda papers.

The petition was noted and referred to the relevant Executive Member.

**COU Petitions to be presented by Members (Standing Order No. 16): Rainbow  
150 Crossing in Portishead (Agenda Item 3)**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor James presented his petition signed by 570 residents, as published with the supplementary agenda papers. The petition called on North Somerset Council and Portishead Town Council to replace the crossing on Portishead High Street with a rainbow crossing as a meaningful symbol that people in Portishead stood for equality and LGBT people are not

alone.

The petition was noted and referred to the relevant Executive Member.

**COU 151 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37) (Agenda Item 4)**

Councillor James declared an interest in the member's motion on cladding (minute no. COU153 refers) and confirmed he would take no part in the debate.

**COU 152 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 (Agenda Item 5)**

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

**COU 153 Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14) End our Cladding and EWS1 Scandal (Councillor Keating) (Agenda Item 6 (1))**

Having earlier declared an interest in this item, Councillor James took no part in the debate.

In introducing his Motion, Councillor Keating referred to the significant number of low and mid-rise buildings in North Somerset and the residents and leaseholders who through no fault of their own were being left in limbo as a result of the cladding scandal. He referred to the wording of the motion as published with the agenda papers and proposed it be amended to refer the matter to the Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel rather than to the Executive, and to ask the Chief Executive to write to Government to express Council's concerns.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Keating and seconded by Councillor Charles

"Council notes that:

- a. Following the human tragedy of the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire taking 72 lives blamed on Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding, this has rightfully led to a focus on fire safety in buildings across the country.
- b. The Government banned the use of all combustible materials on the walls of new high rises in November 2018 (MHCLG, Government bans combustible materials on high-rise homes, 29 November 2018) meaning the problem has now extended beyond ACM cladding to buildings decorated with other materials that could be flammable - including balconies, and wooden panels. However, it did not legislate for building owners to take action or provide sufficient compensation funds to cover all situations.
- c. In parallel, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the UK Council of Mortgage Lenders agreed the industry External Wall System fire review and certification process resulting in what is known as an EWS1 form. Only circa 300 professional fire safety engineers nationally are qualified to issue these - creating a bottleneck across the country including in the West of England.
- d. In North Somerset, there are a significant number of low and mid-rise buildings. These are mostly limited to traditional builds, however there are a concentration of buildings with non-traditionally built dwellings – particularly around Portishead Marina.

- e. Without an EWS1 form, many lenders are now refusing to provide mortgages. As there is no Government legislation forcing owners to produce EWS1 forms or to take remedial action, many leaseholders are having to battle with owners whether their Local Authority, Housing Associations or private landlords. Remediation costs are also skyrocketing in the £100Ks and many owners are forcing this back on leaseholders via financially ruinous service charges – including impacting those in shared ownership.
- f. Subsequently, residents and leaseholders through no fault of their own are being left in potentially ruinous limbo unable to mortgage properties, re-mortgage and therefore unable to buy and sell.
- g. Additionally, residents are living in fear in homes with no idea if they are safe. This is fundamentally holding up people's lives, costing our residents money they shouldn't have to pay and leaving a huge mental health impact.

Council therefore

(1) calls on the Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel to establish policy recommendations on the following points and to report back, in all urgency, to a future meeting of the Council:

- a. Sign up the Council to the End Our Cladding Scandal campaign: [endourcladdingscandal@gmail.com](mailto:endourcladdingscandal@gmail.com).
- b. Continuing providing advice and support to provide assistance to all North Somerset residents associations regardless of housing tenure i.e. Council, Housing Association, Shared Ownership or private. The aim being to assist such resident associations in lobbying developers, building owners and claiming Government funds to urgently rectify their buildings. This support should be proactive rather than reactive.
- c. Work in partnership with the West of England Combined Authority and LEP to redeploy and upskill surveyors and suitable professionals as appropriate, in order to perform more EWS1 assessments. The aim being to accelerate remediation and certification. This may also have a longer-term benefit to increasing higher value job opportunities in North Somerset in partnership with Weston College's Institute of Technology.
- d. Work in partnership with all local private building owners and Housing Associations to act immediately in rectifying issues and achieve EWS1 certification – noting that some of these owners may not be the original developer and therefore will need the Council's assistance to engage and trace such developers or other routes to remedy to avoid any cost to their Leaseholders.
- e. Explore ways to delay approving planning applications from developers where the applicant has outstanding snagging or EWS1 certification issues in North Somerset and include a condition to be discharged on all future planning applications to provide an EWS1 form before first occupation.
- f. Explore ways to expediate Planning Applications, Support, and a Design Guide for communities effected by ESW1 forms and cladding issues.
- g. Lobby and work with the MPs, Ministry of Housing Community and Local Government to:
  - i. Devolve powers to local authorities like North Somerset in order to have jurisdiction over enforcing remediation of housing of all tenures and to target relevant compensation funds from Central Government to where it can actively support affected residents best.
  - ii. Adopt the sensible recommendations of the Housing, Communities and Local

Government Select Committee that the EWS1 process could be reformed to urgently revise and implement a process (at no cost to leaseholders) that offers clarity to lenders, insurers and peace of mind for homeowners and buyers to re-instate re-mortgaging and property sales provided there is no immediate danger.

iii. Adopt the 10 asks of the 'End Our Cladding Scandal' campaign; and

(2) asks the Chief Executive to write to Government to express our concerns about the support provided to our residents affected by the cladding scandal and to highlight the particular circumstances in North Somerset."

Seven members signalled their support for a debate on the Motion.

Councillor Keating spoke in support of his Motion and urged all members to support it.

**Resolved:** Council notes that:

- a. Following the human tragedy of the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire taking 72 lives blamed on Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding, this has rightfully led to a focus on fire safety in buildings across the country.
- b. The Government banned the use of all combustible materials on the walls of new high rises in November 2018 (MHCLG, Government bans combustible materials on high-rise homes, 29 November 2018) meaning the problem has now extended beyond ACM cladding to buildings decorated with other materials that could be flammable - including balconies, and wooden panels. However, it did not legislate for building owners to take action or provide sufficient compensation funds to cover all situations.
- c. In parallel, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the UK Council of Mortgage Lenders agreed the industry External Wall System fire review and certification process resulting in what is known as an EWS1 form. Only circa 300 professional fire safety engineers nationally are qualified to issue these - creating a bottleneck across the country including in the West of England.
- d. In North Somerset, there are a significant number of low and mid-rise buildings. These are mostly limited to traditional builds, however there are a concentration of buildings with non-traditionally built dwellings – particularly around Portishead Marina.
- e. Without an EWS1 form, many lenders are now refusing to provide mortgages. As there is no Government legislation forcing owners to produce EWS1 forms or to take remedial action, many leaseholders are having to battle with owners whether their Local Authority, Housing Associations or private landlords. Remediation costs are also skyrocketing in the £100Ks and many owners are forcing this back on leaseholders via financially ruinous service charges – including impacting those in shared ownership.
- f. Subsequently, residents and leaseholders through no fault of their own are being left in potentially ruinous limbo unable to mortgage properties, re-mortgage and therefore unable to buy and sell.
- g. Additionally, residents are living in fear in homes with no idea if they are safe. This is fundamentally holding up people's lives, costing our residents money they shouldn't have to pay and leaving a huge mental health impact.

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(1) calls on the Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel to establish policy recommendations on the following points and to report back, in all urgency, to a future meeting of the Council:

- a. Sign up the Council to the End Our Cladding Scandal campaign: [endourcladdingscandal@gmail.com](mailto:endourcladdingscandal@gmail.com).
- b. Continuing providing advice and support to provide assistance to all North Somerset residents associations regardless of housing tenure i.e. Council, Housing Association, Shared Ownership or private. The aim being to assist such resident associations in lobbying developers, building owners and claiming Government funds to urgently rectify their buildings. This support should be proactive rather than reactive.
- c. Work in partnership with the West of England Combined Authority and LEP to redeploy and upskill surveyors and suitable professionals as appropriate, in order to perform more EWS1 assessments. The aim being to accelerate remediation and certification. This may also have a longer-term benefit to increasing higher value job opportunities in North Somerset in partnership with Weston College's Institute of Technology.
- d. Work in partnership with all local private building owners and Housing Associations to act immediately in rectifying issues and achieve EWS1 certification – noting that some of these owners may not be the original developer and therefore will need the Council's assistance to engage and trace such developers or other routes to remedy to avoid any cost to their Leaseholders.
- e. Explore ways to delay approving planning applications from developers where the applicant has outstanding snagging or EWS1 certification issues in North Somerset and include a condition to be discharged on all future planning applications to provide an EWS1 form before first occupation.
- f. Explore ways to expedite Planning Applications, Support, and a Design Guide for communities effected by EWS1 forms and cladding issues.
- g. Lobby and work with the MPs, Ministry of Housing Community and Local Government to:
- i. Devolve powers to local authorities like North Somerset in order to have jurisdiction over enforcing remediation of housing of all tenures and to target relevant compensation funds from Central Government to where it can actively support affected residents best.
- ii. Adopt the sensible recommendations of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee that the EWS1 process could be reformed to urgently revise and implement a process (at no cost to leaseholders) that offers clarity to lenders, insurers and peace of mind for homeowners and buyers to re-instate re-mortgaging and property sales provided there is no immediate danger.
- iii. Adopt the 10 asks of the 'End Our Cladding Scandal' campaign; and

(2) asks the Chief Executive to write to Government to express our concerns about the support provided to our residents affected by the cladding scandal and to highlight the particular circumstances in North Somerset.

#### **COU 154 Chairman's announcements (Agenda Item 8)**

The Chairman welcomed back Councillor Ley-Morgan after his recent illness and was pleased to see how well members were looking with a number having recently received their Covid-19 vaccinations.

**COU 155     Leader's announcements (Agenda Item 9)**

The Leader thanked members and officers for their excellent work over recent months in supporting local communities. He also thanked residents for their forbearance which had resulted in a drop in the Covid-19 case numbers within North Somerset.

**COU 156     Chief Executive's announcements (Agenda Item 10)**

The Chief Executive was pleased to announce the recent appointments of Hayley Verrico as Director of Adult Social Services and Amy Webb as Director of Corporate Services as part of the council's senior management restructure.

She reported this would be the last Council meeting attended by Richard Penska as interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer as Richard would be returning to his substantive post on a part-time basis, ahead of his forthcoming retirement. She thanked Richard for his long and invaluable service to the council and thanked both Richard and the Finance team for bringing forward the MTFP and budget report. These sentiments were echoed by councillors during the meeting.

**COU 157     Forward Plan dated 29 January 2021 (Agenda Item 11)**

Councillor Davies presented the Forward Plan.

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

**COU 158     Corporate Parenting Responsibilities (Agenda item 13)**

Councillor Gibbons presented the report.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted.

**COU 159     Question Time (Standing Order No. 18) (Agenda item 14)**

Members noted the two questions that had been raised and the responses thereto as published in advance with the supplementary agenda papers.

**COU 160     Report and matters referred from the Executive, 11 February 2021 EXE 77 - Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 (Agenda Item 15 (1))**

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor Cartman presented the Executive finance references and the council tax setting update report en bloc, that is: Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22; Capital Strategy 2021-2025 and Capital Budget 2021/22; Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget 2021/22; Revenue Budget Update and Council Tax Setting 2021/22 update report. It was noted that a named vote would be required on the budget decision.

In presenting the Executive references and the report, Councillor Cartman thanked Richard Penska and the Finance team for their work in bringing forward the reports and expressed special thanks to Richard for his invaluable contribution.

He also paid tribute to his Executive colleagues for their collaboration and team work in presenting a robust and balanced budget. He referred to the three core themes within the corporate plan of 'open', 'fair' and 'green' as reflected within the council's finance reports and he outlined the key elements within the reports. He referred to the ongoing budget challenges due to increasing cost pressures and rising demand for services, and to particular difficulties for North Somerset given its low tax base resulting in any council tax increases generating less overall funds to spend on services.

In discussing the finance items members echoed the thanks and appreciation expressed to Richard Penska. During the debate the following key points were raised: members welcomed the additional funding for highway maintenance but with the ongoing effects of Covid-19 and increasing demand on services, members sought assurances that the budget was robust and there were sufficient funds available within contingencies to cover this; members welcomed the range of new investment priorities as set out within the capital strategy plans including investment in lakes and community facilities as well as public rights of way and cycle networks; members recognised the importance of robust community engagement and welcomed the new engagement strategy to ensure all groups within the community had a voice and were listened to; reference was made to the challenges around integrated care and the need to ensure the council's interests were protected in the event of further pooling of budgets; members noted the uncertainties around the public health budget for the coming year and the importance of planning for services to address existing inequalities and the delivery of those initiatives delayed due to the pandemic.

In response to questions raised during the debate the interim Director of Finance confirmed it was his assessment as Section 151 Officer that the proposed revenue budget for 2021/22 was robust and the council's reserves were adequate. A detailed assurance assessment was included at Appendix 7 of the report to the Executive on 11 February.

On the Motion of Councillor Cartman, duly seconded it was

**Resolved:**

- (1) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, as shown in Appendix 1 of the report to the Executive, be approved, which includes the requirement to borrow up to £95.561m during the period 2020-2025 as funding for the approved capital programme;
- (2) that the Prudential Indicators for 2021/22, as shown in Appendix 2 of the report to the Executive, be approved; and
- (3) that the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2021/22, as shown in Appendix 3 of the report to the Executive, be approved.

**COU 161 Report and matters referred from the Executive, 11 February 2021 EXE 78 - Capital Strategy 2021-25 and Capital Budget 2021-22 (Agenda Item 15 (2))**

Councillor Cartman presented the reference from the Executive.

All the finance items were discussed together en bloc (see minute no. COU 160 above).



On the Motion of Councillor Cartman, duly seconded it was

**Resolved:**

(1) that the capital strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Executive be approved;

(2) that an increase to the capital programme of £110.737m for a range of transport, housing, school and social care schemes as detailed in section 4.4 and table 3 of the report to the Executive be approved, subject to confirmation of grant funding allocations; and

(3) that an increase to the capital programme of £8.810m for a range of new investment priorities as detailed in section 4.5 and Table 5 of the report to the Executive be approved.

**COU1 62      Report and matters referred from the Executive, 11 February 2021 EXE 79 - Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget 2021/22 (Agenda Item 15 (3)) and Revenue Budget Update and Council Tax Setting 2021/22 (Agenda Item 16 and 16a)**

The Chairman drew members' attention to the update report that now included the precept from the Police and Crime Commissioner (agenda item 16a) and which replaced agenda item 16.

The Chairman ruled that the update report be considered as urgent because it was necessary to consider this information at the meeting so that the Council could approve a budget and set a council tax within the statutory timescale, and the information required from all the other precepting authorities was not available at the time of publication.

Councillor Cartman presented the reference from the Executive and the update report on the Revenue Budget Update and Council Tax Setting 2021/22 (agenda item 16a).

All the finance items were discussed together en bloc (see minute no. COU 160 above).

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

On the Motion of Councillor Cartman, duly seconded it was

**Resolved:**

(1) that the 2021/22 net revenue budget for North Somerset Council services of £171.317m; and the Council Tax Requirement of £177.423m being the value including town and parish council precepts be approved, as set out in Appendix 1 of the update report;

(2) that a council tax increase of 1.99% for 2021/22 be approved;

(3) that an adult social care precept of 3% on the council tax for 2021/22 be approved;

(4) that the directorate gross income and expenditure budget allocations as detailed in the body of the update report and as set out in Appendix 1 be approved;

(5) that the council tax charges for 2021/22 be approved in accordance with the formal Resolution as set out in Appendix 2 of the update report, which provides for an average Band D council tax charge in respect of North Somerset Council services for 2021/22 of £1,504.03, plus special expenses, where such charges apply, giving an overall charge of £1,505.03, 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, as follows (this represents an increase of 1.99% on the general level council tax, and a 3% charge in respect of an adult social care precept):

### **COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION**

#### **The Council resolves as follows:**

1. It be noted that on 31st January 2021 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for 2021/22:

(a) for the whole Council area as 78,738.9 [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 2021/22 (excluding Parish precepts and Special Levies) is £118,505,192.

3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2021/22 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 (Gross Expenditure)	373,026,738
b	Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act (Gross Income)	248,415,499
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). (North Somerset Council Tax Requirement, inc. special expenses, town and parish precepts and special levies)	124,611,239

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). (Band D Council Tax for North Somerset Council including an average of special expenses and town and parish precepts)	1,582.58
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) (Area related expenditure, i.e. town and parish precepts and special expenses)	Precepts: 6,106,047.14 Spec Exp: 79,190.00 6,185,237.14
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. (The Band "D" amount for North Somerset Council excluding "area" related expenditure, i.e. special expenses and town and parish council precepts)	1,504.03
g	The amount of Special Expenses (expressed in Band D)	1.00
h	The total Relevant Basic Amount for North Somerset Council	1,505.03

#### 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:

	<b>Valuation Bands</b>							
<b>Precepting Authority</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
Police & Crime Commissioner	160.80	187.60	214.40	241.20	294.80	348.40	402.00	482.40
Fire Authority	50.95	59.45	67.94	76.43	93.41	110.40	127.38	152.86

5. 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 2021/22 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

6. The Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 is not determined to

be excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

and

(6) that the refreshed Pay Policy for 2021/22 be approved in accordance with the details set out in Appendix 5 of the update report.

### **Named Vote as required under Standing Order 22A**

#### **For the Motion (42):**

Nigel Ashton, Mike Bell, Mike Bird, Steve Bridger, Peter Bryant, Gill Bute, Mark Canniford, Ashley Cartman, John Cato, Caritas Charles, Caroline Cherry, James Clayton, Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, Mark Crosby, Donald Davies, Catherine Gibbons, Wendy Griggs, Ann Harley, Sandra Hearne, David Hitchins, Steve Hogg, Nicola Holland, Ruth Jacobs, Huw James, Patrick Keating, John Ley-Morgan, Stuart McQuillan, Ian Parker, Robert Payne, Marcia Pepperall, Bridget Petty, Lisa Pilgrim, Terry Porter, Geoffrey Richardson, David Shopland, Mike Solomon, James Tonkin, Richard Tucker, Richard Westwood, Roz Willis

#### **Against the Motion (0)**

#### **Abstentions (0)**

**Note:** Councillors Andy Cole and Karin Haverson were absent when the vote was taken.

### **COU 163 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: Avon Fire Authority (Agenda Item (19 (1)))**

Councillor Tucker provided an oral report. He summarised the matters discussed at the recent Fire Authority meeting on 10 February 2021, including approval of the budget precept. He also reported on a fatal incident following a fire in a flat in North Somerset and expressed his condolences to the victim's family.

With reference to the Motion on cladding earlier in the meeting, members raised questions regarding the Fire Authority's view on the risks posed by such buildings. Councillor Tucker confirmed an assessment had been carried out of all high rise buildings in the area and he undertook to provide more information to members on this. It was agreed that input from the council's representatives on the Fire Authority and from professional fire officers should be sought by the Strategic Policy, Economic Development and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel as part of its deliberations on the cladding Motion.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted.

### **COU 164 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel (Agenda Item (19 (2)))**

Councillor Willis presented the report. She updated members on the subsequent meeting of the Panel to reconsider the revised precept following the Panel's veto of the proposed 6.5%, and confirmed this had been set at 5.88%.

In discussing the report and the impact of the reduced precept on the police service, it was noted that the Panel had been advised this would increase the budget deficit but have no direct effect on planned service improvements or the uplift in officer numbers. Reference was made to the challenges faced by Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and to police initiatives to address this, including an increase in the number of BAME officers.

Concerns were raised regarding the ongoing underfunding of the police service in North Somerset with crime becoming a significant problem in some areas. Ongoing efforts were needed to secure fair funding and to ensure the needs of the area were met. With reference to the suggestion that strategic plan for policing in North Somerset should be scrutinised, Councillor Bridger as Chairman of the Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel confirmed he would invite the new Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to the June meeting of the Panel to discuss these issues.

In response to questions raised in relation to the forthcoming PCC elections in May, the Assistant Director Governance and Monitoring Officer advised that from 22 March information would be available in relation to both the PCC and West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Mayoral elections on 6 May 2021.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted.

**COU 165 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Joint Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 19 (3))**

Councillor James presented the report. He drew particular attention to WECA's position on the Bristol Airport planning appeal, its bid to create a Great Western Freeport and to latest position regarding North Somerset's request to become a member of WECA.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted.

**COU 166 Budget Approval and Award of Contract to Progress the Creation of a New School Site to Support the Expansion of Baytree Special School in Clevedon (Agenda Item 20)**

Councillor Gibbons presented the report. She summarised the key issues within the report and the recommendations as set out and thanked officers for a comprehensive report.

In discussing the report reference was made to the significant opposition to the proposed site given its location on a flood plain and its community value as an area of public open space and amenity. Members fully recognised the need for additional places for children with learning and physical disabilities, but some members suggested the proposed site was unsuitable. It was proposed that given

the budget impact of this development, a report should be brought back to Council once the decision of the Secretary of State was issued rather than authority being delegated to the Executive Member. With reference to other options considered, members noted a large number of alternative sites had previously been considered and dismissed, and reference was made to the importance of avoiding any unnecessary delay in building the school given the growing demand for local places for children with profound disabilities.

Councillor Willis stated she had close friends who would be affected by the proposal and would therefore be abstaining from the vote.

Following the debate and the different views expressed, the Chairman proposed that the vote on this item be taken by roll call.

On the Motion of Councillor Gibbons, seconded by Councillor Westwood it was subsequently

**Resolved:** that, subject to notification by the Secretary of State of application 20/P/0605/R3 and, if successful, a planning decision notice being issued, the Council:

(1) approves a budget of £14.63 million;

(2) approves the award of the contract to Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd for the construction of the new Baytree Special School in Clevedon for the value of £14,119,582.00, based on Willmott Dixon's final RIBA Stage 4 cost submission, which assumes a start on site of March 2021, as part of the total project delivery budget of £14,630,000.00; and

(3) delegates authority to the Executive Member for Finance and Performance to make any changes to the above budget and contract value, arising from conditions relating to the planning approval and a later start on site date of September 2021.

## **COU 167 MetroWest Phase 1 - 2021/22 Budget (Agenda Item 21)**

Councillor Tonkin presented the report.

In discussing the report members thanked the Executive Member and officers for the progress on this project but raised concern in relation to the risks of further unavoidable delays and the impact of escalating costs for the Council.

On the Motion of Councillor Tonkin, seconded by Councillor James it was

**Resolved:**

(1) that Council agree to spend £7.392M for the 2021-22 financial year, in accordance with previous MetroWest reports, from the already secured project funding sources. This funding will progress technical work feeding into the Full Business Case, including completion of Development Consent Order process (DCO) and to commence the detailed design.

(2) that Council notes that reporting of spend against this allocated budget will

form part of monthly Capital Programme financial reports to the Executive; and

(3) that Council notes that in the MetroWest Phase 1 report to 10th November 2020 full council meeting, it indicated that officers were working on opportunities to mitigate the time delay of 9 months to the project caused by Covid. Should these opportunities involve accelerating works and therefore spend these will be outside of the above allocation but part of the total project costs.

**COU 168     Asset, Accommodation and Development Strategies (AADS) - Adoption (includes exempt appendix) (Agenda Item 22)**

Councillor Cartman presented the report. He summarised the report and the recommendations, stressing that these three corporate strategies were independent yet inextricably linked, and were fundamental to the council's transformation programme and to the delivery of excellent services. He referred to the proposals outlined in section 3 of the report and the conclusion that the Town Hall should be retained as the primary office and cultural heart of the council but stressed that decisions on the future of sites listed within Group 2A as set out in paragraph 3.17 of the report would be subject to feasibility and business cases. He also made reference to the sites listed in Group 2B and 3 as set out in the exempt appendix, which had yet to be formally allocated but which presented longer term opportunities.

In considering the accommodation strategy, members discussed the many issues around working from home and urged caution in progressing too quickly with any move from Castlewood. It was suggested that once lockdown restrictions had ended and there was a return to some form of normality the position may be different and staff views on working models may have changed. Reference was made to the many benefits of Castlewood and of having council offices based in the north of the district and members stressed the need for careful consideration of the impact of any sale before making any decision. Members noted there had been full scrutiny engagement on the strategies and it was suggested the proposals offered a flexible approach in addressing service plans and new ways of working resulting from the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic. Reference was also made to the environmental and climate change benefits of working from home or from local touch down locations, and the importance of finding the right balance to best suit the needs of the organisation and to support the health and wellbeing of staff.

Councillor Cartman assured members that any future decisions on sites would be evidence based and subject to a rigorous feasibility process as detailed in the report, and he encouraged members to attend and get involved in any consultation and scrutiny sessions.

In response to queries raised during the debate on which sites listed within the exempt appendix were in fact exempt, the Assistant Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer provided clarification. He advised that the sites listed within Group 2B and 3 were exempt for reasons of commercial sensitivity and would remain so beyond this meeting.

On the Motion of Councillor Cartman, duly seconded it was

**Resolved:**

(1) that the following corporate strategies be adopted:

- (a) Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP)
- (b) Accommodation Strategy (AS)
- (c) Development Strategy (DS);

(2) that the feasibility and business cases proceed in relation to the recommendations arising from these strategies, as outlined in section 3 of the report. This work will inform future decision making, to be brought to Executive and full Council as required by the constitution;

(3) that it be noted that financial allocations have been made through the medium term financial plan (MTFP) and capital programme to progress these strategies, as shown in table 1.1 of the report, subject to approval to spend these funds in accordance with the capital programme approvals process; and

(4) that the outline timeframes in section 12 of the report and the high-level activities be noted, to inform future decision making.

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Chairman

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