



Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Council

Tuesday, 15 February 2022

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 6.05 pm

Meeting Concluded: 9.07 pm

Councillors:

Richard Westwood (Chairman)
Karin Haverson (Vice-Chairman)

Mark Aplin
Nigel Ashton
Mike Bell
Mike Bird
Steve Bridger
Peter Bryant
Gill Bute
Mark Canniford
Ashley Cartman
John Cato
Caritas Charles
Caroline Cherry
James Clayton
Sarah Codling
Andy Cole
Peter Crew
John Crockford-Hawley
Ciaran Cronnelly
Catherine Gibbons
Hugh Gregor
Wendy Griggs
Ann Harley
Sandra Hearne
David Hitchins
Steve Hogg
Nicola Holland
Huw James
Patrick Keating
John Ley-Morgan
Stuart McQuillan
Robert Payne
Marcia Pepperall
Bridget Petty

Lisa Pilgrim
Terry Porter
Geoffrey Richardson
David Shopland
Timothy Snaden
Mike Solomon
James Tonkin
Richard Tucker
Roz Willis

Apologies: Councillor Donald Davies.

Officers in attendance: Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Lucy Shomali (Director of Place), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Alex Hearn (Assistant Director (Placemaking & Growth)) and Mike Riggall (Information and ICT Security Manager).

Partaking via Microsoft Teams: Councillors Mark Crosby, Caroline Goddard, Ruth Jacobs, Phil Neve and Ian Parker

Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Sheila Smith (Director of Children's Services), Hayley Verrico (Director of Adult Services), Vanessa Andrews (Marketing and Communications Manager), Sue Efford (Committee and Support Services Manager), Jenny Ford (Head of Development and Placemaking) and Melanie Watts (Head of Finance)

COU Chairman's Welcome
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The Chairman welcomed everyone to this face-to-face meeting of the Council in the New Council Chamber. He referred to the public health recommendations to exercise caution and to the council's own health and safety advice which made it necessary to limit the total number of councillors, officers and members of the public who could be present in the Chamber to ensure the meeting could take place safely.

He reported that for members and officers who did not yet feel comfortable attending in person or who were unable to attend, there was an option to join the meeting via Microsoft Teams. This enabled them to partake in the debate remotely but they would not be formally 'in attendance', and members joining remotely would not be able to vote nor count towards the quorum of the meeting.

The meeting was being streamed live on the internet and a recorded version would be available to view within 48 hours on the North Somerset Council website.

Due to the heavy agenda for this budget setting meeting, the Chairman gave notice that he would be proposing a short comfort break at an appropriate point in the meeting.

COU Public Participation, petitions, and deputations (Standing Orders 2 (vi) and
88 17) (Agenda item 1)

Climate Emergency and Major Transport Schemes

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Assistant Director, Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer read out a statement on behalf of Cresten Boase, a Sandford resident, on the climate emergency and major transport schemes including Banwell Bypass. Ms Boase referred to the council's climate emergency and transport commitments which included a review of all major transport schemes to assess their impact on carbon emissions in order to meet the council's objective of carbon neutral emissions by 2030. She queried why the Banwell Bypass scheme had not been reviewed for its carbon cost, as required under the council's own transport and climate emergency plans, when the scheme would produce significant carbon emissions during its construction and operation. She suggested proceeding towards the planning application stage without a full review of the scheme went against the council's own commitments, and the wishes and convictions of many North Somerset residents committed to reducing carbon emissions and slowing the harmful effects of climate heating.

The Chairman thanked Ms Boase for her statement and referred the matter to Councillor Bridger as the relevant Executive Member, and to the Director of Place for consideration and response.

COU 89 Petitions to be presented by Members (Standing Order No. 16) (Agenda item 3)

(1) Oak Tree Park Residential Mobile Home Park – Loss of Bus Service

Councillor Porter presented a petition signed by 235 residents of Oak Tree Park in the following terms:

“We the residents of Oak Tree Park residential mobile home park feel that we are being victimised in losing the bus service to the park that many residents have enjoyed for years. On this park we have many people who are unable to drive or do not have a car and who are also unable to walk the length of Laney's Drove to get to a bus stop on the A371. We the undersigned want to let North Somerset Council know that we feel that we are being treated very unfairly over this lack of service when we pay statutory council tax the same as any other Weston- super- Mare residents .”

In presenting the petition Councillor Porter referred to the difficulties faced by many of the elderly residents of Oak Tree Park given the nearest bus stop was over a kilometre away. He reported that local residents were already in discussion with officers to address this issue but had wanted their petition presented formally at Council.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Porter and referred the petition to the Director of Place and the relevant Executive Member for consideration and response.

(2) Council Policy in dealing with Trees and Bushes in Worle

Councillor Aplin presented a petition signed by 517 Worle residents in the following terms:

“We the undersigned request that North Somerset Council take more care of trees

and bushes across Worle.”

In presenting the petition Councillor Aplin referred to the many emails he had received from local residents experiencing problems with existing trees and bushes and to the impact this was having on the local community. He suggested investment was needed to properly manage trees and bushes across the district and asked the council to review its policy and take action when significant problems arose, particularly given the commitment to plant more trees across North Somerset as part of the rewilding program. He stressed this was not a petition against rewilding which was supported by the vast majority of local people but rather a petition from those with a love of Worle and a desire to see it looking at its best.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Aplin and referred the petition to the Director of Place and the relevant Executive Member for consideration and response.

COU 90 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37) (Agenda item 4)

None declared.

COU 91 Minutes - 9 November 2021 (Agenda item 5)

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

COU 92 Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14) Future of Swimming Pools in North Somerset (Councillor Keating) (Agenda item 6 (1))

In introducing his Motion, Councillor Keating referred to the importance of undertaking a strategic assessment of swimming pools and to seek to identify additional funding, referring to the vital community asset they provided as well as the climate emergency benefits of refurbishing them.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Keating and seconded by Councillor Hogg

“Council recognises the vital role swimming pools play in our local community. Swimming pools are community hubs where people of all ages come together for fun, fitness and sport.

It is estimated that the enormous benefits swimming brings to people’s physical and mental health saves NHS and Social Care services more than £357 million each year across the UK. The benefits of physical activity on wellbeing are recognised in North Somerset’s own recently adopted Health and Wellbeing policy.

Council reaffirms its commitment to providing top class swimming facilities in North Somerset.

Council notes with concern the report published by Swim England in September 2021 – A Decade in Decline: The Future of Swimming Pools in England – which warns that, without proper investment and refurbishment, up to 2000 swimming pools could be lost across the UK over the next decade.

Many swimming pools in North Somerset are coming towards the end of their lifespan, while others such as that at Churchill Sports Centre have been indefinitely closed due to historical lack of investment and the impact of the Covid pandemic.

Council also notes that Leisure centres can account for as much as 40 per cent of a council's direct carbon emissions. New or refurbished pools are much more sustainable (both economically and environmentally) than those left unimproved and can play a key part in meeting our climate change ambitions.

Council resolves to adopt the recommendations contained in Swim England's 'Future of Swimming Pools in England' report to:

- Undertake a Strategic Needs Assessment to identify the investment needed to improve existing swimming pools in North Somerset to avoid a future shortfall in the provision of local swimming facilities.
- Bid for full Government funding for the refurbishment works that are identified (and for new pools if required).
- Council further instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to demand that the full £1 billion of grant funding recommended in Swim England's report is made available to local authorities to refurbish and expand their swimming pool provision. As part of this funding grants should also be made available to support local authorities to undertake full strategic needs assessments of their local swimming provision."

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

Councillor Keating spoke in support of his Motion. In discussing the Motion reference was made to the costs associated with running and maintaining swimming pools, the need to ensure they were self-financing and the significant investment required in pools such as Churchill to bring them back into use. Members noted the importance of children learning to swim, particularly in a coastal area like North Somerset and to the importance of having full community backing to make a success of any proposals. Reference was made to the problem with the location of Churchill swimming pool on the edge of the village, and to the benefits of making it more prominent, of promoting healthy lifestyles to encourage its wider use both within and beyond the village and of seeking support from partners such as the university to make it more viable. Members supported the need for government funding and long term investment to enable councils to refurbish and expand existing swimming pool provision.

It was noted that the Place Panel was in the process of scrutinising the thirteen pools across the district. A consultation with town and parish councils and local communities was being undertaken to assess support for the proposals which would then come back to the Panel for further consideration. It was noted the timescale for town and parish council responses had been tight and that an extension to the consultation period may be required.

Councillor Keating thanked members for their support and welcomed the review of swimming pools currently being undertaken by scrutiny. As the mover of the Motion, he agreed to take on board the proposal to allow the scrutiny review to conclude, with town and parish councils being fully engaged, and to await its

outcome before further pursuing the recommendations in his Motion.

Following further discussion, it was

Resolved: that, subject to the conclusion of the current scrutiny review of swimming pools and its subsequent recommendations, the Motion as set out in full above be approved and adopted.

COU 93 Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14) Planning and Regulatory Committee - Membership and Procedures (Councillor Shopland) (Agenda Item 6 (2))

In introducing his Motion, Councillor Shopland referred to councillors' decreasing role in the planning decision making process making it difficult for local councillors to properly serve their communities.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Shopland and seconded by Councillor Bryant

“(1) That the Number of Members of the P & R Committee be increased to 25.
(2) That the procedures for allowing Ward Members not on the Committee to refer items for consideration and their being able to debate and vote on them, be reviewed by Council.”

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

Councillor Shopland spoke in support of his Motion. In debating the Motion some members suggested the current planning system was unfair and expressed support for the proposed changes. However, reference was made to the extensive debate on this matter at a recent Council meeting following the planning peer review, which had led to Council agreeing to reduce the number of members on the committee to create a more efficient and informed approach to decision making, in line with good practice in other local authorities.

Following further debate and a Motion ‘that the question be now put’, the Motion was put to the vote and LOST.

COU 94 Matters referred from previous meeting (Agenda item 7)

None

COU 95 Chairman's announcements (Agenda item 8)

The Chairman reported this was the first Council meeting since the passing of former councillor Robert Cleland in December and, on behalf of the Council, he offered his sincere condolences to his family and friends.

At the invitation of the Chairman several members paid their respects and shared fond memories of Robert Cleland.

COU 96 Leader's announcements (Agenda item 9)

None

COU 97 Chief Executive's announcements (Agenda item 10)

None

COU 98 Political Balance Update (Agenda item 11)

The Assistant Director, Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer reported that Councillor Charles' had resigned from the Independent Group and was now a member of no political group. He reported that political balance was as follows:

Independent 16: Conservative 13: Liberal Democrat 10: Labour 6: Green 4:
No Political Group 1

COU 99 Forward Plan dated 31 January 2022 (Agenda item 12)

In the Leader's absence, Councillor Bell presented the Forward Plan.

Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted.

COU 100 Policy and Scrutiny Panel Report (Agenda item 13)

It was noted that the report was included within the supplementary papers that had been published for this meeting.

Councillor Richardson presented the report on behalf of the scrutiny chairmen, referring to changes to scrutiny ways of working over the past year due to Covid restrictions, with most scrutiny meetings being held informally and not in public. However, he reported that the panels had been very busy, as highlighted within the report, and that work included a number of scrutiny led member briefings on a range of topics. He thanked officers and members for their support over the past year and gave assurances that scrutiny panels would continue to challenge and question, to drive improvements and to ensure access to information.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

COU 101 Question Time (Standing Order No.18) (Agenda item 14)

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

At the conclusion of this item, the Chairman proposed a brief adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 7.35 pm and reconvened at 7.45 pm

COU 102 Reports and matters referred from the Executive, 2 February 2022 - EXE 87 Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 (Agenda item 15(1))

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor Cartman presented the Executive

finance references and the council tax setting report en bloc, that is: Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23; Capital Strategy 2022-2026 and Capital Budget 2022/23; Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget Update 2022/23; Revenue Budget Update and Council Tax Setting 2022/23 . It was noted that a named vote would be required on the budget decision.

In presenting the Executive references and the report, Councillor Cartman outlined the council's financial strategy for the year ahead which sought to protect vital services whilst also investing an extra £40m in long-term local projects to improve services for children, green initiatives and local facilities. He highlighted some of the initiatives as set out in the report which focussed on the key priorities of supporting children and young people, delivering better basic services, investing in communities, and tackling the climate emergency. He stated most of the council's money went on providing key basic services such as social care, children's services, recycling & waste and road maintenance, and confirmed residents would continue to receive good council services. As well as protecting key services the budget also sought to keep increases in fees and charges to a minimum. He stated the proposal to increase Council tax by 2.99 % was the same increase as the vast majority of other councils in the country and was largely driven by social care pressures, including 1% specifically for adult social care services. However, he stressed adult social care continued to be underfunded by central government and the Council Tax increase would not solve ongoing pressures. In increasing Council Tax, he was aware of the other cost-of-living pressures facing local residents but stressed the council was subject to similar cost pressures and was working hard to mitigate impacts on services and household budgets. He noted the ongoing budget risks due to uncertainties around inflation, service demand and future income levels, and referred to the challenge of future budget shortfalls which would need to be addressed. He thanked the Director of Corporate Services, the finance team and all staff for their work in putting together the finance reports and also thanked the Executive and all councillors for the collective effort in presenting a robust and balanced budget.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director of Corporate Services confirmed her assessment as Section 151 Officer that the proposed revenue budget for 2022/23 was robust, and that the council's reserves were adequate to address the level of risk. She referred to further challenges ahead which the council would need to plan for in future years. With reference to the Council Tax setting report she confirmed the information relating to the Avon Fire Authority precept and the final Environment Agency levy had now been received, reporting that the indicative figures contained within the report were the confirmed final figures and no further update was required.

In discussing the Executive references and the Council report, members expressed support for the finance strategy and welcomed the investment proposals for improved services for children, green initiatives and local facilities. Questions were raised around the level of reserves and whether adequate contingencies had been made given the risks around increasing costs, demand pressures in home to school transport, challenges in budgeting for placements for looked after children, increasing costs resulting from delays to Portishead Rail and appeal costs associated with the Bristol Airport inquiry. Councillor Cartman confirmed these significant risk factors were recognised but he was satisfied that suitable contingencies had been built into the budget to address these risk areas,

together with an appropriate level of reserves. In response to further concerns raised regarding the impact on particular user groups of closing the Gateway at the Town Hall and Castlewood, Councillor Cartman recognised the need for some limited face to face provision for those who couldn't otherwise access services, but stressed the need to achieve the required budget savings. He referred to the Customer Service Strategy due to come to Executive in April, currently being scrutinised by the PCOM Panel and out for consultation, and encouraged Councillor Willis to feed her comments into that scrutiny review.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Cartman, seconded by Councillor Solomon it was

Resolved:

(1) that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23, as described throughout the Executive report and shown in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved;

(2) that the Prudential Indicators for 2022/23, as shown in Appendix 2 of the Executive report, be approved; and

(3) that the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2022/23, as shown in Section 3.5 of the Executive report, be approved.

COU 103 Reports and matters referred from the Executive, 2 February 2022 - EXE 88 Capital Strategy 2022-26 and Capital Budget 2022-23 (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 102 above).

Motion: Moved by Councillor Cartman, seconded by Councillor Solomon it was

Resolved:

(1) that the capital strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27 as outlined in the Executive Summary and set out in Appendix 1 of the Executive report be approved; and

(2) that an increase to the capital programme of £38.722m in 2022/23 for a range of new investments relating to children and young people, delivering better basic services, investing in our communities and tackling the climate emergency as detailed in section 4.3 and Appendix 2 of the Executive report be approved, subject to confirmation of grant funding allocations.

COU 104 Reports and matters referred from the Executive, 2 February 2022 - EXE 89 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget Update 2022/23 (Agenda item 15(3)) and Revenue Budget Update and Council Tax Setting 2022/3 (Agenda item 16)

With the agreement of the Chairman item 15(3) was taken together with item 16 which included the Council Tax charges for the council and the precepting authorities for 2022/23.

Councillor Cartman presented the reference from the Executive and the report on the Revenue Budget Update and Council Tax Setting 2022/23. All the finance items were discussed together en bloc (see minute no. COU 102 above).

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

Motion: Moved by Councillor Cartman, seconded by Councillor Solomon it was

Resolved:

(1) that the 2022/23 net revenue budget for North Somerset Council services of £179.090m; and the Council Tax Requirement of £185.475m, being the value including town and parish council precepts be approved, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Council report;

(2) that a council tax increase of 1.99% for 2022/23 to support the proposed budget be approved;

(3) that an adult social care precept of 1% on the council tax for 2022/23 be approved;

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

(5) that the council tax charges for 2022/23 be approved in accordance with the formal Resolution as set out in Appendix 2 of the Council report, which provides for an average Band D council tax charge in respect of North Somerset Council services for 2022/23 of £1,549.16, plus special expenses, where such charges apply, giving an overall charge of £1,550.03, 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 for North Somerset Council services of 1.99% on the general level council tax, and a 1% 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 2022 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for 2022/23:
 - (a) for the whole Council area as **79,926.8** [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 2022/23 (excluding Parish precepts and Special Levies) is **£123,888,938**
- 3 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2022/23 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>	387,523,134
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>	257,249,857
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>	130,273,277
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>	1,629.91
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 6,384,339.03 Spec Exp 69,410.00 6,453,749.03
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>	1,549.16
g	The amount of Special Expenses (expressed in Band D)	0.87
h	The total Relevant Basic Amount for North Somerset Council	1,550.03

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:

Precepting Authority	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Police & Crime Commissioner	167.47	195.38	223.29	251.20	307.02	362.84	418.67	502.40
Fire Authority	51.97	60.63	69.29	77.95	95.27	112.59	129.92	155.90

- 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 2022/23 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
- 6 The Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2022/23 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 2022/23 be approved in accordance with the details set out in Appendix 5 of the Council report.

Named Vote as required under Standing Order 22A

For the Motion (28): Mike Bell, Mike Bird, Steve Bridger, Mark Canniford, Ashley Cartman, John Cato, Caroline Cherry, James Clayton, Andy Cole, John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, Catherine Gibbons, Hugh Gregor, Wendy Griggs, Karin Haverson, Sandra Hearne, Steve Hogg, Nicola Holland, Patrick Keating, Stuart McQuillan, Robert Payne, Bridget Petty, Geoffrey Richardson, Timothy Snaden, Mike Solomon, James Tonkin, Richard Tucker, Richard Westwood

Against the Motion (0)

Abstentions (10): Marc Aplin, Nigel Ashton, Peter Bryant, Gill Bute, Caritas Charles, Peter Crew, Marcia Pepperall, Lisa Pilgrim, Terry Porter, Roz Willis

Note: Councillors Sarah Codling, Ann Harley, David Hitchins, Huw James, John Ley-Morgan and David Shopland left the meeting early and were absent when the vote was taken.

COU 105 Reports and matters referred from the Policy/Overview and Scrutiny Panels other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda (Agenda item 17)

None

COU 106 Reports and matters referred from the other Committees other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda (Agenda item 18)

Audit Committee, 27 January 2022 - AUD18 Audit Committee Annual Report 2020-21

Councillor Cato, as Chairman of the Audit Committee, presented the reference. He referred to the financial and corporate governance work undertaken by the committee over the previous year and drew attention to the committee's work plan, welcoming contributions. He invited all councillors to come along to meetings and engage with the committee in improving the work of the council. He thanked members of the committee and officers for their hard work, support and diligence.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Cato, seconded by Councillor Hearne and

Resolved: that the Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/21 be received.

COU 107 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: Avon Fire Authority (Agenda item 19 (1))

Councillor Jacobs presented her report.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

COU 108 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel (Agenda item (19 (2)))

Councillor Crew presented his report, highlighting the key issues and responding to questions from members. Members welcomed the appointment of Sarah Crew as the new Chief Constable and the setting up of Neighbourhood Focus Teams. Members expressed support for the focus on tackling domestic abuse against both women and men, and addressing the issue of drink spiking.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

COU 109 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 was absent at this point in the meeting.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

COU 110 Procurement of External Auditors (Agenda item 20)

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report. It was noted that Avon Fire Authority was also adopting this approach.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Cato, seconded by Councillor Keating and

Resolved: that following recommendation from the Audit Committee, the use of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) to carry out the re-procurement of External Auditors to the Council be approved.

COU 111 Development Programme: Commissioning Plan for Development of Sites in Weston-super-Mare (Agenda item 21)

Councillor Canniford presented the report. He outlined the proposals and anticipated timeline for securing a development partner for these sites, with a focus on ensuring quality and deliverability. A cross party member working group was proposed to oversee the commissioning and procurement process. He suggested that delivery on these sites would be challenging which created additional financial risk but he stressed that without council intervention these sites would remain undeveloped. He drew members' attention to options being considered for temporary 'meanwhile uses' to bring activity and new attractions to the sites, such as the use of converted shipping containers offering short-term low rent premises for independent businesses. He thanked officers for the report and the Place Panel for its input.

In discussing the report members welcomed the proposals but urged caution in terms of expectations, noting these sites were both financially and practically challenging and the various failed attempts to develop them over many decades. It was suggested development of these sites was essential for the improvement of the Town Centre economy and existing housing stock, and for the provision of more affordable housing. Members referred to the need for housing that was truly affordable, to include social rent and shared ownership, and suggested affordable housing levels should reflect the 40% recently agreed as part of the Local Plan consultation. Reference was also made to the need for child and family friendly housing. While there was support for an ambitious development package, reference was also made to the importance of realism, having regard to the particular constraints and challenges these sites presented and the likelihood of significant public subsidy being required to achieve the proposed affordable housing levels. Reference was also made to the need for ambitious goals in relation to climate change and for the carbon footprint of all capital projects to be closely scrutinised.

In response to a proposal for a further recommendation requiring the Executive Member to consult with the Chairman of the Place Panel, Councillor Canniford referred to recommendation (3) in the report that proposed the establishment of a Member Working Group, and agreed to include consultation with the Chairman of the Place Panel.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Canniford, seconded by Councillor Bell and

Resolved:

(1) that the Commissioning Plan for the procurement of a development partner for residential and/or mixed-use development sites in Weston-super-Mare, as set out in section 3 of the report, be approved;

(2) that authority be delegated to the Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy to finalise the package of sites for inclusion in the procurement, subject

to the outcome of acquisition and business case processes;

(3) that the establishment of a Member Working Group be agreed to oversee the commissioning and procurement process, as well as 'meanwhile use' proposals, and to consult with the Chairman of the Place Panel;

(4) that authority be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy, to approve the submission of funding bids to any value to support development and/or 'meanwhile use' proposals, should such opportunities arise;

(5) that an allocation of £693,493 from the approved capital programme for Social Housing Grants (KAH201) be approved, to be made available through the procurement process to the successful bidder to support the provision of affordable housing and/or enhanced sustainability measures at these developments; and

(6) that the principle of facilitating 'meanwhile uses' on sites prior to their development be endorsed, subject to further business case development.

COU 112 Accommodation Strategy Update (includes exempt appendix) (Agenda item 22)

Councillor Bridger presented the report. He referred to an all member scrutiny session that had taken place on 17 January to brief members, but reported that not all members had seen the exempt appendix published with the main Council report for this meeting. He therefore proposed an amendment to the recommendations, suggesting that recommendation (1) seeking approval for transitioning out of Castlewood and its release for disposal or redevelopment be deleted, and an addition be made to recommendation (2) to bring back a further report to a future Council meeting. That report would include a full options appraisal.

The Assistant Director, Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer reminded members of the registration process for receiving exempt papers and asked any member yet to register to contact him so this could be rectified.

In noting that the future of Castlewood would be addressed in the further report, reference was made to the importance of retaining some form of council presence in the north of the district and a request was made for this to be addressed in the report.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Bridger, seconded by Councillor Bell and

Resolved: that the production of detailed options analysis and an associated development and delivery strategy for the Castlewood site be commissioned, and a further report be brought back to a future meeting of Council.

COU 113 Urgent business permitted by the Local Government Act 1972 (if any) (Agenda item 23)

None

Chairman

Appendix 1

Council Meeting, 15 February 2022 Question Time (agenda item 14)

1. Question from Cllr Keating to Cllr Solomon, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Services

Cllr Keating asked the following question of Cllr Solomon:

“Residents are increasingly concerned around road safety on Ladymead Lane in Langford.

Traffic has increased due to new developments and the use of the road as a "rat run" to avoid congestion on the A38. Plans to develop a new school (and possibly new housing as per the draft local plan) will only increase the problem.

Given that this route is heavily used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, will the Executive Member commit to investigating how road safety and improving active travel facilities can improved on this route?" ”

Cllr Solomon responded he would look into this and discuss this with officers and ward councillors.

2. Question from Cllr James to Cllr Davies, Leader of the Council

Cllr James asked the following question of Cllr Davies:

“February marks LGBTQ History Month, and the theme is "Politics In Art: ‘The Arc Is Long’. Many residents may look back and learn about amazing queer artists like Clevedon's Doris Hatt who pioneered modernist art whilst running to be a communist councillor for Clevedon Walton whilst living with her long-term girlfriend in the 1940s.

This month it has also been one year since my petition, signed by 591 people, calling for a Rainbow Crossing on Portishead High Street - looking for a way to integrate equalities and inclusivity into our public realm by something visual which will highlight just how open North Somerset is.

How will this Council commemorate LGBTQ History Month, Pride Month - and how does it plan to honour its commitment to LGBTQ residents to improve the public realm?" ”

Cllr Bell as Deputy Leader responded on behalf of Cllr Davies. He confirmed the council was committed to equalities and inclusivity and suggested regular challenge of council commitments was useful. The council was working on a community inclusion calendar and was keen to ensure a focus on those issues that were most important to local communities and to embed this in our activities and reflect it in our communications. He confirmed this would include celebrating Pride Month and UK Pride next year.

3. Question from Cllr Charles to Cllr Petty, Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Engagement

Cllr Charles asked the following question of Cllr Petty:

"I, and I am sure other members, greatly appreciate the all member briefing on engagement held earlier on this year. I was hoping the Executive Member with portfolio responsibilities would consider the following: the creation of an engagement impact assessment tool similar in design to an EQIA that would ensure consideration of adequate engagement and the impact of engagement on any public facing policy, procedure or action of the council."

In response Cllr Petty welcomed the issue raised by Cllr Charles and reported that work was currently being undertaken on an engagement strategy and she would ensure that options for an engagement impact assessment tool would be considered as part of that. She undertook to provide a full written response and to circulate this to all councillors shortly.

4. Question from Cllr Haverson to Cllr Solomon, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Services

Cllr Haverson asked the following question of Cllr Solomon:

"One of my residents has asked if cyclists are permitted to use the Park & Ride at Long Ashton and use their bike instead of the bus to cycle into Bristol. As I understand it, this is currently not permitted. In answer to one of the FAQs: 'Can I park my vehicle and not catch a bus?' the Travelwest information website states: 'This is not currently possible. If you would like to get more information, please contact the local authority in charge of the site you are interested in.' I suspect that may be because we are trying to stop football fans parking their car and walking to the stadium. Can we reword this advice to permit drivers to either bus or cycle from the car park as I understand there is actually a cycle way exiting the site? I understand Bristol City Council is running the Park & Ride so would Councillor Solomon contact his counterpart at Bristol City Council to look into this."

Cllr Solomon responded that he would be happy to do so.

5. Question from Cllr Gibbons to Cllr Cartman, Executive Member for Corporate Services

Cllr Gibbons stated that Weston Town Council had recently been accredited as a Living Wage Employer and asked what the latest position was with North Somerset Council.

Cllr Cartman responded that all North Somerset Council staff were paid the Real Living Wage, with the exception of apprentices. In terms of the council's supply chain, he suggested this was not always affordable, referring to low wage sectors such as social care. However, he suggested these matters would be considered as part of the People Strategy that was due to come forward shortly.

6. Question from Cllr Shopland to Councillor Bell, Deputy Leader

Cllr Shopland asked the Deputy Leader why the clocks and the wyvern had disappeared from the Chamber and why the photograph of Her Majesty the Queen was located at the side rather than at the head of the Chamber.

Cllr Bell responded that the wyvern was still in its usual location but currently hidden by the projector screen and he would need to find out about the clocks. As for the photograph of the Queen he suggested maybe a more prominent position could be found in the Chamber for her Jubilee year.

7. Question from Cllr Willis to Cllr Solomon, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Services

Cllr Willis asked the following question of Cllr Solomon:

“What is the timeline for the rough sleeping or homeless issues in the doorways of Weston-super-Mare, particularly on Waterloo Street/The Boulevard? Some of my residents are distressed to see these people in such a state and asked me what is happening. I thought we had an initiative in place? Please could the Executive Member advise.”

Cllr Solomon responded he had monitored this recently and had only seen a couple of sleeping bags in doorways but understood this may now have increased. He agreed to contact officers to check whether the initiative was being actively pursued but referred to the importance of dealing with this issue sensitively.

Cllr Bell added it was really important to separate out the issue of unattended belongings left in doorways and those who were sleeping rough. He agreed action should be taken to remove unattended belongings and to deal with those who chose to camp out and beg, and confirmed there was no tolerance of those engaging in anti-social behaviour. However, he stressed no-one should be sleeping rough and anyone concerned about a rough sleeper should contact StreetLink, the national rough sleeping helpline which alerts local services.

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