

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Executive

Wednesday, 2 February 2022

New Council Chamber, Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 2.30 pm

Meeting Concluded: 5.00 pm

Councillors:

Donald Davies (Chairman)

Mike Bell (Vice-Chairman)

Steve Bridger

Mark Canniford

Ashley Cartman

Catherine Gibbons

Bridget Petty

Mike Solomon

Also in attendance: Councillors Robert Payne, Nigel Ashton, Peter Bryant, John Crockford-Hawley, Karin Haverson, Terry Porter, Geoffrey Richardson and Roz Willis.

Officers in attendance: Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Sheila Smith (Director of Children's Services), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Gemma Dando (Assistant Director - Neighbourhood Management), Richard Kent (Head of Planning, Place Directorate), Michael Reep (Planning Policy Manager), Mike Riggall (Information and ICT Security Manager) and Ayesha Tinsley (Digital Apprentice).

Partaking via Microsoft Teams:

Councillors: Nicola Holland (Assistant Executive Member), Mike Bird, John Cato, Caroline Cherry, Mark Crosby, Wendy Griggs, Sandra Hearne, Ruth Jacobs, John Ley-Morgan, Stuart McQuillan, Marcia Pepperall.

Officers: Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Lucy Shomali (Director of Place), Hayley Verrico (Director, Adult Social Services), Sue Efford (Committee and Support Services Manager), Colin Medus (Head of Public Transport Transformation), Colin Russell (Service Manager - Recycling & Waste), (Melanie Watts (Head of Finance)

EXE Chairman's Welcome

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The Chairman welcomed everyone to this face-to-face meeting of the Executive in the New Council Chamber. He explained that in line with public health recommendations to exercise caution and the Council's own health and safety advice, the number of councillors, officers and members of the public in attendance in the Chamber was still limited to ensure the meeting could take

place safely.

Some councillors and officers would be joining the meeting remotely via Microsoft Teams but whilst able to partake they would not be “in attendance formally” and, in the case of Executive Members, would be unable to vote or count towards the quorum for 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.

**EXE
77** **Addresses by Members of the Public (ESO 6) (Agenda item 1)**

The Executive received two addresses from members of the public as follows:

(1) Trevor Garfield, Locking resident, on the Local Plan.

Mr Garfield was not present at the meeting and his address was read out by the Assistant Director, Legal & Governance. Mr Garfield raised concerns regarding the inclusion of Elm Grove nurseries for development within the Local Plan, referring to the number of development plans for the site over recent years which had all been rejected and suggesting land around Locking village was now heavily developed and any further development would compromise the village. He asked for this land to be removed from the development plans.

The Chairman thanked Mr Garfield for his address and referred his comments for consideration later in the meeting under agenda item 9 (North Somerset Local Plan).

(2) Cresten Boase, Sandford resident, on the Banwell Bypass Project and its impact on climate emergency measures.

Ms Boase addressed the Executive, referring to the controversial nature of this project which involved building a new road over part of the Mendip Hills AONB, countryside, agricultural land and floodplain, encroaching on a protected groundwater source and protected rare bat habitat, and building a car-dependent new estate on a greenfield site. She stated the project would substantially increase carbon emissions and jeopardise the Council’s aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2030. She raised concern that the Council was pressing ahead without undertaking a review of the project’s carbon cost, a requirement under its own plans and policies, and suggested the project would have a damaging effect on the Council’s aim to reduce car dependency and promote more sustainable modes of travel for the foreseeable future. It would cancel out the benefits of other carbon reduction projects and the positive efforts of residents and groups in North Somerset to reduce their own carbon footprint. She suggested there had been no public consultation on the principle of the bypass nor the project as a whole, and requested a full review of the Banwell Bypass project and its associated carbon cost without further delay

The Chairman thanked Ms Boase for her address and referred the matter to Councillor Bridger as the appropriate Executive Member.

EXE 78 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37) (Agenda item 3)

None declared.

EXE 79 Minutes - 8 December 2021 (Agenda item 4)

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

EXE 80 Non-Executive Councillors' Addresses (Agenda item 5)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor McQuillan addressed the Executive on the North Somerset Local Plan. He thanked officers for their work on the Preferred Options document and recognised the difficult position facing the Council given the scale of the government's housing requirement and the lack of sustainable locations outside the Green Belt. He noted the strong focus on the climate emergency and active travel within the document but asked officers to look further at whether the nature emergency considerations could be strengthened. He welcomed the reduced housing numbers for Yanley Lane and the retention of green space between Bristol and Long Ashton, but raised concerns in relation to traffic mitigation, school places and healthcare provision which he anticipated would be raised as part of the consultation. He welcomed the consultation undertaken to date and urged officers to keep dialogue going with key stakeholders and to resist pressure from major developers for increased housing numbers. He expressed the hope that should government housing targets be reduced that those housing allocations within the Green Belt would be the first to be reviewed.

The Chairman thanked Councillor McQuillan for his address and referred his comments for consideration later in the meeting under agenda item 9 (North Somerset Local Plan).

EXE 81 Matters referred to the Executive and not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda (Agenda item 6)

None

EXE 82 West of England Sub-Region: items not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda (Agenda item 7)

None

EXE 83 Forward Plan dated 31 January 2022 (Agenda item 8)

In response to a question raised regarding a report to Executive in April on a greenhouse gas capture research project, Councillor Bridger reported that officers were currently exploring options for submitting a bid for funding as part of the Banwell Bypass Scheme.

Resolved: that the forward plan be noted.

EXE Change to the Order of the Agenda

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The Chairman gave notice that he would be changing the order of the agenda and taking items in the following order: item 9, 14,15,16,17,11,12,13,10,18.

EXE North Somerset Local Plan (Agenda item 9)

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Councillor Canniford presented the report. He sought approval for the Local Plan Preferred Options document for the purposes of public consultation and thanked officers for the considerable amount of work undertaken in getting to this position. He suggested that in looking at the Preferred Options document there were two key considerations to bear in mind, namely that the removal of any site would require replacement with an alternative to achieve the required housing numbers, and that failure to achieve the government's target would increase the risk of speculative planning applications, potentially leading to an increase in planning appeals. He encouraged local residents to engage in the consultation process and to give their views on the proposed approach and proposals around the climate emergency, and how any shortfall in housing numbers might be addressed. He referred to the challenges for the Council given the scale of the government's housing target and the lack of sustainable locations outside the Green Belt. The comments raised by Mr Garfield and Councillor McQuillan earlier in the meeting were noted.

With reference to the recommendations Councillor Canniford proposed two amendments. He referred to an omission relating to a proposed primary school in Weston town centre on land fronting Drove Road roundabout he would like added to the Preferred Options Document and identified on the policies map prior to consultation. He also proposed an amendment to strategic policy SP8 on Housing, suggesting the affordable housing requirement be increased still further to 40% rather than the increase to 35% as set out in the document.

In discussing the report reference was made to the informal member engagement that had been undertaken along with robust scrutiny via the Place Scrutiny working group, established to consider and advise on the emerging approach. The Panel Chairman thanked all those councillors who had engaged with the process to date. He referred to the far reaching consequences of the Local Plan and the importance of good public consultation to ensure the views of local people were heard. Concerns were raised at the scale of the housing targets set by government and members stressed that local people and their representatives were best placed to decide what was best for their areas. Reference was made to the immense scale of the house building required, with two new strategic growth locations within the proposals and, given the exceptional circumstances in North Somerset with only limited sustainable sites available, the inclusion of sites within the Green Belt.

Members generally welcomed the ambitious target to secure 40% affordable housing but reference was made to the difficulties in meeting current levels and the need to ensure targets were achievable. Reference was also made to the definition of 'affordable' housing, which was still out of reach for many, with too many larger houses being built. It was suggested that a lower number of truly affordable quality housing, with good community facilities would be preferable. Reference was also made to the benefits of providing flexible housing that catered

for a range of ages and needs, and of the importance of finding ways to engage with young people as part of the consultation process. Members welcomed the focus on viability and sustainable development that addressed climate emergency, active travel and public transport, economic development, affordability and community facilities.

Following detailed discussion, it was

Resolved:

(1) that the Local Plan Preferred Options document be approved for the purposes of public consultation, subject to the inclusion of a proposed primary school in Weston town centre on land fronting Drove Road roundabout, and to an amendment to strategic policy SP8 on Housing, to increase the affordable housing requirement to 40%; and

(2) that any subsequent changes to the document required prior to consultation be delegated to the Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy and the Director of Place.

Reason for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered:

As set out in the report.

EXE 86 Fees and Charges 2022/23 (Agenda item 14)

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor Cartman presented the following four finance reports en bloc, that is: Fees and Charges 2022/23; Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23; Capital Strategy 2022-2026 and Capital Budget 2022/23; Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget 2022/23.

In presenting the reports Councillor Cartman referred to the three words which underpinned everything the council was seeking to achieve within the finance reports: Open, Fair and Green. He stated the budget for the coming year was one of protection and investment, protecting the essential services that all residents relied on and investing for a better future for everyone in North Somerset. In addition to the existing ambitious investment programme with over £300m committed to local projects, it was proposed to increase that by a further £40m to improve services for children, fund green initiatives and invest in improving local facilities and infrastructure. He outlined the individual investment proposals within these key areas as set out in the report, and highlighted the plans for protecting essential facilities and services such as social care, waste collection and road maintenance.

With reference to ongoing demand and cost pressures Councillor Cartman drew attention to the proposed council tax increase of 2.99% which Council would be asked to approve later this month. He stated 2.99% was below inflation and whilst recognising the cost-of-living pressures on residents, the reality was that all the money raised by this increase was still insufficient to fund the gap in social care funding. He suggested the finance reports demonstrated the council was

committed to developing a robust and sustainable budget and a revenue, treasury, and capital strategy that protects services and invests for the future. He thanked the Director of Corporate Services, the finance team and others across the council for their exceptional hard work in putting this budget together.

At the invitation of Councillor Cartman, the Director of Corporate Services highlighted the key elements within the finance reports referring to the council's current and projected financial position and the anticipated resources available. She referred to the key risks inherent within the budget planning process, and the financial strategies to mitigate these. She confirmed the proposals delivered a robust budget for the coming year and thanked those councillors and officers involved in putting together the report.

In discussing the proposals members thanked Councillor Cartman and officers for the detailed and comprehensive budget reports presented. Members expressed their support for specific schemes with particular reference to the prioritisation of children and young people and the provision of play facilities. Reference was made to the benefits of cross party working and constructive challenge in putting together the budget, resulting in solid and ambitious proposals. The ongoing pressures on social care and the lack of funding was highlighted and it was suggested the government must be held to account to ensure they delivered the resources required to support this and other essential services. Reference was also made to the importance of public health and the ambitious Health and Wellbeing Strategy which sought to narrow health inequalities and build a healthier and happier North Somerset. With regards to the capital strategy reference was made to the importance of ensuring all capital projects were fit for the future and that climate and nature emergency considerations were embedded within all future schemes.

During the debate the following points were made: members welcomed the improved format of the Treasury Management Strategy and in response to questions around fund performance, Councillor Cartman confirmed that continued efforts would be made to look for improvements and build on the good work to date; members welcomed the extension of the Strawberry Line to Clevedon but stressed the importance of adequate investment to maintain the existing route; members noted there would be no increase in Green Waste collection charges but referred to the shortcomings in the service over recent months and the need for service users to be refunded accordingly; questions were raised around the level of reserves and the importance of adequate contingencies given the known risks associated with increasing costs and demand around home to school transport and the difficulties in budgeting for demand led services such as placements for looked after children. Councillor Cartman confirmed he was satisfied that suitable contingencies had been built in across the budget to address these risk areas together with an appropriate level of reserves; in response to concerns in relation to the impact on certain groups of closing the Gateway at the Town Hall and Castlewood, Councillor Cartman referred to the fine balance between the costs and equality implications of these proposals, stressing the importance of road testing these proposals and of full engagement, noting that a report on the Customer Access Strategy was due to come to the Executive in April.

Resolved: that the changes to fees and charges as detailed in section 3 of the report be approved.

Reasons for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

EXE 87 Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 (Agenda item 15)

Councillor Cartman presented the Council's treasury management strategy for the 2022/23 financial year, detailing how the council plans to manage its cash-flows and resources to ensure effective treasury management, the proposed Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 and the proposed policy for making Minimum Revenue Provision in respect of the repayment of the council's external debt, within the revenue budget.

All the finance reports were discussed together en bloc (see minute no. EXE 86 above for the debate relating to these reports).

Recommended to Council:

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

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

Reasons for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

EXE 88 Capital Strategy 2022-2026 and Capital Budget for 2022/23 (Agenda item 16)

Councillor Cartman presented the Capital Strategy and Capital Budget, outlining the council's approach to capital investment over the short, medium and longer term and providing a high-level overview of how capital expenditure activity contributes to the provision of local public services within the area. These resources would be used to support the council's children and young people, tackle the climate emergency and invest in communities and infrastructure, whilst aiming to strengthen the delivery of basic services. The strategy matches the council's priorities and planned service requirements with funding projections and asset management considerations, being an overarching strategic plan closely linked to other key plans and strategies.

All the finance reports were discussed together en bloc (see minute no. EXE 86 above for the debate relating to these reports).

Recommended to Council:

(1) that the capital strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27 as outlined in the Executive Summary and set out in Appendix 1 of the 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 report be approved, subject to confirmation of grant funding allocations.

It was further

Resolved:

(1) that the revised borrowing impact within the capital programme of £94.291m for approved schemes to 2022/23, which could rise to £138m by 2026 be noted;

(2) that approval for the detailed highways schemes be delegated to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Services; and

(3) that the amendments to the capital budget for the current year 2021/22, as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report, be approved.

Reasons for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

EXE 89 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget 2022/23 (Agenda item 17)

Councillor Cartman presented the report which finalised the MTFP process by updating all financial assumptions and integrating the impact of new investment proposals, to enable the Executive to recommend a final balanced revenue budget to Council for the 2022/23 financial year. Council would then consider the recommended budget as part of the council tax setting process for the year ahead.

All the finance reports were discussed together en bloc (see minute no. EXE 86 above for the debate relating to these reports).

Resolved:

(1) that the updated revenue and capital budget forecasts in respect of the 2021/22 financial year, as detailed within section 3.1 of the report, be noted;

(2) that the Equality Impact Assessment report attached at Appendix 4 of the report be noted, and members familiarise themselves with the published Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) that underpin the 2022/23 budget savings plans; and

(3) that the statement of the Chief Finance Officer on the adequacy of reserves and the robustness of the budget as detailed in section 3.8 of the report be noted.

It was further

Recommended to Council:

(1) that a revenue budget for 2022/23 as detailed within the report and shown at Appendix 1 of the report be approved;

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

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

Reasons for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

EXE 90 Highway Maintenance Contract Extension (Agenda item 11)

Councillor Solomon presented the report.

Resolved: that a one-year extension to the existing highway maintenance contract with Milestone Infrastructure from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 be approved.

Reason for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered:

As set out in the report.

EXE 91 Recommissioning of the Flexible Framework of Independent Fostering Providers for Placements for Children and Young People (Agenda item 12)

Councillor Gibbons presented the report.

Resolved:

(1) that approval be given to award the contract as outlined in the previously agreed commissioning plan; and

(2) that providers that have successfully applied to the flexible framework be approved, and the approval of future additions to the flexible framework during the contract term be delegated to the Director of Children's Services.

Reason for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered:

As set out in the report.

EXE 92 Update on the Development of a Joint Statutory Public Bus Enhanced Partnership with the West of England Combined Authority and Applicable Bus Operators (Agenda item 13)

Councillor Davies presented the report. He drew members' attention to the letter from the Department for Transport attached at Appendix 3 which put the final statutory consultation processes on pause, pending a provisional funding allocation in February 2022. This changed the timescales for the Enhanced Partnership plan and made the situation less certain, moving the adoption date back to April to June 2022. He confirmed that any significant changes from the approved draft would require the matter to be referred back to the Executive for a further decision as referenced in recommendation (3).

In discussing the report reference was made to the importance of adequate funding to provide frequent, reliable, affordable and integrated bus services that were valued by local communities. Members referred to the need to demonstrate demand for these services to ensure they were not lost. Reference was made to the importance of good communication and public consultation by the bus operators, and of the need for West of England partners to work closely together to address cross-boundary issues on the bus network.

Resolved:

(1) that the update on the development of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes as required by the National Bus Strategy be noted;

(2) that the Leader of the Council, as the Executive Member responsible for Strategic Transport; Transport Policy, Public Transport, Home to School Transport, Bus and Rail Strategy, be delegated authority to approve the final Enhanced Partnership and initial schemes in partnership with The West of England Combined Authority; and

(3) that the decision to approve the final Enhanced Partnership and initial schemes be referred back to the Executive should the Plan and process significantly change from the proposed Draft.

Reason for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered:

As set out in the report.

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

The meeting adjourned at 4.22 pm and reconvened at 4.41 pm

EXE 93 Oral reports of Executive Councillors (Agenda item 18)

On reconvening, Councillor Davies reported that the decision on the Bristol International Airport appeal had just been announced and he expressed his extreme disappointment at the Inspectors' decision to allow the appeal.

He stated that the council would be studying the Inspectors' decision to see if there were any grounds for challenge and would be working hard regardless to hold the airport to account to deliver their promises of reducing the carbon impact of the airport operation, especially around non-car travel to the airport, and the greenwashing promises of the airline industry to decarbonise which, in reality, would not happen in this decade.

Councillor Gibbons reported that the first meeting of the North Somerset Youth Parliament had taken place the previous day and she looked forward to a vibrant forum for consultation and participation with young people across the district. She thanked Councillor Holland and the Youth Champions for their work in bringing this forward.

Councillor Canniford referred to the new Omicron hospitality and leisure grants that were now available and encouraged businesses to apply.

EXE 94 Waste Strategy (Agenda item 10)

Councillor Solomon presented the report. He stated that whilst North Somerset was already a high performing authority, work was ongoing to reduce waste, to reuse where possible and to increase the amount recycled, all of which would make a positive contribution towards the climate emergency and budget savings. He referred to the importance of education in encouraging food waste recycling to prevent it ending up in black sacks.

In discussing the report Councillor Bell proposed an amendment to the recommendations as set out. He proposed that the latest suggestion to implement trials of three-weekly residual waste collections (black bins) be amended and that this revert to the original wording in the draft strategy, namely that three-weekly collections be identified as an option for the future once further evidence had been sought.

In considering the report members welcomed the new strategy and the proposed package of measures which set strong and clear ambitions for the future, and thanked all those who engaged in the consultation. With reference to the proposed change to the recommendation, members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of introducing three-weekly residual waste collections at this point, noting this had already been implemented by some neighbouring authorities and referring to the need to change behaviours to make a positive contribution to the climate emergency. Reference was made to the particular difficulties experienced by those living in flats and the need for these issues to be examined and addressed.

Following further debate, it was

Resolved:

(1) that the draft waste strategy be amended in accordance with revised actions 2 (Measures of Success) and 3 (Communications) as set out in the report, but the Executive declines to update the draft strategy in the ways proposed in revised action 1 (Future options for black bin collections to increase recycling and reduce waste) at this time; and

(2) that the North Somerset Waste Strategy, as amended by these resolutions, be adopted, with any further minor amendments for clarity prior to publication being approved by the Executive Member, in consultation with the Director of Place.

Reason for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered:

As set out in the report.

EXE 95 Urgent business permitted by the Local Government Act 1972 (if any) (Agenda item 19)

None

Chairman
