

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Executive

Wednesday, 19 October 2022

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 2.32 pm

Meeting Concluded: 3.33 pm

Councillors:

Steve Bridger (Chairman)
Mike Bell (Vice-Chairman)

Mark Canniford
Catherine Gibbons
Steve Hogg
Bridget Petty
Mike Solomon

Apologies: Councillor: Ashley Cartman.

Also in attendance: Councillors Hugh Gregor and Lisa Pilgrim.

Officers in attendance: Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Sheila Smith (Director of Children's Services), Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Hayley Verrico (Interim Director, Adults' Support and Safeguarding), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Emma Diakou (Head of Business Insight, Policy and Partnerships), Richard Kent (Head of Planning, Place Directorate) and Michael Reep (Planning Policy Manager, Place Directorate).

Partaking via Microsoft Teams:

Councillors: Nigel Ashton, Mike Bird, John Cato, Peter Crew, Don Davies, Karin Haverson, Sandra Hearne, John Ley-Morgan, Stuart McQuillan, Robert Payne, Terry Porter, James Tonkin.

Officers: Gemma Dando (Assistant Director - Neighbourhood and Transport, Place Directorate), Mel Watts (Finance Manager, Corporate Services Directorate) and Hazel Brinton (Committee Services Manager, Corporate Services Directorate)

EXE Chairperson's Welcome

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The Chairperson welcomed everyone to this face-to-face meeting of the Executive in the New Council Chamber.

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".

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 32 Addresses by Members of the Public (ESO 6)

None received.

EXE 33 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

None declared.

EXE 34 Minutes

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

EXE 35 Non-Executive Councillors' Addresses

None received.

EXE 36 Matters referred to the Executive and not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda

None.

EXE 37 West of England Sub-Region: items not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda

None.

EXE 38 Forward Plan dated 3 October 2022 (attached)

Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted.

EXE 39 Local Plan 2038 - Update following further consideration by informal Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 7 October 2022

The Chairperson advised that a written reference note following the informal Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel set up to receive wider and deeper input from members had been circulated to all members and further legal advice had been obtained.

The comments from the informal Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel were noted together with the ongoing work by officers on the constrained nature of North Somerset. A future report would come to the Executive to give clarification on the nuances around the Green Belt and its protection and other sensitive sites. The Chairperson hoped that the council would receive greater clarity from central government on possible changes to local planning policy and to which the council would respond. He noted that the council wished to submit a robust, responsive plan that responded to community views and that all members could support.

EXE 40 Month 5 Budget Monitor

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report. She highlighted that the

net expenditure for the council for 2022/23 was expected to be £185m for the year which would be an overspend of £4.391m and an underlying increase in service pressures of £400k since the last report.

Mitigations in the budget of £856k had been identified to offset some of the overspend. The pressures were coming from a number of areas such as the rise in energy costs and cost of living pressures including wage increases. Officers were looking at energy saving measures and pay increases were subject to ongoing national negotiations.

The Director of Corporate Services further noted that after identified mitigations, the overspend had been reduced to £231k but this meant using reserves and contingency which reduced the council's flexibility in addressing any future, emerging risks. Work was ongoing to reduce the deficit to zero by year end. Additionally, she noted minor changes to capital projects and two additions to the capital programme.

In discussing the report, members queried the level of outturn forecast variance on the Children's Services Directorate Schools Budget and the use of reserves to cover the forecasted overspend and balance the current year budget. The impact of the deficit and use of reserves on the following year's budget and reserves was queried. The Director of Corporate Services noted that the use of reserves was for one off costs and not ongoing revenue costs.

Resolved: that the Executive

- i. Noted the projected revenue and capital budget forecasts as detailed within the report and also the issues and assumptions that underpin the forecasts,
- ii. Approved the in-year amendments to the revenue and capital budgets as detailed in Appendices 1 and 4 to the report and
- iii. Noted the financial risks being assessed by the council, which may have an impact on future monitoring reports

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 41 Update on the Cost of Living Working Group

The Head of Business Insight, Policy and Partnerships presented the report which gave an overview of the work of the Cost of Living Working Group. She brought members' attention to a number of updates including the development of a cost-of-living action plan by the working group which now comprised of around 60 members across North Somerset including groups from the community and voluntary sectors. The action plan touched on a number of areas as detailed in the report and would be shared with the council's Citizen Panel for feedback.

The officer presenting noted her report detailed a number of ongoing projects including the Public Living Rooms Project which had received 23 applications from 29 different groups for grant funding. She added that libraries were being considered for warm spaces as was the production of a map.

The report also detailed a Communications Plan and an Oversight Panel which had been set up as the Cost of Living Working Group had grown so rapidly that the panel was required to expedite decision making. The panel was chaired by Councillor Bell and would meet every two weeks for the foreseeable future.

The Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing commented that the council had pulled together the Working Group task force in response to the cost-of-living crisis and thanked officers and teams from across all directorates who were finding time in addition to their day jobs to support the initiative. He added that it demonstrated that even in challenging times, there was a willingness amongst communities to support each other and how important local councils were in drawing upon their expertise and networks in times of crisis. He noted that the message for the community was that there was help out there and thanked officers and voluntary groups for getting involved.

In discussing the report, members noted that there were concerns over the level of detail and complexity of the “Worrying about Money” leaflet which whilst useful was nonetheless too complex for some residents to understand. They also expressed concerns around whether the support was reaching all those that were in need over and above the usual demographic targeted for support. It was noted that the council was supporting a wider range of households that usually targeted although the financial mechanisms for support were constrained by legislation.

During the debate, it was highlighted that there were a number of ways information on sustainable energy and tips on energy efficiency was being communicated including via the local Eat Festivals and social media.

Resolved: that the Executive noted the report.

EXE 42 Living Well with COVID

The Director of Public Health and Regulatory Services summarised the main points of his report. He noted that the country was now in a different phase of the pandemic but commended the council and community over the past three years for the response in mitigating the risk of COVID. He explained the requirement to produce a North Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan had been proactively replaced by the council’s North Somerset Living Well with COVID-19 strategy.

He explained that roles and responsibilities for the various agencies would be different from April 2023 when the national funding from Department of Health and Social Care which had been provided to support the local response would cease.

The Director of Public Health and Regulatory Services outlined the four areas of the North Somerset Living Well with COVID-19 strategy:

- Prevention where the council was working alongside settings in managing

- localised outbreaks
- Protection via the vaccination programme which targeted the most vulnerable residents and monitoring the uptake of vaccinations
- Treatment – clinically led but with a more effective range of interventions and
- Response where the Public and Regulatory Service was still running a team alongside colleagues from Adult Social Care and Children’s Services although this would cease from in April 2023.

North Somerset residents were encouraged to take up vaccinations when offered.

In discussing the report, members asked questions around the severity of reactions to vaccinations and their ongoing effectiveness; the availability of support and advice for those with long covid and the flexibility the council could exercise in adding to the national guidelines regarding health issues and whether that could be tailored to local requirements.

The Director of Public Health and Regulatory Services highlighted to members that the National Covid Inquiry had opened and that the first matter being considered was around response and turning scientific insight into guidance. Members asked about communications to keep Covid on the radar and it was explained that the relative risk now was much lower than at the start of the pandemic. The importance of public health services and health protection together with the necessary funding of them was considered as was the potential conflict of messaging regarding staying at home if vulnerable due to Covid with the message of communities coming together in shared warm spaces during the Cost of Living crisis. The ongoing requirement for volunteers to help with the vaccination programme was noted.

Resolved: that the Executive noted the report.

EXE 43 Draft Calendar of Executive Meetings 2023/24

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer.

Resolved: that the draft calendar of Executive meetings for the 2023/24 Municipal Year be approved.

Reasons for the decision:

As set out in the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the report.

EXE 44 Oral reports of Executive Councillors

None.

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

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None.

Chairman
