

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Executive

Wednesday, 7 December 2022

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 6.02 pm

Meeting Concluded: 7.16 pm

Councillors:

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

Mark Canniford
Ashley Cartman
Catherine Gibbons
Steve Hogg
Bridget Petty
Mike Solomon

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), Alex Hearne (Assistant Director, Placemaking and Growth, Place Directorate), Mike Riggall (Information and ICT Security Manager, Corporate Services) and Vanessa Andrews (Marketing and Communications Manager).

Partaking via Microsoft Teams:

Councillors: Nigel Ashton, Mike Bird, Peter Crew, Don Davies, Sandra Hearne, Patrick Keating, Geoff Richardson,

Officers: Hayley Verrico (Director of Adult Social Services), Jenny Ford (Head of Placemaking and Development, Place Directorate), Rachel Lewis (Heritage and Design Manager, Place 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 47 Addresses by Members of the Public (ESO 6)

None received.

EXE 48 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

None declared.

EXE 49 Minutes 19 October 2022

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

EXE 50 Non-Executive Councillors' Addresses

None received.

EXE 51 Matters referred to the Executive and not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda

None.

EXE 52 West of England Sub-Region: items not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda

None.

EXE 53 Forward Plan dated 2 December 2022

Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted.

EXE 54 Schools Capital Upgrades - remaining roofing programme

At the invitation of the Chairperson, Councillor Cartman presented the report. He explained the background to the report and the requirement to include the project at Kewstoke Primary School in the council's capital programme for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to support essential repairs and improvements up to the value of £1.75m. The scope of the project had been provisionally agreed to include a new roof and an extension to provide a relocated staff area and the provision of new welfare facilities for both staff and pupils.

He noted that the current market for works contractors was challenging and therefore the open tender route was preferred as it gave the maximum opportunity for competition and allowed local suppliers to bid for the contract to keep as much of the work as possible in North Somerset.

In discussing the report members were pleased to note that local contractors could bid for the work and that better insulation would contribute to the building's efficiency. Future proofing of the structure to allow for solar panels was requested to be considered.

Resolved:

- That the Executive approved the joint commissioning and procurement plan for the procurement of roofing and other construction works at Kewstoke Primary School and
- That the Executive approved the allocation of up to the value of £1.75m from the Schools Capital Maintenance programme (approved at Council 15th February 22) for Kewstoke Primary School to support essential repairs and improvements.

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 55 Approval of Two Towns Placemaking Strategies and Connecting Portishead Development Framework

At the invitation of the Chairperson Councillor Canniford presented the report. He informed members that there had been a change to the recommendation wording in the report.

Revised recommendation

“That the Executive endorsed, in principle, the Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead placemaking strategies as the partnership visions for regeneration, placemaking and economic development for the respective towns, and agreed to delegate to the Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy, in consultation with relevant Town Councils and other partners, the authority to determine the final content and wording of the strategies.”

He noted that until this point, the council had no regeneration programmes for the towns outside of Weston-s-Mare and the placemaking strategy for the latter had been successful. There was investor interest in developing other towns in North Somerset and to secure investment, the towns needed a vision as to how they wish to develop. The council had been successful in gaining funding for library, sea front and bus service facilities in Clevedon but he added that town centres were changing as working and shopping habits changed so the council needed to take the opportunity to bid for funding and shape investment. To do so, the towns must have a vision and this must be developed in partnership with the towns. He commented on how the placemaking strategy for Weston had supported bidding opportunities for regeneration and employment.

He informed members that the strategy for Portishead involved a large brownfield site which would encourage investment particularly with the new railway line to be built. The strategy would provide a framework to co-ordinate the evolution of the town and support a phased development with joined up decisions about infrastructure. He noted his disappointment that Portishead Town Council felt it was no longer able to support the exercise but they had been good partners in

participating in the process since 2020. The town council's logo would be removed from the cover of the project document and website as soon as possible.

Councillor Canniford acknowledged that in the case of Clevedon, there was still further discussions to be held around the options including those for council-owned land at Churchill Avenue and confirmed those discussions would take place with ward members. Similarly, no decisions had been made with regard to the vision for Nailsea and all was still up for discussion. The document was intended to create discussion. Regular stakeholder meetings would continue but he added this was the first time that the council had had a vision for the towns and was willing to adapt that vision in consultation with local communities.

In discussing the report, members made the following comments: that there should be no plans to develop the Churchill Avenue site; that the proposals for Clevedon and Nailsea were a list of ideas rather than a strategy and that there was a desire to have further conversations with Councillor Canniford on the proposals.

Members noted that the approach to the consultation for Nailsea and Clevedon differed from the council's usual approach and felt that the engagement had been extensive and tailored to the communities involved. They noted that residents had welcomed the approach and the chance to come together to form a vision for their towns' and communities' development. The documents were a means to drawing out ideas but there was more work to do on the detail. It was important to recognise the purpose of the process and documents and that this was not the end of the process but a continuous dialogue with communities and towns. Reference was made to the fact that the document for Portishead differed in approach to those for Clevedon and Nailsea.

It was noted that the documents were a broad framework for a vision for the towns and the recommendation did not commit the council to taking a decision at that point on any of the elements in the documents. There were still site-specific consultations to take place such as that on Churchill Avenue in Clevedon.

Resolved:

That the Executive endorsed, in principle, the Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead placemaking strategies as the partnership visions for regeneration, placemaking and economic development for the respective towns, and agreed to delegate to the Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy, in consultation with relevant Town Councils and other partners, the authority to determine the final content and wording of the strategies.

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 56 Month 6 Budget Monitor, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget 2023/24

At the invitation of the Chairperson, Councillor Cartman introduced the combined report noting that local government finance was caught between rising costs and tighter funding. He informed members that the current in year budget overspend was £4m whilst for 2023/24, the gap had been reduced from £17m to £4.1m with savings of £10.53m already incorporated. He thanked officers and members for their work; it had been a difficult process but the council had remained with its principles of protecting core services and the vulnerable in society. The process of identifying savings was ongoing and there would be consultation with members and communities.

Members considered the report and raised the following observations: that historically children's centres had been subjected to cuts but were needed more than ever and whether in the light of the proposed closure of Backwell recycling centre, consideration had been given to encouraging residents to recycle more with the introduction of 3-weekly black bin collections

Councillor Cartman explained that it was difficult to avoid "salami slicing" of services in the current climate and that the conversation around children's centres had been the most difficult as the Executive shared this concern. There were no proposals to go to 3-weekly bin collections currently.

Members were informed that children's centres were at the heart of the council's offering to families and that they were being transformed into family hubs as it was recognised that the council needed to change what was offered. There was no desire to see cuts to front line staff who deliver the outreach services from the family hubs. Additionally, evidence showed that there was not a significant increase in fly tipping with the closure of recycling centres.

Resolved:

1. That the Executive noted:
 - a) the updated revenue and capital budget forecasts as detailed within para 3.1 of the report in respect of the monitoring the budgets for 2022/23 financial year and the proposed strategy to balance the budget by the end of the year,
 - b) the updated range of revenue budget assumptions and risks within the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the period 2023-2027 as detailed within paras 3.3 and 3.4 of the report,
 - c) the draft savings strategies and proposals that have been included within the Medium-Term Financial Plan as described within para 3.5 and listed in Appendix 1 of the report
 - d) the updated budget gap of **£4.111m** for 2023/24 financial year as detailed in para 3.2, together with outstanding areas of work which are to be completed before the Executive can present a balanced budget for the 2023/24 financial year

2. That the Executive approved:
- e) the in-year amendments to the budgets within the current capital programme following the re-assessment and re-phasing of the current capital programme as detailed listed in Appendix 2 of the report and
 - f) the release of the Executive's latest draft budget for 2023/24 for consultation and engagement with the public and other stakeholders, incorporating growth and savings items as described throughout the report, whilst recognising that further changes will still need to be made to finalise and balance the budget for next year.

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 57 Rights of Way Improvement Plan

At the invitation of the Chairperson, Councillor Solomon presented the report noting the importance of Public Rights of Way to everyone and the importance of an action plan to deliver improvements that will benefit all communities in North Somerset. The review had been due in 2020 but had been delayed due to the pandemic and there had been over 2000 responses to the council's consultation on the plan. The council relied on volunteers and landowners to support efforts to maintain paths, bridges and other structures.

In considering the report, members highlighted the importance of joined up thinking in linking the council's Active Travel Strategy and Public Rights of Way. The Public Rights of Way Team was thanked for their work in improving the area's footpaths and improving accessibility for those with difficulties climbing stiles. There had been significant investment in improving public rights of ways. The consultation effort by officers was also highlighted.

Resolved:

That the council adopted the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) 2022-23 appended to the report.

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 Future Governance Model - The Music Service

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At the invitation of the Chairperson, Councillor Gibbons presented the report on the Music Service and the reasons behind the required changes to it. She informed members that Music Education, as required by the Department for Education (DfE) would change radically in 2023. The report proposed actions which sought to protect the existing music offer for young people and build a vibrant and robust music education future for young people in North Somerset. The service was not a statutory service but a traded one and was currently jointly delivered in partnership with South Gloucestershire Council and Bath and North East Somerset via a grant received from the DfE, not from council funds.

The council recognised that the partnership working had the potential to do much more and that a broader, more universal offer was being achieved because of the efficiencies gained by working together. Through partnership, the services were beginning to realise their potential to deliver an improved offer for all young people from the most vulnerable to those who are gifted and talented.

Additionally, the new Department for Education vision for the governance and delivery of music education in England was significantly different to the current model and required changes to transform the service so that it was fit for the future. The merger between North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire music services would put the service in a position to make a strong bid for DfE grant funding. The new merged service would be set up as an independent company limited by guarantee registered as a charity and with a trading arm.

Thanks were extended to Councillor Wendy Griggs and the scrutiny panel for the work around the risks and opportunities of the proposed change.

In discussing the report, members were supportive of the direction of travel but noted some concerns in that it may mean a less tailored service which had less contact with local musicians in North Somerset thus losing its intimacy and more time would be spent in considering how to bid for funding rather than delivering a service. Councillor Gibbons responded that the hope was that there would be more innovation because of the change with the potential to unlock greater funding to do much more and to protect what was already being done. The change was around the governance of the service not a change in the personnel delivering it.

Resolved:

- i. That the Executive approved, in principle, the proposal that the Music Service merges with Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) and South Gloucestershire Council's Music Services, into one single service.
- ii. That the Executive approved, in principle, the single service being established as an independent organisation outside the 3 Councils, enabling the Service to be eligible to retain government funding, protect staff and develop a broader, more universal youth music education offer on behalf of the 3 Councils.

- iii. That the Executive delegated authority to the Executive Member for Corporate Services and the Director of Corporate Services (s151) officer to make the final decision on potential transfer and the terms thereof once transfer negotiations had progressed and proposed terms could be reported as the final actuarial details and proposals for any pension admission agreements for the proposed independent organisation were still to be received.

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 59 Ofsted Focused Visit Letter

At the invitation of the Chairperson, Councillor Gibbons presented the report to members. She explained that the Focused Visit Letter from Ofsted highlighted key messages from the inspectors when considering the council's arrangements for the 'front door', which was the point at which the local authority, alongside other agencies, considered and responded to referrals about children who may be in need or at risk of harm.

The authority knew itself well and provided the inspectors with an accurate picture of where it was and what remained to be done. Issues were already being addressed and funding was being identified for an additional member of staff to support Multi-Agency work around child exploitation. Ongoing improvements were being made with Quality Assurance work. She added that the feeling from the feedback meeting at which she was present was much more positive than the letter suggested and was testament to the hard work of officers in the Front Door team and Children's Services and to whom she extended her thanks.

Resolved:

1. That the Executive noted the contents of the letter and
2. That the Executive noted the progress to date and the work still needed.

EXE 60 Weston Business Quarter - delivery/disposal options and mechanisms (included EXEMPT appendix)

The Chairperson invited Councillor Cartman to present the report noting that if members wished to discuss the exempt appendix, then the meeting would have to go into closed session.

Councillor Cartman informed members that the council had been approached by a manufacturing company already based in the South West who wished to consider purchasing the site. The company would bring investment into the area as well as high quality jobs. Construction inflation means that the business case approved last year for the Weston Business Quarter by the Executive was no longer

feasible. The report was seeking authority to enter into negotiations with the manufacturing business.

Councillor Canniford added that in respect of the council's Food Works ambitions, the entire site was not being offered and a part would be held back so that work being conducted by the Economy Team and Food Works could continue in North Somerset.

Resolved:

- That the Executive noted the change in circumstances and proposed change of approach to the development of North Somerset Council owned land at the Weston Business Quarter.
- That the Executive delegated authority, for a maximum period of 18 months from the date of the meeting, to the Executive Member for Corporate Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Placemaking & Economy and the Section 151 Officer, to finalise and approve the disposal of council-owned land at the Weston Business Quarter in line with the parameters set out in Appendix A to the report.

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
61 Oral reports of Executive Councillors**

The Chairperson asked residents to look out for vulnerable neighbours during the current cold conditions and as it was the last Executive meeting of the year, wished all a happy, peaceful, and warm festive season.

Chairman
