

## Minutes

of the Meeting of

# The Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy and Scrutiny Panel Thursday, 2 March 2023

New Council Chamber

Meeting Commenced: 2.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 4.00 pm

### Councillors:

Geoffrey Richardson (Chairman)  
Stuart McQuillan (Vice-Chairman)

Peter Bryant  
John Cato  
James Clayton  
Robert Payne  
Terry Porter  
Richard Tucker

**Apologies:** Councillors Gill Bute and Mark Crosby.

**Absent:** Councillor John Ley-Morgan.

**Also in attendance:** Councillors Ash Cartman, Peter Crew, and Karin Haverson.

**Officers in attendance:** Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Stuart Anstead (Head of Support Services Partnership), Emma Diakou (Head of Business Insight, Policy and Partnerships), Dee Mawn (Environmental Health Service Manager) Howard Pothecary (Safer Communities Service Manager), Harry Mills (Safer Communities enforcement Manager), Jason Reading (Senior Project Manager), Julia Stuckey (Super Weston Placemaking Project Manager), Samantha Usher (Electoral Services Manager), Brian Veale (Managing Director, North Somerset Environment Company) and Leo Taylor (Policy and Scrutiny Manager)

### PCO Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

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None.

### PCO Minutes

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**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

**PCO 23 The Panel's Work Plan March 2023**

Members noted the work plan which included detail of informal scrutiny work undertaken since the last panel meeting held in November 2022 together with planned work going forward.

Members then considered the appendix to the work plan setting out the Chair's work plan recommendations to the Panel when it is reconstituted after the forthcoming district election (as set out in his scrutiny report to Council on 21 February 2023):-

**Concluded:**

- (1) that the work plan be received and updated accordingly; and
- (2) that the following recommended areas of work plan focus for the Panel - going forward into the new administration - be endorsed:-
  - Contribute to policy discussions for the procurement of energy.
  - Arrange all member briefings/consultations on 2023-24 budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
  - Ensure Customer Services improvements happen as planned.
  - Ensure capital spending and major projects provide value for money.
  - Ensure Climate Emergency actions are met.
  - Support Community Safety initiatives.
  - Ensure Accommodation Strategy progresses to plan.

**PCO 24 The Winter Gardens Community Use**

The Weston Placemaking Programme Manager presented the report updating elected members on the continued community use of the Winter Gardens together with an update from the Community Board, which was established because of specific clauses in the Legal Transfer Agreement between North Somerset Council and Weston College in early 2016.

The Programme Manager was thanked for her report.

**Concluded:**

- (1) that the report be received; and
- (2) that a further update be provided in six months' time.

**PCO 25 Elections Act and North Somerset Local Elections 4 May 2023**

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report providing an update on the planning and actions undertaken to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the forthcoming North Somerset District and Parish elections. It also noted the provisions of the Elections Act 2022, the impact this would have for these elections and the steps being taken to ensure those who were eligible would be able to cast their vote at the polling station.

In discussion, Members sought the following assurances:

- the adequacy of resources to support the administration of the election ;

- the numbers of applications for Voter Authority Certificates. Although numbers were relatively low at this stage, assurance was given that resourcing was in place to address any late surge in applications;
- the speed and efficiency around processing applications.
- around contingency planning for security incidents at polling stations; and
- around the effective targeting of information at groups of people most likely to struggle with or be unaware of the voter ID requirements;

In further discussion concern was raised that some people were finding it difficult to get the information needed to support a Voter Authority Certificate application. Officers emphasised that these issues were mostly confined to first time applications and that anyone struggling could be referred to the Council's Library Service for assistance.

**Concluded:** that the report be received.

**PCO 26 Update on the progress of the council's Programme Management Office, award of Levelling Up Fund (LUF), and Q3 update on Projects and Property**

[This item was taken out of sequence]

The Head of Business Insight, Policy and Partnerships presented the report which provided updates on the progress of the council-wide Programme Management Office (PMO); the award and management of Levelling Up Funds and Major projects by exception.

In discussion, Members sought and received clarification on the following:

- the level of accreditation sought for Council project managers (Association of Project Managers membership and chartered status);
- the process by which projects were assessed and monitored to ensure those underperforming were filtered out;
- governance (CGP) and role of the Executive, Scrutiny and peer review in the process - Members noted that an audit of the capital governance process was being planned;
- review and learning following project closures;
- the approach to capturing project environmental impacts;
- the Council's capacity to deliver levelling-up fund projects; and
- training for Members on project management - it was noted that a this was being planned for Members' induction.

**Concluded:** that the report be received.

**PCO 27 Domestic Abuse and VAWG Crime**

The Domestic Abuse and VAWG Lead presented the report which outlined for following:

- the work led by North Somerset Council's Safer and Stronger Communities

Team in partnership with other agencies to meet the statutory requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and on local service developments to support survivors of domestic abuse and VAWG; and

- the future priorities and planned actions for the development and future funding of the Council's response to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

There was discussion around the following topics:

- Accommodation/refuges – this was a significant challenge with just three refuges in central Weston-super-Mare requiring more out-of-area placements. The team were reaching out to social housing providers to find solutions and the next stage was to focus on “move-on” accommodation. They were also looking at creative solutions where victims were able to remain in their own properties (such as facilitating the moving of perpetrators to alternative accommodation).
- Next Link/the Bristol commissioning model – officers referred to increasing coordination with Bristol City and South Gloucestershire Councils allowing greater agility and capacity to place victims across the wider area. This had been pioneered by Bristol in its approach to related service commissioning and the Council (NSC) was confident it would take a similar approach when it came to recommissioning its own services in the area.

**Concluded:** that the report be received

## **PCO 28 Review of Public Space Protection Orders 2023**

The Environmental Services Manager presented the report which provided background (legislation and policy) around the forthcoming review of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and set out the options considered and recommendations regarding which PSPOs to renew together with suggestions for any additions/amendments needed as part of the review which must take place no later than 15 October 2023.

In discussion some Members provided feedback on proposals with their respective wards and the Panel sought and received further clarification on the following:

- the process for making changes to PSPOs – it was noted that decisions on additions/amendments would be taken by the Executive Member and;
- the extent of the public consultation (Parish and Town Councils were included);

In closing discussion, the Chair encouraged Members to engage with and provide further feedback to the consultation going forward.

**Concluded:** that the report be received.

## **PCO 29 Delivery of the ICT Strategy Action Plan**

The Head of Support Services presented the report which provided, for Panel

review and feedback, a detailed list of commitments made in the ICT strategy together with the progress being made in delivering the associated action Plan.

In discussion Members sought and received clarification on the following:

- the six activities shown in the report as “de-prioritised” – officers confirmed that there had been challenge around identifying critical resources in the current financial year but gave assurance that these would be brought back on track in 2023-24;
- call-centre performance – it was noted that this issue was being considered further by the Panel’s Customer Services working group;
- concerns about telephone access to staff working from home – The Director of Corporate Services encouraged Members to report any incidents and referred them to the Chief Executive’s recent statement on the issue.

**Concluded:** that the report be received and that Members feedback be provided to officers in the form of the minutes.

### **PCO 30 NSEC shareholder update**

The Executive Member for Corporate Services presented the report which gave an update on North Somerset Environment Company Limited (NSEC), the Council’s wholly owned subsidiary company, providing an overview by the shareholder representative (the Executive Member) from a governance perspective on the activities and performance of the company, which had seen a marked improvement. He also introduced the Managing Director of NSEC.

In discussion, Members received the following responses to their comments and queries:

- Non-executive Directors – it was confirmed these were all external appointments;
- developing new business – Operational staff had experience in that area and the Company had full membership on the Local Council Road Innovations Group (LCRIG);
- Finance officer – this post had been recruited and was being supported to work towards achieving full chartered status;

Members also sought and received clarification on the following:

- composition of the client team managing the NSEC contract
- progress addressing driver shortages - NSEC was now training drivers and the shortage had reduced

**Concluded:** that the report be received.

### **PCO 31 Accommodation Strategy**

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report providing an update on the Council’s Accommodation strategy Programme.

In discussion, Members sought and received clarification on the following:

- status of the Project Manager leading on the strategy programme;

- the reasons for the procurement of new pc monitors and clarification on numbers;
- changes in staff behaviour in respect of changing workstyles - Members noted that there was recognition of importance of face-to-face contact and that staff were being encouraged to work in the office should they wish;
- the implications of desk booking systems designed to ensure compliance with fire regulations and maximum numbers of staff attending the office at any one time. Issues around staff being unable to access office space when required were not anticipated.

**Concluded:** that the report be received and that Members feedback be provided in the form of the minutes.

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Chairman

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