

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Executive

Wednesday, 6 December 2023

New Council Chamber

Meeting Commenced: 2.31 pm

Meeting Concluded: 3.51 pm

Councillors:

Mike Bell (Chairperson)
Catherine Gibbons (Vice-Chairperson)

Mark Canniford
James Clayton
Jenna Ho Marris
Annemieke Waite
Roger Whitfield
Hannah Young

Apologies: Councillors: Mike Solomon.

Also in attendance: Councillors: Christopher Blades, Peter Bryant, Peter Burden, Andy Cole, Luke Smith

Officers in attendance: Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Hayley Verrico (Director of Adult Social Services), Carolyn Fair (Interim Director of Children's Services), Jenny Ford (Interim Assistant Director, Place) Jane Horner (Programme Management Officer) and Vanessa Andrews (Marketing and Communications Manager).

Partaking via Microsoft Teams:

Councillors: Clare Hunt, Sue Mason, Terry Porter, and Michael Pryke

Officers: Mel Watts (Head of Finance), Gemma Dando (Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods and Transport), Peter King (Senior Project Manager) and Hazel Brinton (Committee Services Manager).

EXE Chairperson's Welcome

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The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting which was being livestreamed. He added that only Executive members present would be able to vote on items but other members at the meeting could contribute to the discussion during the debate on items.

EXE 63 Addresses by Members of the Public (ESO 6) - Nick Wring, local business rate payer - changes to Clevedon Sea Front

Nick Wring, local business rate payer, addressed the Executive on the changes to Clevedon Sea Front and the review undertaken by AECOM. He voiced concerns around the impact of the scheme on local businesses, those less able, young families, the street scene, health and safety, the opportunity for social interaction, the loss of access to critical retail areas, excessive speeding and loss of revenue and footfall. He believed the review failed to address the areas of concern and asked for the funds to be found to deliver the required changes.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Wring for his address.

EXE 64 Addresses by Members of the Public (ESO 6) - Malcolm Simmons, local resident, and business rate payer - changes to Clevedon Sea Front

Malcolm Simmons, local resident, and business rate payer addressed the Executive on the matter of the Clevedon Sea Front changes and the review by AECOM. He noted that 6,500 people had signed a petition in relation to the scheme. He asked members to consider the photographic evidence provided to understand the problems caused by the scheme including access issues for residents and the abuse of loading bays used for all day parking. He added that the AECOM report did highlight measures to be considered which would be a positive change to the current scheme.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Simmons for his address.

EXE 65 Addresses by Members of the Public (ESO 6) - Jo Gower-Crane, local resident - farming, food production and food security in relation to North Somerset Council policies.

Jo Gower-Crane, local resident addressed the Executive on the issue of farming, food production and food security in relation to North Somerset Council policies. She noted her concern around the cost-of-living crisis and food poverty and believed this situation would worsen unless national and local food production was protected. She asked that farming, food production and food security was addressed across all North Somerset Council's policies.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Gower-Crane for her address and asked the Executive Member for Economy and Planning to contact her to discuss her concerns.

EXE 66 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

None declared.

EXE 67 Minutes - 18 October 2023

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

EXE Non-Executive Councillors' Addresses

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None.

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

None.

EXE West of England Sub-Region: items not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda
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None.

EXE Forward Plan dated 30 November 2023

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Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted.

EXE Clevedon Seafront / Hill Road Independent Review

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The Chairperson acknowledged comments made by the public speakers and noted that he had seen no evidence that anyone had acted without the best of intentions in implementing the scheme. He reaffirmed the council's commitment to listen to residents' concerns and learn from its mistakes. He expressed confidence in all those involved with the project.

Councillor Young introduced the report and confirmed that she would continue to speak with residents of Clevedon around their ongoing concerns. She advised that the report to members made eight recommendations as a result of the AECOM report as to how the council should now move forward. The review had been extensive, and the initial review funding had been extended to facilitate additional public engagement and detailed analysis of the 2790 responses to the questionnaire consultation. She added that whilst it was clear that some did not support the scheme it was not the case that no one supported it, and some supported all aspects of the scheme. The review findings supported the changes to Hill Road but advised changes to the Beach elements of the scheme.

Councillor Young noted that AECOM had not been asked to complete detailed design work so further work on the design details would be required as a result of the recommendations with engagement from the public to determine the feasibility of taking forwards the specific recommendations. She added that AECOM had concluded that the scheme had not met its original objectives in two keys areas: the provision of a safe, direct, and coherent cycle route and the mitigation of any negative impact on people with disabilities and those with protected characteristics. She emphasised that the review did not conclude that people rejected the concept of Active Travel and desired that the funding to make the recommended changes should be identified.

Councillor Young informed members that she had requested further engagement with Active Travel England on the outcome of the review and its view on the proposed changes and had offered to meet with them as she believed the council's experience and learning could be used nationally on other schemes. She confirmed that there would be an ongoing dialogue with ward members and

Clevedon Town Council.

At the invitation of the Chairperson, local ward members gave their views which included concern over the apparent fear of engaging with Active Travel England should changes undermine the active travel objectives of the original scheme and impact on any future local funding from Active Travel England; support for the engagement with Clevedon Town Council and local ward members; the need for a collective duty as a council to find the required funding to implement changes; the reassurance of built in scrutiny from the relevant scrutiny panel going forwards; concern that there were no recommendations regarding changes to the Hill Road part of the scheme; concern that the review had not considered a full reversal of the scheme and the costings involved and the scope to include other Clevedon groups who may wish to be engaged with proposed changes.

In debating the report, members noted concern regarding the proposed contraflow for cyclists, that no one solution would be acceptable to all and that reversing the scheme may also entail negative impacts on the disabled and young families.

Councillor Young responded to the points made and thanked ward members for their constructive comments. She said that the council was trying to remain true to the spirit of the review which contained a broad range of opinion and that a full reversal of the scheme would be outside of the review's recommendations. She committed to an ongoing dialogue with residents and other stakeholders. However, she advised that large public meetings and engagement had a cost attached to them and that it was the role of councillors to engage with the public. She noted the need for detailed engagement on proposals with seafront residents and businesses.

Resolved: that the Executive:

1. Noted the outcome of the independent review by AECOM of the Clevedon Seafront/ Hill Road scheme as set out in the report attached as Appendix 1 of the report, including the results of the technical assessment, policy review and review of the economic impacts of the scheme.
2. Noted the level of public and stakeholder engagement in the review and the strength and range of views expressed through the review process as set out in Section 5 of the report.
3. Agreed to proceed with implementation of the recommendations of the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit, as proposed in Section 9.5 of the report, which are required to address immediate road safety issues and assist in managing people's behaviours or misunderstanding of how the scheme should work; while noting the need to ensure value for money given not all of the recommendations will be required if wider scheme changes to The Beach are made.
4. Noted the recommendations of the review as set out in Section 9 of the report to retain the one-way system and the changes to Hill Road as implemented.
5. Commissioned the Director of Place to develop options for funding and implementation of the recommendations in Section 10 of the report for more substantial changes to the current scheme on The Beach and, in particular, to consider:
 - the technical evidence and public and stakeholder concerns set out for each recommendation.

- community support for implementation of the recommendations.
- the requirement for more detailed design and costings for the revised scheme for The Beach; and
- in consultation with the Director of Corporate Services/ s151 officer, the value for money of proceeding with scheme changes to The Beach and the potential impacts on the council's ability to progress with other priority schemes given there is currently no funding available for this.

6. Requested that there is further engagement with Active Travel England on the outcome of the review to consider and confirm their position.

7. Requested that there is further engagement with the relevant Ward members and Clevedon Town Council on the next steps following issuing of the independent review report.

8. Requested that the Executive Member for Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Director of Place, brings a further report to a special Executive meeting in March 2024 with the outcome of the work related to recommendation 5 above and to propose a way forward.

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 73 Establishment of the dynamic purchasing system for highway civils, structures and surface treatments

Councillor Young introduced the report and reminded members that Council had agreed the Future Highways Service Commissioning Plan at its meeting in November 2022. Since then, two elements had been contracted: the cyclical and reactive maintenance to NSEC (North Somerset Environment Company) and the surfacing and surface dressing elements via two single provider frameworks. The report before members covered the final element to be awarded. Councillor Young clarified that approximately £11.9m value of works would go through the Dynamic Purchasing System over 7 years with no minimum, thus allowing flexibility to deliver schemes within the funding envelope.

Resolved: that the Executive approved the establishment and operation of the highway dynamic purchasing system for civils, structures and surface treatments detailed in the report where suppliers will be added to DPS on successful application in the Selection Questionnaire stage.

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 74 Safeguarding Children Partnership annual report

Councillor Gibbons presented the report to members. She noted that the report reflected a period of considerable change and transition and that the council had faced recruitment challenges which meant the arrangements for the safeguarding partnership had taken longer to implement than desired. Key posts had now been recruited to and there was a collective agreement to strengthen the work of the partnership in delivering against key priorities.

Councillor Gibbons detailed the key strategic business priorities and achievements of the partnership and noted that the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2023-26 had been finalised. She added that there was greater representation from health partners in the partnership. An independent review of the partnership would help reshape the partnership going forwards in line with the new Working Together 2023 document. She informed members that the Children's and Adult's directorates had begun to work on shared priorities and transitional safeguarding.

In debating the report, members recognised the work of partners and officers within the statutory partners and other stakeholder groups to positively change the lives of young people and their families in North Somerset. The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Equalities added that she looked forward to closer working between officers, herself and the Executive Member for Children's Services, Families and Lifelong Learning to achieve shared objectives. Councillor Gibbons responded to question around the division of time social workers spend on paperwork and with children and what support systems were in place to care for the carers.

Resolved: that the Executive received and commented on the Children's Safeguarding Board annual report.

EXE 75 Update on Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024-2028 and Draft Revenue Budget for 2024/25

Councillor Bell presented the report and reminded members of the budgetary pressures facing the council particularly for 2024-25. The report set out next steps and the position in respect of further consultation and engagement. The budgetary gap had been narrowed but there remained around £13m of savings to be identified over the four-year period with significant challenges for both next year and the following years.

Councillor Bell noted that the majority of the budget was required for statutory services with around 10% for discretionary spending. There was little room to meet demand and new responsibilities without additional means of financing them were being added every year by central government. Difficult decisions about how to deliver services within the community were required to balance the books and there was ongoing concern over how local government was funded.

Councillor Bell invited the s151 officer to comment on the report. The s151 officer reminded members of the national context in which North Somerset Council found itself and that other local authorities had issued s114 notices whereby an authority declared via its s151 officer that it was unable to meet its expenditure. North

Somerset Council was not in that position, but decisions needed to be taken to avoid the council finding itself in that territory. She noted that all the risks previously identified over the years were now starting to become issues which meant the council was now finding it difficult to manage flexibly within its budget. She added that the gap may grow because of continuing pressures.

In discussing the report, members noted the need to conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) of budgetary savings on those with protected characteristics and those on low income. Directorates would be reporting on anticipated savings in the coming week with an EIA statement to follow. The s151 officer was asked about the impact of the discontinuation of the Household Support Fund and how this could be mitigated. The s151 officer advised that the council would not be in a position to compensate for this grant not being made available by central government. Members noted the impact this may have on other organisations which relied on income from this fund such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and foodbanks.

Resolved: that the Executive

1. Noted the contents of the report which provided a further update on the council's medium term financial planning activities for the period 2024-2028, including the refinement of core assumptions and the updated budget gap.
2. Approved the release of the Executive's draft budgets for 2024-2028 for consultation and the next stage of engagement with the public and other stakeholders, incorporating the draft savings plans that were shown at Appendix 1 of 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 76 Budget monitor 2023/24 – Month 6 Update

Councillor Bell presented the report and informed members that the forecast net overspend of £600k was similar to that of previous months. He encouraged members to look at the detail behind the projected overspend which demonstrated that Adult Social Services and Children's Services were showing in year budget pressures of £6m. Other budget areas has been able to support the council in approaching a balanced position at year end but longer term, financial pressures were growing, and not enough budget was being provided to cover rising social care costs with demand for services in this area continuing to rise.

At the invitation of the Chairperson, the s151 officer commented that whilst the council was in an area of a small projected overspend currently, she wished to highlight the areas of risk to members which was likely to increase the projected overspend by year end. This needed to be considered in respect of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Resolved: that the Executive:

- i. Noted the revenue budget forecasts within the report, the issues and assumptions that underpin the forecasts and the steps being taken to balance the budget by the end of the financial year,
- ii. Noted the financial risks being assessed by the council, which may have an impact on future monitoring reports.
- iii. Approved the changes to the revenue and capital budgets as detailed in Appendix 1A and Appendix 4 to the report.

EXE Oral reports of Executive Councillors

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Councillor Bell welcomed Councillor Tom Daw as the newly elected member for Wrigton after the recent by-election.

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

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None.

Chairperson
