

# Minutes

of the Meeting of

## The Council

### Tuesday, 12th January 2021

held in the Virtual Meeting.

Meeting Commenced: 6.00 pm    Meeting Concluded: 7:44 pm

#### Councillors:

P David Shopland (Chairman)

P Richard Westwood (Vice Chairman)

P Marc Aplin (joined after attendance roll call)

P Nigel Ashton

P Mike Bell

P Mike Bird

P Steve Bridger

P Peter Bryant

P Gill Bute

P Mark Canniford

P Ashley Cartman

P John Cato

P Caritas Charles

P Caroline Cherry

P James Clayton (joined after attendance roll call)

P Sarah Codling

P Andy Cole

P Peter Crew

P John Crockford-Hawley

P Ciaran Cronnelly

P Mark Crosby (joined after attendance roll call)

P Donald Davies

P Catherine Gibbons

A Hugh Gregor (unable to join for technical reasons)

P Wendy Griggs

Ann Harley

P Karin Haverson (joined after attendance roll call)

P Sandra Hearne

P David Hitchins (joined after attendance roll call)

P Steve Hogg

P Nicola Holland

P Ruth Jacobs

P Huw James

P Patrick Keating

A John Ley-Morgan

A Stuart McQuillan  
P Ian Parker  
P Robert Payne  
P Marcia Pepperall  
P Bridget Petty  
P Lisa Pilgrim  
P Terry Porter  
P Geoffrey Richardson  
P Tim Snaden (joined after attendance roll call)  
P Mike Solomon  
P James Tonkin  
Stuart Treadaway  
P Richard Tucker  
A Roz Willis (unable to join for technical reasons)  
Vacancy

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

**Officers in attendance:** Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Lucy Shomali (Director of Place), Sheila Smith (Director of Children's Services), Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Hayley Verrico (Interim Director of Adult Social Care), Richard Penska (Interim Director of Finance and Property), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Governance & Monitoring Officer), Vanessa Andrews (Corporate Services), Hazel Brinton (Corporate Services), Sue Efford (Corporate Services), Jo Jones (Corporate Services), Mike Riggall (Corporate Services), Katherine Sokol (Corporate Services), Melanie Watts (Corporate Services)

**COU 132 Petition presented by Councillor Cronnelly: Need for Repairs to Weston Village's Roads (Agenda Item 3)**

Councillor Cronnelly presented an online petition from 76 local residents seeking urgent action to repair Weston Village's roads before there is an accident.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Cronnelly for the petition which was referred to the Executive Member for Planning, Highways and Transport.

**COU 133 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37) (Agenda Item 4)**

None

**COU 134 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 (Agenda Item 5)**

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

**COU 135 Chairman's announcements (Agenda Item 8)**

The Chairman announced that former Liberal Democrat councillor Nan Kirsan, the first Leader of North Somerset Council, had sadly passed away.

He wished to mark this first Council meeting in 2021, referring to the difficult decisions to be taken during the year ahead and the importance of pressing ahead with the business in hand.

**COU Leader's announcements (Agenda Item 9)**  
**136**

The Leader echoed the Chairman's sentiments on the sudden and sad death of Nan Kirsan. He also reported that Councillor Ley-Morgan was currently ill in hospital and, on behalf of the Council, sent his best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The Leader expressed his thanks to all staff and contractors for their ongoing work in continuing to provide services and keep residents safe over the Christmas and New Year period. He also thanked residents for following the Coronavirus guidance, and fellow councillors for all they were doing to keep their communities safe.

**COU Chief Executive's announcements (Agenda Item 10)**  
**137**

The Chief Executive wished all councillors a happy New Year. She would continue to provide updates on the latest lockdown and Covid-19 news as well as changes to the organisational structure. It was disappointing not to be able to say farewell to colleagues who had recently left the council due to current lockdown restrictions but reported that consideration was being given to options for doing so virtually.

The Chief Executive also thanked staff for their tireless work throughout this difficult period, referring to the particular pressures on health and social care across the region and the challenges for schools. She also thanked councillors, the council's partners, contractors, community groups and the voluntary sector for their hard work and, with the roll out of the Coronavirus vaccine and the increase in lateral flow testing, looked forward to a better 2021 for everyone.

**COU Forward Plan dated 31 December 2020 (Agenda Item 11)**  
**138**

Councillor Davies presented the Forward Plan.

**Resolved:** that the Forward Plan be noted.

**COU Policy and Scrutiny Panels – Chairman of Health Overview and Scrutiny**  
**139 Panel (Agenda Item 12)**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Gibbons reported that Councillor Tucker would be standing down as Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel for health reasons, with immediate effect. She thanked Councillor Tucker for his hard work and dedication and welcomed his continued contribution to the work of the council. Councillor Cronnelly would replace Councillor Tucker as a panel member and she proposed that he also replace him as Chairman.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Gibbons and seconded by Councillor Davies and

**Resolved:** that Councillor Cronnelly be elected as Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the remainder of the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

**COU Corporate Parenting Responsibilities (Agenda Item 13)**

**140**

Councillor Gibbons presented the report.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted and a further corporate parenting report be presented following the visit to North Somerset, in March, of the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, Mark Riddell.

**COU Question Time (Standing Order No. 18) (Agenda Item 14)**

**141**

Oral questions were directed to the members concerned and the summary notes and topics involved are contained in Appendix 1.

**COU Reports and matters referred from the other Committees: Audit Committee, 19 November 2020 - AUD 17 Audit Committee Annual Report 2019-20 (Agenda Item 17)**

**142**

Councillor Cato presented the reference from the Audit Committee. He thanked all those who supported the work of the Audit Committee and invited all councillors to attend meetings of the Committee, the next one being scheduled for 28 January.

**Resolved:** that the Audit Committee Annual Report 2019-20 be received.

**COU Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: Avon Fire Authority (Agenda Item 18 (1))**

**143**

Councillor Tucker presented the report.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted.

**COU Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel (Agenda Item 18 (2))**

**144**

**Resolved:** that the report be noted.

**COU Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: West of England Combined Authority Joint Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 18 (3))**

**145**

Councillor James presented the report. He drew particular attention to the information and latest advice regarding the process for North Somerset to join the Combined Authority, and asked members to contact him or one of the other representatives on the Joint Scrutiny Committee if they wanted more information.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted.

Councillor Petty presented the report. She highlighted the progress made on key activities around the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan with the aim of embedding climate change into everything the council does. On the issue of carbon literacy she confirmed the Council had now been certified as a Carbon Literate Organisation which demonstrated the council's commitment to carbon literacy and its seriousness in establishing and maintaining a low carbon culture. She stated that the council's emissions represented just one percent of the emissions across the district and highlighted the importance for the area and for future generations of continuing to lobby the government and increase awareness around the climate crisis amongst local residents and across all sectors of the community.

Members welcomed the report and debate ensued on the key issues, during which the following main points were discussed: concerns around street lighting on new developments where low energy LED lighting units were not coming on when needed or were staying on during the day which was wasting energy and delaying adoption of the road; members recognised the benefits of carbon literacy training and of encouraging staff to propose initiatives but queried the methods in place to attribute and measure success, and the need to focus on impact and outcomes; the impact on carbon emissions both nationally and locally of recent lockdowns and the increasing numbers working from home; the benefits for all of safe cycling and walking routes, with cycling at the heart of the transport network; the benefits of reviewing the council's ageing vehicle fleet and renewing with fully electric vehicles and charging facilities in addressing concerns around air quality and public health; the benefits of schemes such as the 'cycle to work' loan scheme and of increasing the purchase limit to provide for electric bikes; the provision of metrics on climate categories for all projects and reports to ensure actions were measurable and the need to lobby central government for additional resources to provide for this; the need to establish whether current progress was sufficient to meet the target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030; a recognition that the impact of the climate emergency was already being felt in terms of flooding and early/hot summers and the need to keep the climate crisis at the top of the agenda and to commit the necessary resources to achieve this; the need to prioritise actions within the plan and to have a clear understanding of the impact of any interventions including the wider co-benefits of some of the proposed actions to guide future decision making; the opportunities presented by the pandemic in terms of re-inventing North Somerset's economy and promoting the visitor economy as a low-carbon alternative to foreign travel, and opportunities for skills training and jobs around low carbon industries and investment; pushing forward with measures within the council's direct control or influence, specifically around new homes standards and not supplying gas to new developments; the importance of engaging with the poorest families whose options for taking measures to address the climate crisis may be more limited, and the need for knowledge and expertise in community engagement to bring about the cultural change required if targets were to be achieved.

**Resolved:**

(1) that the progress with specific initiatives within the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan be noted: and

(2) that the half-year update of council carbon footprint be noted.

**COU 147 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Revenue Budget Update (Agenda Item 20)**

Councillor Cartman presented the report. The report updated budget forecasts following the Spending Review and the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announcements. The financial impacts of the capital programme decisions and treasury management policies would be integrated within the report to the Executive in February. Councillor Cartman referred to the uncertainties which made the budget setting process particularly difficult this year, and to the increasing demand and costs for services which had been largely mitigated by transformation savings rather than service cuts. He stated the proposals demonstrated strong financial control and reflected the council's priorities. He asked members to note the recommendations and the updated projections and to put forward any alternative proposals for consideration by the Executive in February, ahead of the Council budget meeting.

The Interim Director of Finance and Property reported that the Local Government Settlement only provided certainty for one year therefore this was a one year budget with one-off investment plans due to the difficulty in committing resources beyond 2022/23.

In discussing the budget proposals reference was made to the ongoing budget pressures that made it difficult to achieve a balanced budget every year, and members welcomed the additional government funding received that provided some mitigation for Covid pressures. Reference was made to the un-ringfenced funding package of £1.55m and to the importance of making sufficient budget provision to allow for much needed investment in roads, highways and footpaths to prevent further deterioration and to ensure they were fit for purpose. In noting the £7.5m savings to be achieved from transformation related activities, reference was made to the need for special scrutiny and ongoing review of these major transformation projects to ensure the right approach and that progress was being made. It was noted that earlier scrutiny feedback had already been taken on board and that major projects would be kept under review. It was further suggested that the Audit Committee should look at how resources were spent across the council, including on small items such as stationery, to ensure best value was being achieved and savings realised wherever possible.

Executive Members thanked officers for their ongoing work and achievements in continuing to deliver services, and in particular the finance team for their work on the budget report.

**Resolved:**

(1) that the update budget projections as at the end of December 2020 within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), following the announcement of the

Spending Review and the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, be noted;

(2) that the next steps and timescales for finalising the MTFP and setting the 2021/22 revenue budget be noted; and

(3) that the items to be presented to the meeting for discussion and consideration within the 2021/22 budget be noted.

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Chairman

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Council Meeting, 12 January 2021 Question Time (agenda item 14)**

#### **1. Question from Cllr Charles to Cllr Davies, Leader of the Council**

“In light of the horrific scenes from Washington last week during the confirmation of President Elect Biden I’m sure that the Executive and Council will voice our support to those Americans who worked bravely and tirelessly to protect the principles of democracy in the face of such aggression. This however is an extreme example of a public disconnect with the democratic process not only in the US but across the world including here in the UK. We see either through a lack of knowledge or disinformation a loss of trust in government both local and national and a sense of disempowerment from the public. This is dangerous as it can potentially lead to extremist elements coming to prominence. Will the Executive and Policy and Scrutiny Panels (in their policy development role) consider the following:

1. How to support citizen education initiatives concerning the role of local government and what powers the authority possesses and which it doesn't.
2. What plans are in place for increasing voter registration and explaining the electoral process to the wider public.
3. What are the Executive plans for increasing our menu of citizen engagement and empowerment opportunities.”

In response, Cllr Davies thanked Cllr Charles for his question commenting he was equally shocked by what had happened in Washington last week, as well as by the recent events in Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong. He responded he would refer questions 1 and 3 to Councillor Holland for a written response and question 2 to both Councillor Holland and Councillor Cartman. With reference to the scrutiny panels, he asked Councillor Bridger as Chairman of the Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel if he would respond in writing on these issues and Councillor Bridger agreed to do so.