

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Taunton on Wednesday 17 October 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr C Aparicio Paul, Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr A Bown, Cllr A Broom, Cllr P Clayton (Vice-Chair), Cllr M Caswell, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr J Clarke, Cllr S Coles, Cllr A Dance, Cllr H Davies, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr D Fothergill, Cllr G Frascini, Cllr A Govier, Cllr A Groskop, Cllr D Hall, Cllr P Ham, Cllr M Healey, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr James Hunt, Cllr John Hunt, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr M Keating, Cllr A Kendall, Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr J Lock, Cllr D Loveridge, Cllr T Munt, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr G Noel, Cllr L Oliver, Cllr J Parham, Cllr M Pullin, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr L Redman, Cllr B Revans, Cllr M Rigby, Cllr D Ruddle, Cllr N Taylor (Chair), Cllr J Thorne, Cllr G Verdon, Cllr L Vijeh, W Wallace, Cllr A Wedderkopp, Cllr J Williams, Cllr J Woodman.

90 **Apologies for Absence** - Agenda Item 1

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllr R Williams, Cllr T Napper, Cllr H Prior-Sankey, Cllr M Best, and Cllr T Lock

92 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 2

Members' written notifications of interests were affixed to the Notice Board at the back of the Council Chamber for the duration of the meeting

93 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 3

(1) Public Questions / Statements / Petitions (under 5000 signatures) and elected member questions: Notice was received of questions / statements / petitions regarding: Public Questions / Statements:

PQ1. Request of Extraordinary Council Meeting

From Nigel Behan

Response from Cllr David Fothergill – Leader of the Council

PQ2. Request of Extraordinary Council Meeting

From Alan Debenham

Response from Cllr David Fothergill – Leader of the Council

94 **Request for extraordinary meeting** - Agenda Item 4

(1) The Chair invited Cllr Liz Leyshon, the Opposition Spokesperson for Resources to set out the request for the Extraordinary Council Meeting to seek debate and assurance being provided to Council. The request said: "Following the financial disclosures around our revenue & reserves, that have come to light during the latest round of saving proposals, our confidence in the Cabinet and their ability to deliver a balanced budget at the end of this financial year has plummeted. We feel that following the decision of Cabinet to implement the saving proposals at today's meeting, a number of important points need to be urgently answered, these being :-

1. What contingency plans are in place should these proposed savings fail?
 2. If no contingency plans are in place, then how can the people of Somerset be assured that this plan is robust?"
- (2) Cllr Leyshon explained the request had been supported by all opposition members. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources responded and said that the Council had to live within its means and called on councillors to work together for the best interests of Somerset. The Council's Statement of Accounts and Value for Money opinion had been discussed at the July Audit Committee and the feedback from many councillors has been very supportive. Significant savings proposals had been put forward for the September Cabinet meeting and had been agreed, recognising that members had listened to the concerns regarding the proposals for young carers and these had been withdrawn.
- (3) Members were informed that there was a fortnightly robust tracking process in place and there were regular financial update reports at Scrutiny and Cabinet meetings. There was a request for all councillors to get involved and do what they could to help alleviate the funding crisis. All five of the Somerset MPs had been written to regarding the financial difficulties facing the Council and four of them had responded with support.
- (4) There was further debate about opposition councillors being involved in financial discussions at an early stage, the robustness of the savings plan agreed at Cabinet in September, ongoing pressures in Children's Services, the use of capital receipts flexibilities, use of business rates, the scheduled increased frequency in budget reporting to provide assurance and the level of the contingency budget.
- (5) Cllr Rigby indicated his intention to put forward a proposed amendment for the Council to consider. It was agreed to hold an adjournment at 10.36am to allow time for an amendment to be finalised.
- (6) The meeting re-commenced at 10.46am. Cllr Mike Rigby put forward an amendment to the proposal which stated: 'Having heard the Council's contingency plan it is clear that we require a reasonable and robust means of managing our way out of this financial crisis. Council does not agree that the budget set in February 2018 together with the emergency measures agreed in Cabinet on 12 September and the contingencies described today provide that. We therefore call upon Cabinet to provide a costed contingency plan based upon identified risks and also request more regular reporting to Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings.' This was seconded by Cllr Leigh Redman.
- (7) Section 151 officer and Interim Director of Finance, Peter Lewis, said that the proposals put forward at the September meeting were considered robust and that those in-year savings decisions were needed to ensure that the projected overspend was addressed. He provided assurance that SLT meet regularly to review the financial position and that more regular budget monitoring reports are being taken to Cabinet and Scrutiny.

- (8) There was a request for a named vote on the amendment proposed by Cllr Rigby and the Council voted 19 for and 30 against, with 1 abstention and therefore the amendment was not carried.

Vote cast as follows:

<p>For</p> <p>Cllr Bloomfield Cllr Broom Cllr Clarke Cllr Coles Cllr Dance Cllr Davies Cllr Dimery Cllr Govier Cllr John Hunt Cllr Kendall Cllr Leyshon Cllr J Lock Cllr Loveridge Cllr Munt Cllr Redman Cllr Revans Cllr Rigby Cllr Ruddle Cllr Wedderkopp</p>	<p>Against</p> <p>Cllr Aparicio Paul Cllr Bown Cllr Clayton Cllr Caswell Cllr Chilcott Cllr Filmer Cllr Fothergill Cllr Fraschini Cllr Groskop Cllr Hall Cllr Ham Cllr Healey Cllr Hewitt-Cooper Cllr James Hunt Cllr Huxtable Cllr Keating Cllr Lawrence Cllr Lewis Cllr Nicholson Cllr Noel Cllr Oliver Cllr Parham Cllr Pullin Cllr Purbrick Cllr Thorne Cllr Verdon Cllr Vijeh Cllr Wallace Cllr J Williams Cllr Woodman</p>
<p>Abstained</p> <p>Cllr Taylor</p>	

- (9) Cllr Liz Leyshon then put forward a further amendment to the proposal which was seconded by Cllr David Fothergill. This amendment sought to seek support for all members to work together for the best interests of Somerset and lobby for better funding. The Council agreed the proposed amendment.

(10) The Council RESOLVED unanimously for the rest of the 2018 calendar year that all Somerset County councillors work together to support the officers and make as much collective and coherent noise in support of Somerset and other councils, particularly those with a statutory care duty, and that all members put their collective effort into making as much difference as possible during this time.

(The meeting ended at 11.07)

CHAIR