

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Wednesday, 15 January 2025 at 10.00 am

**Present:**

Cllr Bill Revans (Chair)  
Cllr Liz Leyshon (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Theo Butt Philip  
Cllr Heather Shearer  
Cllr Richard Wilkins

Cllr Mike Rigby  
Cllr Sarah Wakefield

**In attendance:**

Cllr Mandy Chilcott  
Cllr Faye Purbrick  
Cllr Lucy Trimmell

Cllr Tom Power  
Cllr Jo Roundell Greene

**Other Members present remotely:**

Cllr Graham Oakes  
Cllr Suria Aujla  
Cllr Andy Dingwall  
Cllr Val Keitch  
Cllr Marcus Kravis  
Cllr Sue Osborne  
Cllr Tony Robbins  
Cllr David Woan

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts  
Cllr Dawn Denton  
Cllr Andy Hadley  
Cllr Andy Kendall  
Cllr Frances Nicholson  
Cllr Leigh Redman  
Cllr Claire Sully  
Cllr Ros Wyke

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

Apologies were received from Cllr Graham Oakes (in attendance online), and Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts (in attendance online) and Cllr Mandy Chilcott (late due to a road closure).

**65 Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Agenda Item 2**

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **66 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3**

The following declarations of interest were automatically recorded:

Cllr Theo Butt Philip – Wells City Council  
Cllr Graham Oakes – Yeovil Town Council / Yeovil Without Parish Council  
Cllr Mike Rigby – Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council  
Cllr Heather Shearer – Street Parish Council  
Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts – Taunton Town Council  
Cllr Richard Wilkins – Curry Rivel Parish Council

## **67 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4**

The previously submitted public question was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

## **68 Executive Forward Plan - Agenda Item 5**

The Executive noted the Forward Plan.

## **69 Somerset Council Improvement and Transformation Programme - January - Agenda Item 6**

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited the Lead Member for Transformation, Human Resources and Localities, Cllr Theo Butt Philip, to introduce the report. Cllr Butt Philip highlighted the regular update and the update to the risks.

Cllr Butt Philip proceeded to hand over to Louise Routley, Digital Programme Manager, who explained the progress updates, including all the risks and the changes to previous risks, new risks and how they had been monitored.

The Leader of the Council invited comments from Committee Members and other Members present, with officers providing responses as appropriate. Questions and points raised included: concerns that the risk scores remain static; the impact of trade unions and whether there would be further delays or risks to the programme as a result of trade union discussions.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussion and proceeded to a vote on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Executive resolved to:

- Endorse the progress made in the month from 11 November – 6 December 2024.
- Consider the current assessment of programme risks which includes those with a score of 16 or higher that may arise during the change process, along with the status of actions to mitigate these risks, as detailed in Appendix A.

## **70 2024/25 General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - Month 7 - Agenda**

## Item 7

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited the Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Finance, Procurement and Performances to introduce the report. Cllr Leyshon explained that the report had been seen by Scrutiny Committee – Corporate and Resources; that there was a slight improvement in the Month 7 position; that there won't be a Month 8 report due to focus on Budget Setting.

Cllr Leyshon proceeded to hand over to Nicola Hix, Service Director Finance & Procurement, who detailed: the forecast underspend of £2.72m and the resulting reduced call on reserves; recommendation L in the report to delegate any application for Exceptional Financial Support for 2025/26 to the Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer); the increase in achieved or on track savings and the need for further improvement in that; improvement in collection rates for business rates and council tax; that there had not been significant movement in capital budget; the need for exceptional financial support for 2024/25 and the discussions underway for 2025/26.

The Leader of the Council invited comments from Committee Members and other Members present, with officers providing responses as appropriate. Questions and points raised included: the ongoing pressures in Children's relating to external placements and home school transport and work ongoing to improve modelling and mitigate overspends; the pressures relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant; the draw on different reserves and how that is shown in the Table 1; the hard work of everyone involved in forecasting and reducing spending; the increase in risk of not achieving a sustainable MTFP and what could be done to reduce the risk; the impact of in-year overspends on the MTFP; the impact of borrowing costs on the budget; the savings that are at risk and plans in place to address it and the limited time-frame to do so; the slippage in the capital programme; the factors that led to reduced demand creating savings in Adult's Services and Children's Services; the causes and impact of staff vacancies; if any pressures in SEND provision would be caused by movement from independent schools as a result of VAT; thanks to the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Service Director – Finance and Procurement and the rest of the finance team who have been working hard on the application for Exceptional Financial Support.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussion and proceeded to a vote on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Executive resolved to:

- a) Note Council is now **forecasting a balanced revenue position** (on-budget).
- b) Note the total Council revenue forecast underspend of **£8.782m** for the year. There is a forecast **underspend of £2.722m within Service Directorates** for 2024/25 and the Corporate Contingency of £6.000m, whilst remains unallocated it has been released into the forecast outturn within budget lines **Table 1**.
- c) Note that the planned use of reserves of £36.800m for Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Support towards the budget is forecast to **reduce by £8.782m to £28.018m**, due to the forecast underspend within budget lines

**(section 18).**

- d) Agree that mitigating actions are to be identified in order to reduce any overspends, to take action and to contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of the authority.
- e) Agree that the **Council continues with the aim of avoiding a Section 114 notice** by taking all of the necessary actions and continuing to operate as if one has been issued.
- f) Note the progress and **delivered savings of £17.050m** of the approved savings programme as set out in **Table 2** and **Appendix J**.
- g) Note that work will continue to find mitigating or substitute savings for the **£1.239m** of Red unachievable savings, deliver the **£5.004m** Amber at risk savings and the **£16.584m** Green on track savings.
- h) Note the in-year forecast overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant of **£32.767m, an increase of £4.508m** from Quarter 2 **(in section 12)**.
- i) Note the total forecast Dedicated Schools Grant year-end **deficit of £68.707m** as set out in **Appendix C**.
- j) Note the collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates as set out in **section 19**.
- k) Note the Capital Programme forecast outturn at Month 7 is £113.678m.
- l) Approve that any application for **Exceptional Financial Support** for the 2025/26 budget is delegated to the Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) as detailed in **section 31** of this report.

## **71 The Provision of General Nursing Care Block Beds in Somerset - Agenda Item 10**

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited the Lead Member for Adults Services, Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Sarah Wakefield, to introduce the report. Cllr Wakefield explained that this is part of the CQC requirement to manage the market; that it prevents negotiating for beds on a spot basis which can increase costs; that block beds are rarely unoccupied; that this controls the price in the market and fixes the availability; that this was coming to Executive Committee because of the value of the contract: £2m per year with a 5 year contract and an optional 2 year extension.

Cllr Wakefield proceeded to hand over to James Sangster, Service Manager – Adults and Health Commissioning, who explained that these were for areas with high demand and lower availability; that part of the decision was taking a direct award for Yeovil to get block beds as there had not been any bids in that area.

The Leader of the Council invited comments from Committee Members and other Members present, with officers providing responses as appropriate. Questions and points raised included: the procurement advice on the direct award; the level of confidence of finding a provider in Yeovil; the development of new care homes in Yeovil; the relationships with providers in Yeovil including the developers of homes; the impact of new nursing and residential homes on the market and the health and social care system.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussion and proceeded to a vote on the

recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Executive resolved to agree:

- a. the outcome of the procurement process to award contracts to the supplies named in the Tender Evaluation Report Confidential Appendix B for General Nursing Block Beds, for the length of 5 years (plus permitted extensions of 2 years + 2 years + 1 year).
  - o Commissioners to work with the care home market to explore a direct award for 10 Block Beds in Yeovil due to no bids being received during the procurement tender.
  - o the case for applying the exempt information provision as set out in the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and therefore to treat the attached confidential Appendix B in confidence, as it contains commercially sensitive information, and as the case for the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information.

## **72 Annual Public Health Report - Agenda Item 8**

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited the Lead Member for Public Health, Climate Change and the Environment, Cllr Graham Oakes, to introduce the item. Cllr Oakes explained the target set by central government of less than 5% of the population smoking; the benefits of stopping smoking; the different attitudes about smoking; the importance of listening to people; the need for a whole organisation response.

Cllr Oakes proceeded to hand over to the new Interim Director of Public Health, Alison Bell, and Rachel Handley, Consultant in Public Health. They detailed: the commitment to achieve this; the need for the whole health and care system to get behind it; that since 1971 smoking has killed 8 million people in the UK; the reasons behind why people smoke; how smoking affects us in Somerset; the current services provided; how we can achieve the 2030 target.

The Leader of the Council invited comments from Committee Members and other Members present, with officers providing responses as appropriate. Questions and points raised included: the comments from Scrutiny Committee – Adults & Health; how to target hard to reach smokers; the need for integration with health colleagues; how professionals engaged in other support work can support people to quit; how to engage with community groups, workplaces, and drug and alcohol group; the need to normalise non-smoking; engaging with Local Community Networks; deterring new starters from smoking and how they factor into the statistics; work with other agencies to disrupt black market activity; the work done around young people vaping; trading standards and enforcement powers and the link to organised crime; how to engage different demographics and different cultural backgrounds; incentive schemes (including for pregnant women) and the evidence behind them; the tobacco industry and its support of vaping; support groups; the impact of national measures versus local measures; the change in licensing powers relating to vape shops and other policy changes relating to vape sales; the data around smoking in social housing residents; smoking near hospital and council buildings and how to

deter it; the success of current stop smoking services; vaping stalls in local markets; the need to stop young people from starting vaping; whether there can be any intervention with commercial landlords leasing to vape shops; the need to engage local businesses; how to support our own staff to quit.

The Leader of the Council and other Members present highlighted their thanks to the former Executive Director of Public and Population Health, Prof. Trudi Grant, for her hard work and advocacy for public health in Somerset over the 12 years in post.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussion and proceeded to a vote on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Executive resolved to note and endorse the recommendations in the report and agree its publication:

1. Strong leadership across many organisations will be needed. The Somerset Board and constituent organisations commitment to a refreshed Local Declaration on Tobacco Control, (including commitment to not work with tobacco companies).
2. Support to Trading Standards to enforce the new tobacco and vaping legislation.
3. Support local workplaces to develop smoke-free policies that adhere to smokefree legislation, public sector organisations in Somerset should be exemplar employers.
4. Launch new, fresh communication and training campaigns that take a compassionate approach to smoking, supporting front line workers and members of our communities to have non-judgmental Very Brief Advice conversations about stopping smoking at every opportunity with signposting to support that meets their needs.
5. Strong engagement with people in Somerset to develop a new Somerset-wide action plan which develops services to meet the needs of people to stop smoking and protects people from second-hand smoke and smoking-related behaviour.
6. Focus our support towards groups with the highest rates of smoking, use behavioural insight research to understand what will work best to help them to stop smoking as well as to create more supportive environment.
7. Support schools, hospitals and care infrastructure to embed clear policies for smoking and vaping.
8. Stop smoking services should be further developed at hospital sites so 100% of patients are asked if they smoke and offered support to stop.
9. 100% of pregnant women and partners should be screened using carbon monoxide monitors at booking and throughout pregnancy, and provided with appropriate support.
10. To hit the target of smokefree by 2030, there needs to be strong measurement of progress against the target of 45,000. A collection of performance measures needs to be agreed with constant monitoring; as many measures as possible need to be 'real time' with little time lag.

**73 HRA Development Team and name change for Homes in Sedgemoor - Agenda Item 9**

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited the Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity, Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, to introduce the report. Cllr Smith-Roberts explained that the decision would be creating a single housing development team; it would involve changing the name of Homes in Sedgemoor to Homes in Somerset; that they would keep working to build more housing in Somerset; that this proposal had been through the Homes in Somerset Board, the Tenants Strategic Group and Scrutiny Committee – Communities; that there would be no impact on staff or tenants and no financial impact on the Housing Revenue Account; that there would be still be options for different models of delivery.

The Leader of the Council invited comments from Committee Members and other Members present, with officers providing responses as appropriate. Questions and points raised included: whether this was appropriate for Executive to make the decision; the impact on management and oversight.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussion and proceeded to a vote on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Executive resolved to:

- a. Approve the proposed name change from Homes In Sedgemoor to Homes in Somerset
- o Approve the TUPE transfer of the Somerset Council Development Team to Homes In Sedgemoor (Homes In Somerset), with the associated change to the Management Agreement, subject to formal HR consultation.

**(The meeting ended at 12.17 pm)**

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**CHAIR**