

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Taunton on Wednesday 22 January 2020 at 10.00am.

Present: Cllr M Best, Cllr A Bown, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr J Clarke, Cllr P Clayton, 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 James Hunt, Cllr John Hunt, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr M Keating, Cllr A Kendall, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr J Lock, Cllr T Lock, Cllr T Munt, Cllr T Napper, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr G Noel, Cllr L Oliver, Cllr J Parham, Cllr C Paul, Cllr H Prior-Sankey, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr L Redman, Cllr B Revans, Cllr M Rigby, Cllr N Taylor, Cllr J Thorne, Cllr G Verdon, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr A Wedderkopp, Cllr J Williams, Cllr R Williams and Cllr J Woodman

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

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr A Broom, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr S Coles, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr D Loveridge, Cllr M Pullin, Cllr D Ruddle and Cllr L Vijeh.

161 **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.

Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 14 - Annual Report and Accounts of the Somerset Pension Fund by virtue of receiving a Somerset County Council pension.

162 **Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17 July, 2019** - Agenda Item 3

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair of the meeting.

163 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

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

1. Taunton Bus Station

From David Redgewell (Not present)

Response from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

2. Taunton Bus Station

From Nigel Behan

Response from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

3. Pensions Investments

From Sigurd Reimers

Response from Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources

4. Local Government NJC Pay to Somerset County Council

From Nigel Behan

Response given by Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources under the Requisitioned Item on this subject (Agenda Item 10 and Minute 169)

5. Investment in Cycle and Walking Infrastructure

From Mike Ginger (Represented by Jonathan Sladden)

Response from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

6. Climate Emergency

From Nigel Behan

Response from Cllr David Hall, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure

7. Council Budget

From Alan Debenham

Response from Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources

8. Unitary Authority

From Alan Debenham

Response from Cllr David Fothergill, Leader

Full details of the questions and responses given at the meeting and/or in writing following the meeting are set out in Appendix A to these Minutes.

164 Chair's Announcements - Agenda Item 5

The Chair referred to the events that he and the Vice-Chair had attended since the last meeting of the County Council in July 2019, as listed in Chair's Information Sheet No. 6 circulated with the agenda.

165 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet - Items for Decision** - Agenda Item 6

The Council considered a report by the Leader and Cabinet setting out recommendations to Council arising from Cabinet meetings held on 13 November and 18 December 2019.

(1) ***Climate Emergency Framework***

The report drew attention to partnership work being taken forward with district councils to consult on and develop a county-wide Climate Emergency Strategy, and the approval of a Climate Emergency Framework document on the expected directions of travel.

The Council noted the Climate Emergency Framework, which sets out the development of a full Climate Emergency Strategy that is scheduled to be considered at the County Council meeting in July 2020.

(2) ***Investment Strategy***

The report set out options for the County Council relating to investments and generating a financial return to support the delivery of Council priorities.

Cllr David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Liz Leyshon, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to:

(a) build on its current Treasury Management investment activities to generate higher returns, protect against inflationary risks, sustaining a prudent balance of risk and reward;

(b) pro-actively consider options for further investing in existing Council owned property to optimise the value from these assets;

(c) consider other investment opportunities that may arise from time to time subject to appropriate due diligence and governance arrangements being in place.

(3) ***Treasury Management 2019/20 Mid-Year Report***

The report provided a summary of Treasury management activity and the outturn for the first half of the year.

Councillor David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Liz Leyshon, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to endorse the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2019 - 20.

166 **Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board** - Agenda Item 7

The Council considered the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board 2018 - 19 (together with an introductory report), which was presented by Jill Johnson, OBE, Chair of the Board.

The role of the Board was to ensure that the County Council, together with the Somerset District Councils, fulfilled their duties towards Children Looked After, corporately and in partnership with other statutory agencies, including the National Health Service and the Police.

Jill Johnson highlighted the main points in the Report, which showed that the Corporate Parenting Board continued to function effectively with clear progress against the 7 Principles of Corporate Parenting and its Ofsted Improvement Programme. The Report reflected the high quality of delivery that front-line staff undertook daily and the Board's ability to influence this delivery through its direct contact with operational leads in its sub-groups. It set out achievements during 2018 - 19 and further areas for development that were ambitious for the overall outcomes for the 800 + children and young people in care.

Cllr Frances Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, thanked Jill Johnson and the Corporate Parenting Board for their continuing hard work.

Cllr Nicholson, seconded by Cllr Leigh Redman, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to:

(a) invite District Councillor representation on the Corporate Parenting Board to provide support on housing and leisure issues;

(b) extend its thanks to the young people on the Care Councils for all the hard work that they undertake;

(c) recommend that Councillors appointed to the Corporate Parenting Board who do not attend Board meetings for three consecutive meetings are reported to Group Leads.

(The meeting was adjourned between 11.15am and 11.25am)

167 **Report of the Monitoring Officer** - Agenda Item 8

The Council considered a report by the Monitoring Officer on the matters below.

(1) ***Scrutiny Review***

The report set out proposals for stronger and more effective scrutiny involving an enhanced role for Scrutiny Committee members that had emerged from the review involving the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and had taken account of best practice by other authorities and the latest statutory guidance.

The proposals had the support of the County Council's three Scrutiny Committees, the Cabinet and the Constitution and Standards Committee.

Members were reminded that: all members could attend meetings of the three Scrutiny Committees and contribute freely on any agenda item, and were encouraged to do so;

any member could propose a topic for inclusion on Scrutiny Work Programmes; any member could be asked by a Scrutiny Committee to contribute information and evidence and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews.

Cllr David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Jane Lock, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to:

(a) implement a programme of cultural transformation and improvements to its Scrutiny arrangements by March 2021, including the provision of additional resources in the Democratic Services Team and members training budgets to deliver the enhanced scrutiny arrangements;

(b) agree 10 of the 11 recommendations within the Centre for Public Scrutiny's 'Supporting Governance, Scrutiny and Member Support in Somerset County Council' report as detailed on pages 9 and 10 of Appendix A and for these to be implemented by March 2021, and in line with Scrutiny Committees' recommendations, endorse an alteration to Recommendation 6 within the CfPS report and recommend that the number of agenda items is limited to an absolute maximum of 4, rather than the 2 recommended in the CfPS report;

(c) request that it receives a progress report on the improvements to its scrutiny arrangements at its meeting in November 2020;

(d) authorise the Monitoring Officer to undertake any necessary technical amendments to the Council's Constitution to support the implementation of the proposed improvements to the Council's scrutiny arrangements; and

(e) request that the Monitoring Officer undertakes further work regarding the proposals for co-opted members (with non-voting rights) to be potentially included within the membership of the Scrutiny Committee for Policies and Place and the Scrutiny Committee for Adults and Health with the aim of reporting these proposals to the Council's Annual General Meeting.

(2) ***Committee Appointments***

The report set out proposed changes to appointments to committees, internal/external bodies and panels as a result of changes to political groups.

Cllr David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Jane Lock, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to:

(a) increase the composition of the Officer Appeals Committee from six to nine elected members;

(b) increase the composition of the Constitution and Standards Committee from five to six elected members;

(c) approve the revised committee appointments set out in the report and the Appointments Schedule at Appendix 1.

168 **Report of the Chief Executive** - Agenda Item 9

The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive recommending the appointment of officers to the statutory officer roles of Chief Finance Officer, Director of Adult Social Services and Monitoring Officer.

The report covered: the role, functions and powers of these positions and the recruitment/appointment process.

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, seconded by Cllr John Hunt, moved, and the Council **RESOLVED** to appoint and empower:

(a) Jason Vaughan (Director of Finance from 1 March 2020) to the statutory role of Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) with all the legislative and constitutional delegated powers for this role with effect from 1 March 2020;

(b) Mel Lock (Director of Adults & Health Services) to the statutory role of Director of Adult Social Services with all the legislative and constitutional delegated powers for this role with immediate effect;

(c) Scott Wooldridge (Strategic Manager - Governance & Democratic Services) to the statutory role of Monitoring Officer with all the legislative and constitutional delegated powers for this role with immediate effect;

The Council congratulated the officers on their appointments and paid tribute to the service given by Sheila Collins, the outgoing Director of Finance.

169 **Requisitioned Item - Local Government NJC Pay to Somerset County Council** - Agenda Item 10

Cllr Leigh Redman, seconded by Cllr Martin Dimery, moved his requisitioned item for a Fully Funded, Proper Pay Rise for Council (and School) Workers.

Cllrs Redman and Dimery spoke in support of the proposal.

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, responded to Cllr Redman's proposal and the earlier Public Question from Nigel Behan (Agenda Item 4 and Minute 163). She then moved an amended version of Cllr Redman's proposal (set out in the resolution below).

Cllr Redman, with the concurrence of his seconder, withdrew his motion in favour of the amended version moved by Cllr Chilcott, which became the substantive motion. This was seconded by Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey, and voted on.

The Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the motion, as revised, and accordingly to:

- support the phased rise in the National Living Wage to £10.50 an hour. We expect this increase to be fully funded for our directly employed staff, with a corresponding increase in core funding for our commissioned services. We support the lowering of the age at which the full National Living Wage is paid from 25 to 21. We will write to the Secretary of State on the basis that increases to the local government pay-scale and the National Living wage are funded **centrally** and on an ongoing basis; and
- acknowledge that the Council will continue to contribute and play an active part in working with the Local Government Association on issues of pay and other benefits and to ensure that these are appropriately funded;
- welcome the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources meeting with our trade union representatives to discuss pay, other concerns and observations;
- support the Council's continued approach to encourage our workers to join a trade union.

170 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet - Items for Information** - Agenda Item 11

The Council received a report by the Leader and Cabinet summarising key decisions which the Leader, other Cabinet Members and officers had taken between 9 July 2019 and 10 January 2020, and items of business discussed at Cabinet meetings held in August, September, November and December 2019.

The Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure (Cllr David Hall) - Agenda Item 12 and the Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care - Agenda Item 13 were taken under Agenda Item 11.

The Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure covered a wide range of issues including: economic development; Hinkley Point 'C'; minerals and waste; library services; civil contingencies; flood and water management; library services; climate change; and Brexit.

The Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care (Cllr David Huxtable) covered a wide range of issues including: promoting independence and community connect; carers; learning disabilities; working with health and our hospitals; mental health; dementia; and safeguarding service.

The Leader and Cabinet Members responded to questions from members as set out below:

Cllr David Fothergill, Leader

Future of Local Government

From Cllr Liz Leyshon

Unitary Authorities

From Cllrs Jane Lock, Mike Rigby, Martin Dimery, Andy Kendall and Hazel Prior-Sankey

Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Roadworks in Bridgwater

From Cllr Leigh Redman

B3191 Watchet

From Cllr Hugh Davies

Local Schemes: Ashcott

From Cllr Liz Leyshon

Parking Reviews

From Cllrs Alan Wederkopp, John Hunt, John Clarke and Terry Napper

Minor Road C182

Cllr Ann Bown

Cllr David Fothergill, Leader on behalf of Cllr Christine Lawrence, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

Health Provision

Cllr Anna Groskop

NHS Dentistry

Cllr John Hunt

Health and Wellbeing Funds

Cllrs Adam Dance, Bill Revans, Leigh Redman and Andy Kendall

Cllr Faye Purbrick, Cabinet Member for Education and Council Transformation

Children not Attending School

Cllr Leigh Redman

The Council noted:

(a) the reports of the Leader and Cabinet, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care;

(b) the progress to date and challenges faced by Adult Services.

171 **Annual Report and Accounts of the Somerset Pension Fund** - Agenda Item 14

The Council received and noted the Annual Report and Accounts of the Somerset Pension Fund 2018 - 19 (together with an introductory report) which was presented by Cllr Graham Noel, Chair of the Somerset Pensions Committee.

Cllr Noel highlighted work on the pooling of assets with other South West authorities' Local Government Pension Scheme Funds for management by Brunel Pension Partnership Ltd and investment performance.

172 **Annual Report of the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership** - Agenda Item 15

The Council received and noted the Annual Report of the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership, which was presented by Cllr Rod Williams, Chair of the Partnership.

The report covered: work of the Partnership; national developments; formation of a South West Armed Forces Covenant Partnership; Somerset activities; the annual Partnership Conference; Remembrance and other activities; and communications.

173 **Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee** - Agenda item 16

The Council received and noted a report by the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee, which was presented by Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered: Fit for My Future (mental health) strategy; CCG Integrated Quality and Performance report; minor injury unit service; Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board; Adult Social Care performance; Discovery Report; mental health social care scrutiny update; Value for Money; Tracker and Social Care Experts Review; CCG Quality, Safety and Performance Report; and annual report of the Public Health Director.

174 **Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee** - Agenda Item 17

The Council received and noted a report by the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee, which was presented by Cllr Leigh Redman, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered: revenue budget monitoring; Early Help Strategic Commissioning Board update; Troubled Families update; Value for Money; Tracker and Social Care Experts Review; review of the Scrutiny function; new Somerset Safeguarding Children

Partnership arrangement; customer feedback; young carers update; Children's Services performance; and children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing update.

175 **Report of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee** - Agenda Item 18

The Council received and noted a report by the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee, which was presented by Cllr Anna Groskop, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered: revenue and capital budget monitoring; County Farms disposals; Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service new service delivery model; Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband Programme; external audit Value for Money report; Climate Emergency Framework; review of the Scrutiny function; West Somerset Opportunity Area; and library redesign.

(The meeting ended at 13.20)

Chair of the Council