

## COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Taunton on Wednesday 19 February 2020 at 10.00am.

**Present:** Cllr M Best, Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr A Bown, Cllr A Broom, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr J Clarke, Cllr P Clayton, Cllr S Coles, Cllr A Dance, Cllr H Davies, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr D Fothergill, Cllr G Fraschini, 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 A Kendall, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr J Lock, Cllr T Lock, Cllr D Loveridge, 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 M Pullin, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr L Redman, Cllr B Revans, Cllr M Rigby, Cllr D Ruddle, Cllr N Taylor, Cllr J Thorne, Cllr G Verdon, Cllr L Vijeh, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr A Wedderkopp, Cllr J Williams, and Cllr J Woodman

### 176 **Apologies for Absence** - Agenda Item 1

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllrs A Govier, M Keating, C Lawrence and R Williams.

### 177 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 2

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

Members were reminded that the Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to enable all elected members to participate and vote on setting the Revenue Budget, Council Tax levels and the Members Allowance Scheme. Any member who had an amount of Council Tax due to be paid which had been unpaid for at least two months needed to declare that as they could not take part in the vote relating to the Budget.

### 178 **Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22 January, 2020** - Agenda Item 3

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair of the meeting.

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

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

#### **1 - 3. South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside/Bus Services in Somerset**

From: David Redgewell (Represented by John Hassell)

Responses from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

#### **4 - 6. Budget/Council Tax**

From: Alan Debenham

Responses from Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources.

## **7 - 9. Climate Emergency**

From: Nigel Behan

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

(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).

### 180 **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 January 2020, as listed in Chair's Information Sheet No. 7 circulated with the agenda;
- his initiative involving the teaching of basic resuscitation and first aid to young people throughout Somerset which was at an early stage but attracting a wide level of support. The Chair confirmed that Somerset schools would be involved;
- his invitation to Cllr Peter Clayton, a former Vice-Chair of Council, to help him with the running of the meeting, in the absence of the elected Vice-Chair.

### 181 **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 arising from Cabinet meetings held on 22 January and 10 February 2020 on the Medium Term Financial Plan and related matters and the Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

***(a) Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 - 2022/23 including: the Revenue Budget; the Capital Strategy; the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement; and the Section 25 Statement from the Section 151 Officer***

*(i) Leader's Budget Speech*

Cllr David Fothergill, Leader of the Council, made a speech introducing the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 - 2022/23 and the budget. Matters referred to by Cllr Fothergill included:

- the Council's improved financial position (as reflected in the agenda papers) putting it in a better place to invest in Somerset, its stronger reserves and no new cuts to services;
- the Council's achievements over the past year through investment in areas including: roads; waste and recycling; the ongoing large school building programme;

- Prevention; increased payments to care providers; Improving Lives; enterprises centres; and robots in classrooms;
- the need to continue lobbying Government for a fairer funding settlement, and the benefits of a unitary authority for Somerset;
  - a range of exciting and innovative initiatives and priorities for investment in local communities including: Family Safeguarding; continuing the Small Improvements Scheme programme; improved public transport for residents in rural areas; a programme to bring in advisory 20mph zones outside schools across Somerset; and a new £1m fund to support Climate Change initiatives (see Paragraph (iv) of this Minute), to enable Parish and Town Councils to tackle the global climate crisis at a local level.

*(ii) Points of Clarification and other Queries/Comments*

Cllr Fothergill responded to points raised by members on matters including the following:

- how Taunton residents could participate in the debate on Climate Change without a Town Council
- how the proposed investment of £1m in Climate Change initiatives compared with that in other similar authorities
- enforcement of the proposed 20mph speed limit outside schools, any differentiation between different sorts of schools to which the limit could apply and funding for 20 mph limits away from schools
- could the Council really afford the £1m for Climate Change initiatives and would funding continue to be available after this was used
- could there be more than a single unitary authority for Somerset
- could the next County Council Elections be delayed in the light of the unitary authority debate
- the parameters of the Improving Lives scheme
- continuity of Small Improvements Scheme, and its use to fund 20 mph limits.

*(iii) Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 - 2022/23 - Reports and Proposals*

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the Medium Term Financial Plan proposals which were set out in the report to the Cabinet attached to the Leader and Cabinet's report to Council as Paper A (and its appendices).

Cllr Chilcott indicated that the MTFP was considered by the Council's three Scrutiny Committees ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 10 February 2020. The Scrutiny Committees received an update and overview that summarised key messages from the MTFP (2020 - 23) Strategy Report approved by Cabinet on 18 December 2019. This included an overall assurance narrative from the Cabinet Member for Resources and the Section 151 Officer alongside more details about the key areas of focus for transformation in the next few years, and further explanation of the reasons for movements in the levels of spend and funding between the years over the MTFP period.

The Scrutiny Committees provided challenge to the process and while none had made any formal recommendations, each had made comments and observations regarding the proposed MTFP, which were set out in the report of the Leader and Cabinet.

The Cabinet duly considered the MTFP and feedback from the Scrutiny Committees, and at its meeting on 10 February 2020 endorsed the recommendations, for approval by Council.

Members were reminded of the need to consider the Section 151 Officer's statement in Appendix L to Paper A regarding the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the reserves and balances and to have due regard to the equalities impact assessments within the papers.

*(iv) Proposed Amendment*

Further to Cllr Fothergill's budget speech, Cllr Chilcott, seconded by Cllr David Hall, moved that the recommendation relating to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 - 2022/23 set out in Paragraph 2.1 of the report of the Leader and Cabinet be amended by the addition of the following to the proposed earmarked reserves in recommendation (8):

- g. Contribution to Climate Emergency Reserve £1m
- h. Contribution to Funding Volatility Reserve £1.345m.

(funded through Business Rates retention income)

Cllr Chilcott added that the officers had been asked to review the Capital Programme to identify future funding for Climate Change initiatives.

Sheila Collins, Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer, by leave, spoke to provide further information on the MTFP.

Cllr Liz Leyshon, Opposition Spokesperson for Resources, responded formally to the budget proposals.

Cllr Fothergill, Cllr Chilcott and Sheila Collins responded to further points of clarification etc raised by members on matters including:

- the definition of "Reserve"
- whether the Social Care Volatility Reserve was separate from the Funding Volatility Reserve
- whether Climate Emergency Reserve funding had to be spent this year or could be carried over into next financial year
- how to secure funding for Climate Change initiatives
- expenditure on the Somerset Waste Partnership and Public Health.

The Council paid tribute to the service given by Sheila Collins who would be leaving the Council shortly.

A named vote was taken on the proposed amendment, with votes being cast as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Cllr Mike Best		
Cllr Neil Bloomfield		
Cllr Ann Bown		
Cllr Amanda Broom		
Cllr Peter Clayton		
Cllr Mike Caswell		
Cllr Mandy Chilcott		
Cllr John Clarke		
Cllr Simon Coles		
Cllr Adam Dance		
Cllr Hugh Davies		
Cllr Martin Dimery		
Cllr Bob Filmer		
Cllr Giuseppe Fraschini		
Cllr Anna Groskop		
Cllr David Hall		
Cllr Philip Ham		
Cllr Mark Healey		
Cllr Nigel Hewitt-Cooper		
Cllr James Hunt		
Cllr John Hunt		
Cllr David Huxtable		
Cllr Andy Kendall		
Cllr Mike Lewis		
Cllr Liz Leyshon		
Cllr Jane Lock		
Cllr Tony Lock		
Cllr Dave Loveridge		
Cllr Tessa Munt		
Cllr Terry Napper		
Cllr Frances Nicholson		
Cllr Graham Noel		
Cllr Linda Oliver		
Cllr John Parham		
Cllr Claire Paul		
Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey		
Cllr Mike Pullin		
Cllr Faye Purbrick		
Cllr Leigh Redman		
Cllr Bill Revans		
Cllr Mike Rigby		
Cllr Dean Ruddle		

Cllr Nigel Taylor Cllr John Thorne Cllr Gemma Verdon Cllr Linda Vjeh Cllr William Wallace Cllr Alan Wedderkopp Cllr Josh Williams Cllr John Woodman		
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(NB. Cllr David Fothergill was unable to vote as he had left the Chamber during the debate)

The Council therefore **RESOLVED** by 50 votes to 0 to adopt the amendment.

*(v) Substantive Motion and Decisions*

Cllr David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Mandy Chilcott, moved the recommendation relating to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 - 2022/23, as amended, as the substantive motion.

A named vote was taken on the motion, with votes being cast as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Cllr Neil Bloomfield Cllr Ann Bown Cllr Peter Clayton Cllr Mike Caswell Cllr Mandy Chilcott Cllr John Clarke Cllr Hugh Davies Cllr Martin Dimery Cllr Bob Filmer Cllr David Fothergill Cllr Giuseppe Frascini Cllr Anna Groskop Cllr David Hall Cllr Philip Ham Cllr Mark Healey Cllr Nigel Hewitt-Cooper Cllr James Hunt Cllr John Hunt Cllr David Huxtable Cllr Mike Lewis Cllr Terry Napper Cllr Frances Nicholson Cllr Graham Noel Cllr Linda Oliver	Cllr Andy Kendall	Cllr Mike Best Cllr Amanda Broom Cllr Simon Coles Cllr Adam Dance Cllr Liz Leyshon Cllr Jane Lock Cllr Tony Lock Cllr Dave Loveridge Cllr Tessa Munt Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey Cllr Bill Revans Cllr Mike Rigby Cllr Alan Wedderkopp

Cllr John Parham Cllr Claire Paul Cllr Mike Pullin Cllr Faye Purbrick Cllr Dean Ruddle Cllr Nigel Taylor Cllr John Thorne Cllr Gemma Verdon Cllr Linda Vjeh Cllr William Wallace Cllr Josh Williams Cllr John Woodman		
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(NB. Cllr Leigh Redman was unable to vote as he had left the Chamber during the debate)

The Council **RESOLVED** by 35 votes to 13, with 1 abstention, to adopt the substantive motion, and accordingly to:

(1) take account of the Section 151 Officer's assessment of the robustness of budget and adequacy of reserves on the budget proposals as set out in Appendix L;

(2) agree the net revenue budget in 2020/21 of £338,370,800;

(3) agree to increase the level of the general Council Tax by 1.99%, which will provide a further £4.924m to support the Councils expenditure on services;

(4) agree to increase Council Tax by a further 2% for the adult social care precept, which will provide a further £4.949m to support the growth in demand for services;

(5) agree to continue the Council Tax precept of £12.84 within the base budget for the shadow Somerset Rivers Authority (representing no increase). This results in a Council Tax Requirement of £2,562,543;

(6) agree the precept requirement of £257,292,090 for 2020/21 and set the County Council precept for Band D Council Tax charge at £1,289.20 for 2020/21. This is a rise of £0.95 per week for a Band D property;

(7) note that the amount of Council Tax payable for dwellings listed by valuation band, calculated in accordance with the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Local Government Act 1992, shall be as follows:

Valuation Band Amount £

- A 859.47
- B 1,002.71
- C 1,145.96
- D 1,289.20

E 1,575.69  
F 1,862.18  
G 2,148.67  
H 2,578.40

(8) approve the use of earmarked reserves as follows:

- a. Contribution to Social Care Transformation Reserve £4.472m
- b. Contribution to Insurance Fund Reserve £2.067m
- c. Contribution to Budget Equalisation Reserve £4.562m
- d. Contribution to Social Care Volatility Reserve £2.343m
- e. Draw from Corporate Priorities Reserve £5m (£4.831m in 2020/21, and £0.169m in 2021/22)
- f. Draw from various service Earmarked Reserves £2.047m
- g. Contribution to Climate Emergency Reserve of £1m
- h. Contribution to Funding Volatility Reserve of £1.345m;

(9) agree the proposals for transformation (as set out in Appendices A to G), and delegate the implementation to the relevant Director(s) following due process;

(10) agree that due regards have been taken to any equalities implications identified and risk implications prior to any decision being taken in relation to the recommendations in this report, noting the initial equalities impacts;

(11) agree to keep the current Members' Allowances Scheme unchanged for 2020/21, noting the work being undertaken ahead of the County Council elections in 2021;

(12) note that the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Resources, Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer will oversee and monitor the delivery of the proposals for transformation and report on progress as part of the budget monitoring reports;

(13) delegate authority for the development of any additional alternative proposals for transformation that may be necessary to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and relevant Director(s);

(14) delegate powers to the Section 151 Officer following consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise budget proposals following analysis of the final Local Government Financial Settlement and confirmation of the Business Rates income;

(15) approve the allocation of the Schools' Block element of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) as set out in Section 6 of the report;

(16) delegate approval of the final formula factors for individual schools 2020/21 to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, the Cabinet Member for Education and Transformation and the Cabinet Member for Resources;

(17) to note the Capital Strategy and adopt the Prudential Code Indicators set within the document;

(18) approve the proposed additions to capital programme for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24 of £123.961m, as set out in Section 9 of the report;

(19) approve that the Chief Executive and the Senior Leadership Team, following appropriate consultation and after giving due regard to the information contained within any associated impact assessments, are given delegated authority to decide on the individual capital projects to be delivered within block allocations;

(20) approve that the Section 151 Officer is given delegated authority to accept any additional grants or funding that is made available to the County Council together with authority to consequently expand the approved capital programme, providing there are no negative revenue budget implications as a result of that action;

(21) approve the continuation of the current MRP Policy for 2020/21.

(The meeting was adjourned between noon and 12.12)

**(b) *Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21***

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced proposals for a strategy and associated activities for the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and treasury investments and the associated risks to underpin the Council's business and service objectives which were set out in the report to the Cabinet attached to the Leader and Cabinet's report to Council as Paper B (and its appendices).

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, seconded by Cllr Liz Leyshon, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to:

(1) adopt the Treasury Management Strategy (as shown in Section 2 of Paper B)

(2) approve the Treasury Investment Strategy (as shown in Section 3 of Paper B) and proposed Lending Counterparty Criteria (attached as Appendix B to Paper B)

(3) adopt the Prudential Indicators in Section 4 of Paper B.

**182 Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee - Agenda Item 15**

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: scrutiny work programme; Medium Term Financial Plan for Children's Services; and family safeguarding.

**183 Report of the HR Policy Committee - Agenda Item 7**

The Council considered a report by the HR Policy Committee, which was presented by Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered: the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21; pension discretion policy; and officer appeals procedure update.

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, seconded by Cllr Liz Leyshon, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Pay Policy Statement (PPS) for the Council for 2020-21 as set out in Appendix A to the report.

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

The Council considered a report by the Monitoring Officer on the proposed appointment of a Deputy Section 151 Officer.

Cllr David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Liz Leyshon, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to appoint the post and postholder of Strategic Manager, Finance Business Partnering, currently held by Sian Kenny, as a Deputy Section 151 Officer with effect from 1 March 2020.

185 **Requisitioned Item - Climate Emergency - A Tree for Every Baby in Somerset'** - Agenda Item 9

Cllr Liz Leyshon, seconded by Cllr Tessa Munt, moved her requisitioned item set out in the report, and both spoke in support of the proposal.

During debate, Cllr Leyshon, with the concurrence of her seconder, accepted an amendment suggested by Cllr Mike Lewis to make it clear that the proposal involved 'A Tree for Every Baby *in Somerset*'.

The Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the motion, as amended, which read as set out below:

"As this Council works towards completion of its Action Plan to accompany the Climate Change strategy, leading from the declaration of a Climate Emergency a year ago, we call upon Council to acknowledge the further pressures of Ash dieback and loss of mature trees in recent storms.

Planting trees is beneficial to the environment in the face of accelerating climate change. As we plant trees they help support our wildlife, improve our natural environment as well as reduce the concentration of harmful gases contributing to climate change.

In order to ensure a significant increase in tree planting within the boundary of Somerset, this Council will commit to working with partners, including District and Parish Councils, to support tree planting schemes with local communities and landowners to enable new trees to be planted across Somerset equal to or in excess of the number of babies born in the

County this coming year and for the following two years. 'A TREE FOR EVERY BABY IN SOMERSET'.

*(Note: 2016 births in Somerset, from Somerset Intelligence = 5470)*

## 186 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet - Items for Information** - Agenda Item 12

The Council received a report by the Leader and Cabinet summarising key decisions which the Leader, other Cabinet Members and officers had taken between 11 January and 10 February 2020, and items of business discussed at Cabinet meetings held on 22 January and 10 February 2020.

The Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing 2018/19 and 2019/20 (presented by Cllr David Fothergill, Leader, on behalf of Cllr Christine Lawrence, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing) - Agenda Item 10 and the Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Resources (Cllr Mandy Chilcott) - Agenda Item 11 were taken under Agenda Item 12.

The Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing covered: improving the health of children and young people; improving the health of the whole population; and protecting the health of the population.

The Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Resources covered key activities and achievements in the following areas: finance services and the Council's improved financial stability; corporate property; procurement; HR and organisational development; and legal and democratic services.

At Cllr Fothergill's invitation, the Director of Public Health reported on the safeguarding measures being undertaken in Somerset in response to the international Covid - 19 (Coronavirus) outbreak (and responded to a question from Cllr Bill Revans).

Cllr Fothergill and Cabinet Members responded to questions from members as set out below, with Cllr John Woodman paying tribute to the excellent response by highways staff during the recent flooding:

*Cllr David Fothergill, Leader*

### **Unitary Authorities**

From: Cllrs Jane Lock, John Hunt, Liz Leyshon, Tessa Munt, John Clarke, Martin Dimery and Alan Wedderkopp

*Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport*

### **Provision of 20 mph Speed Limit Signs outside Schools**

From: Cllr John Hunt

### **Display of Real Time Information at Bus Stops**

From: Cllr Tessa Munt

### **Co-ordination of Footway Works and Safety Defect Repairs**

From: Cllr Andy Kendall

*Cllr David Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care*

### **Immigration Rules post Brexit**

From: Cllr Bill Revans and Tony Lock

### **Funding of Social Care Providers**

From: Cllr John Hunt

The Council noted the reports of the Leader and Cabinet, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing 2018/19 and 2019/20 and the Cabinet Member for Resources.

#### **187 Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee - Agenda item 13**

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: scrutiny work programme; Medium Term Financial Plan for the Committee's services; family safeguarding; Somerset health protection assurance report; and Fit for my Future.

#### **188 Report of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee - Agenda Item 14**

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: scrutiny work programme; 2019/20 Revenue Budget monitoring; and overview and Medium Term Financial Plan for Economic and Community Infrastructure and Corporate and Support Services.

(The meeting ended at 13.20)

Chair of the Council