

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the County Council held in The McMillan Theatre, Bridgwater, TA6 4PZ, on Wednesday 24 November 2021 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr M Best, Cllr A Bown, Cllr A Broom, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr P Clayton, 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 J Hunt (joined at 12:15), Cllr James Hunt, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr D Johnson, Cllr M Keating (Vice-Chair), Cllr A Kendall, Cllr C Lawrence, 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 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 J Thorne, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr J Williams, Cllr R Williams and Cllr J Woodman

Apologies for absence: Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr J Clarke, Cllr J Parham, Cllr N Taylor, Cllr G Verdon and Cllr L Vijeh

2 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 3

The Acting Chair reminded the meeting that details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils could be viewed on the Council's Website and there was no need for members to individually declare these personal interests in those other councils at the meeting.

3 **Minutes from the meeting held on 21 July 2021** - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the meeting on 21 July 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Acting Chair.

4 **Chairs Announcements** - Agenda Item 5

In Memorium

The Acting Chair paid tributes to former County Councillor and Mendip District Councillor Alderman Ralph Clark who passed away on Friday 3 September and to Tim Carroll former Somerset County Councillor and South Somerset District Councillor who also died on 3 September.

Ralph was elected to Somerset County Council in 1985 and represented the Street Division for 16 years. Having served as the Vice Chair of Council for two years, he then completed the first of two stints as Council Chair, between 1987 and 1989. He was re-elected as Chair of Council in 1993 and remained in position until 2000, as well as serving as Chair of various committees, including Finance, Economic Development, Capital Programme Board and the Organisation, Support and Resources Review between 2000-01. In addition to his service at SCC, Ralph served on Mendip District Council for many years and

served as the Council's first ever Chair of Council between 1974-76. In November 2017 Ralph was one of four former County Councillors appointed to the new position of Honorary Aldermen of the County Council.

Of Tim Carroll it was recorded that he was a distinguished Council Leader, who commanded respect from all members and officers at South Somerset District Council. He was well respected and the epitome of what a Councillor should be. This was supported by other Councillors who knew him.

Valediction

The Acting Chair acknowledged the contribution of serving County Councillor Linda Vijeh after she recently announced that she would be stepping down in the New Year.

Welcome

The Acting Chair welcomed Dawn Johnson the newly elected representative for the Comeytrove and Trull ward for whom this was her first meeting of County Council.

Engagements

The Acting Chair then referred to the many events he had attended since the last meeting and made particular reference to the many Remembrance Services across the County and the active participation of so many other County Councilors.

5 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 6

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

What Affects Local Government Affects us all.

From: Eva Bryczkowski

Response was from Cllr Mandy Chilcot Cabinet Member for Resources

Bus Services

From David Redgewell who was not present, so a summary of the submission was read aloud by the Monitoring Officer.

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

Somerset Bus Partnership

Peter Travis who was not present, so a summary of the submission was read aloud by the Monitoring Officer.

Response from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport **Joint Scrutiny Representation, Budget and ASC, Climate Change Emergency**

Alan Debenham who was not present, so a summary of the submission was read aloud by the Monitoring Officer.

Response from Leader of the Council Cllr David Fothergill, Cllr Mandy Chilcott Cabinet Member for resources and Cllr David Hall Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure.

Bus Service Improvement Plan and Climate Emergency Strategy

Nigel Behan who was not present, so a summary of the submission was read aloud by the Monitoring Officer.

Responses from Cllr John Woodman Cabinet member for Highways and Transport and Cllr David Hall Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure.

6 Report of the Leader and Cabinet - - Agenda Item 7

The Council considered a report that set out the Leader's and Cabinet's recommendations to Council arising from their consideration of reports at the Cabinet meeting on 15 November 2021. The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to operate the overall treasury function with regard to the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services. The Code requires Full Council to receive as a minimum, an annual strategy and plan in advance of the year, a mid-year review, and an annual report after its close. The report provided a mid-year review for 2021-22 and set out that Treasury Management activity and outturn for the first half of the year continued to ensure the Council embraced best practice in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) recommendations.

The Council discussed the report and welcomed the predicted borrowing balances and good returns.

Councillor Mandy Chilcott and Seconded by Councillor Liz Leyshon moved, and the Council **RESOLVED** to:

Endorse the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2021-22.

7 Report of the Monitoring Officer - Agenda Item 8

The Council considered a report from the Monitoring Officer that set out proposals for the Council to consider regarding the potential formation of a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Joint Scrutiny Committee comprising elected representatives from Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and South Somerset District Council (collectively known as the Constituent Councils for the Joint Committee). Each individual Council would be considering the proposed formation of the Joint Scrutiny Committee (JSC) and delegating appropriate functions to it.

Councillor David Fothergill welcomed this Joint Scrutiny Committee as the start of a process and that it would build on the 'spirit of collaboration' which already existed with the Health and Well-being Board and the Joint Waste Board.

Councillor Bill Revans acknowledged that the proposals represented a compromise, but they should not be regarded as inadequate because of that as there was fair representation across the County which offered a realistic way forward and he encouraged all to participate and not be partisan. Councillor Martin Dimery thanked the Officers for trying to make the Joint Committee as fair as possible but wanted it recorded that there were no Green Party representatives despite some parts of the County having a very strong Green Party presence.

The Monitoring Officer reminded Council that any elected member could attend meetings of the Joint Scrutiny Committee and they would be most welcome to participate in discussions.

Councillor Leigh Redman thanks Officers for the work put into this process and acknowledged that he had made some comments on the Terms of Reference and had been pleased to see that the accompanying FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) had addressed many of his points. It was confirmed that any subsequent changes to the terms of reference would have to be approved by the Constitution and Standards Committee.

Councillor Anna Groskop, seconded by Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey, moved and the Council **RESOLVED to:**

- Approve the establishment of a LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee together with the four District Councils in Somerset constituted in accordance with and having the roles and responsibilities set out in the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1 ("Terms of Reference").
- Agree to nominate the following eight Members from its overview and scrutiny committees to sit on the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Ann Bown
Councillor Bob Filmer
Councillor Anna Groskop
Councillor Jane Lock
Councillor Tessa Munt
Councillor Leigh Redman
Councillor Rod Williams
Councillor William Wallace

- Nominated Councillor Bob Filmer to the Joint Scrutiny Committee as its Vice Chair.

8 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet - Agenda Item 9**

The Council received a report by the Leader and Cabinet summarising the key decisions taken by the Leader, Cabinet Members and officers between 13 July 2021 and 12 November 2021, together with the items of business discussed at the Cabinet meetings on 15 September 2021, 20 October 2021 and 15 November 2021.

Councillor David Fothergill and Cabinet Members responded to questions from members.

Councillor Leigh Redman asked about trauma informed somerset and a response was provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson Cabinet member for Children and Families.

Councillor Bill Revans asked about Adult Social Care (ASC) and the impact on Somerset. It was noted that ASC is 'hot' at the moment with Legislation currently going through the Parliamentary process. The Leader assured the Council that he was keeping the pressure on and had already had a number of meetings with the Minister responsible.

The Council noted this report.

9 **Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport - Agenda Item 10**

Councillor John Woodman introduced the report which highlighted the key activities and achievements of the past year. In addition, his report also highlighted the work services had undertaken to support the Council's ongoing response to Covid-19 pandemic. The Council considered the report, and Councillor Mike Rigby asked for reassurance that coordination of street works be undertaken as he had noticed that in Bridge Street in Taunton once one set of works had been completed another had started after the road had been resurfaced. He also asked for information on the following: the value of fixed penalty notices; the removal of temporary road signs when no work was being

undertaken; and children excluded from school transport. Councillor John Woodman undertook to issue a written reply to those questions.

Councillor John Woodman highlighted the considerable number of major improvements currently underway or completed in addition to 265 minor schemes. There was a discussion and clarification was provided on the budget for Small Improvement Schemes. Cllr Dance apologised for remarks he made in his statement about the Leader of Council.

Councillor James Hunt joined the meeting at this point (12:15)

Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey noted, and Councillor Frascini agreed that as Taunton was an unparished area it was not able to commission surveys to support SIS applications. Councillor agreed to issue a Members Information Sheet with further details about Officer Lead Improvement Schemes. Councillor Dawn Johnson noted that Highways is an issue in her area and was concerned that schemes that had been promised were not delivered and some work was needed to improve communication.

Councillor Tessa Munt requested, and Councillor Woodman agreed to hold a meeting to discuss road improvements in Wells.

Councillors David Huxtable and Mark Healey both raised Points of Order in relation to asking questions of Cabinet Members in this forum without indication the nature of the questions beforehand as doing so would give Cabinet Members the opportunity to provide fulsome replies.

The Council noted the report.

10 **Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure** - Agenda Item 11

Councillor David Hall introduced his report setting out the progress and achievements from the last year including in Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure, as well as looking forward to the next year. The report focused on the key highlights from those service areas from the past year and he recognised the importance of on-going service activity and the tremendous contributions made by Council to businesses and communities across the County.

The Council discussed the report, and Councillor Dean Ruddle observed that he felt Capital costs were still too high and Councillor Hall offered to have a discussion with him about his points.

The Council acknowledged the fantastic work of those in Public Health.

The Council noted the report.

11 Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee - Agenda Item 12

The Council received and noted a report by Scrutiny for Adults and Health Committee, which was presented by Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey, Chair of the Committee. The report covered the work of the Committee since July and Cllr Prior-Sankey thanked her Vice Chair, Cllr Healey, and other members of the Committee and all those who continued to work across the care sector and NHS on behalf of Somerset residents. Cllr Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, stated his appreciation to Cllr Prior-Sankey and her Committee for all their work

Councillor Jane Lock noted the disappointing performance in relation to discharge from Hospital to either domiciliary care or residential Care. It was recorded that these are very challenging times and Somerset was in line with other similar Authorities this did not make it acceptable. Councillor David Huxtable made the point that with Hospital at Opal 4 (the highest alert) there are still more challenges to manage this winter.

The Council noted the report.

12 Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee - Agenda Item 13

The Council received and noted a report by Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee, which was presented by Cllr Leigh Redman, Chair of the Committee. The report covered the work of the Committee since May, and he thanked his fellow Committee members and Officers for their support. He noted that the Committee was carrying some vacancies for co-opted Members and encouraged people to join the Committee. Cllr Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, stated her thanks to all Officers that supported the Committee, the Vice-Chair and members of the Committee and noted the dedication of the Chair of the Committee.

The Council noted the report.

13 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 the work of the Committee since September 2021 she encouraged greater interest and input from elected members into the Scrutiny function as this would be important in the coming years and she

thanked everyone that had helped with the work of the Committee. By leave Councillor Tessa Munt asked about the disposal of land at Ash as she stated that the report did not adequately reflect the discussion of the Committee when this matter had been subject to a 'call-in'. Councillor Mike Rigby asked about some Freedom of Information questions the answers to which had not yet been published and he was assured by the Chief Executive that this matter would be resolved shortly.

Cllr Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources, stated her thanks to Cllr Groskop and her Committee for their scrutiny, particularly of the Council's financial reports, as their work was much valued.

The Council noted the report.

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

Councillor Rod Williams introduced the Annual report of the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. The Report updated the Council on the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant (SAFC) Partnership since the last Annual Report to Full Council in November 2020. The purpose of the SAFC Partnership was to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Somerset and Somerset County Council (SCC) had led the Partnership. The definition of the Armed Forces Covenant is : -

'The Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve. It says we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. This includes offering injured servicemen and women, and bereaved families, extra support where appropriate.'

The Covenant, a Government initiative, had been designed to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community were not disadvantaged compared to members of the civilian community. Delivery of the Covenant is aimed at four groups of beneficiaries: regulars, reservists, veterans, and their immediate families.

Councillor Leigh Redman thanked Councillor Rod Williams for the report and recorded how pleased he was to see so many Councillors participating in Remembrance Day events across the County.

Councillor David Fothergill, Leader of the Council, thanked Councillor Rod Williams for all the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Armed Forces community in Somerset. Councillor Mark Healey agreed and said he too appreciated the dedication shown by Councillor Rod Williams.

The Council noted the report and commended the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership on the positive contribution and difference they have made to Somerset and the Armed Forces.

(The meeting ended at 1.25 pm)

CHAIR