
COUNTY COUNCIL

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

20 July 2022
(Published on 27 July 2022)

Item No.	Title
6	Report of the Leader and Executive - items for decision
	<p>DECISION</p> <p><u>Paper A - Medium Term Financial Strategy & Plan 2023/24 and 2027/28</u></p> <p>The Council approved that the Director of Finance and Governance is delegated authority to set the council tax base and business rates base for Somerset Council.</p> <p><u>Paper B - Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22</u></p> <p>The Council endorsed the Treasury Management outturn report for 2021-22.</p> <p><u>Paper C - The Children and Young People's Plan 2022-2024</u></p> <p>The Council endorsed Somerset's Children & Young People's Plan 2022 – 2024.</p>
7a	Appointment of a Chief Executive - Report of the Appointments Committee
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Accept the recommendation of the Appointments Committee and appoint Mr Duncan Sharkey as the permanent Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of Somerset County Council and the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of Somerset Council with effect from 1 April 2023.Appoint on the basis of the terms and conditions agreed at the Extraordinary Council meeting on 15 June 2022 and on a spot salary for the post of £195,000 including Returning Officer Fees.

Item No.	Title
7b	Interim arrangements for the post of Chief Executive and designation of the Head of Paid Service
	<p>DECISION The Council Resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To delegate the powers of the Chief Executive to Paula Hewitt (Director of Economic & Community Infrastructure and Deputy Chief Executive) as the acting Chief Executive of Somerset County Council during the Interim Period. • To designate Paula Hewitt as the Council's Head of Paid Service for the Interim Period. <p>To delegate to the current Chief Executive, the decision on the appointment and delegation of existing powers for an acting Deputy Chief Executive for the Interim period.</p>
8	Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel - Special Responsibility Allowances for 2022/23
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council resolved to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome and thank the Panel for its report and recommendations set out in Appendix 1 2. Support and agree the Panel's recommendations in respect of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) the Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny Polices and Environment Committee and the Joint Scrutiny Committee for Local Government Reorganisation be set at Bands 5 and 6 respectively ii) the Chair of Standards Committee be set at Band 6 iii) that the Council supports the need for a fundamental review of the Members' Scheme of Allowances for 2023/24 and for this to be reported to the Council by February 2023. The Council supports the approach to the fundamental review being undertaken in three parts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Basic Allowance 2. The SRAs 3. Other allowances, such as travel, subsistence and carers

Item No.	Title
	<p data-bbox="461 219 1369 387">With the BA being considered soonest. The role of co-opted members, including Independent Remuneration Panel members themselves, should also be considered and this could fit within either part 2 or part 3</p> <p data-bbox="317 461 1070 499">3. Reject the Panel's recommendations in respect of:</p> <p data-bbox="365 551 1374 678">i) the role of opposition spokesperson should no longer receive an SRA and instead retain the current SRA band for the role of opposition spokesperson.</p> <p data-bbox="365 730 1422 898">Reason - it is felt that the level of time and commitment given by Opposition Spokespersons warrants an allowance in line with the Council's arrangements for several years and in view of the members involvement as part of the transition to the new Somerset Council.</p> <p data-bbox="365 949 1409 1032">ii) the SRAs for Associate Lead Members be set at Band 7 and instead retain these at Band 6.</p> <p data-bbox="365 1084 1398 1256">Reason - it is felt the reduction to Band 7 does not adequately reflect the support and time that Associate Lead Members provide when compared to comparable roles and therefore to retain the SRA for these roles at Band 6 as previously agreed by the Council in February 2022.</p> <p data-bbox="365 1308 1422 1435">iii) the Chair and Vice Chair of Constitution & Governance Committee be set at Bands 6 and 7 respectively and instead propose that these are set at Bands 5 and 6 respectively.</p> <p data-bbox="365 1487 1398 1659">Reason - it is felt that the level of time and commitment given by these roles during the transition to the new Somerset Council should warrant SRAs of Band 5 and 6 respectively in line with the Chair and Vice Chair of Audit Committee.</p> <p data-bbox="365 1711 1390 1883">iv) the Leader of a political group receives a SRA where the membership of the political group is 5 or more and instead agree that the Leader of a political group receives a SRA where the membership of the political group is 3 or more.</p> <p data-bbox="365 1935 1398 2018">Reason - it is felt that the minimum level should be set at 3 to reflect the Council's arrangements for several years and in view of all political group</p>

Item No.	Title
	<p>leaders with the transition to the new Somerset Council.</p> <p>4. (a) Support the Panel's recommendation in respect of the formation of an Independent Remuneration Panel for Somerset Council but with an amendment to reflect the Council's intention to accelerate the formation of the Panel by Autumn 2022:</p> <p>"Council undertakes the necessary work to ensure that an Independent Remuneration Panel is in place for the new unitary council <u>by autumn 2022</u> and that in terms of membership the Council considers:</p> <p>a) people who reside in Somerset and drawn from the existing panels operative in the county at present;</p> <p>b) a wide geographical spread of members from across the county; and</p> <p>c) a minimum membership of five</p> <p>(b) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to undertake all necessary actions to implement recommendations above including the recruitment and appointment of panel members to the new Independent Remuneration Panel.</p>
9	Annual Report of the Audit Committee
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council noted the report.</p>
10	Requisitioned Items
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council resolved:</p> <p><u>Declaration of an Ecological Emergency</u></p> <p>1. That in addition to the work already underway, it will take on the responsibility as Lead Partner in the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) (this has already been agreed with Natural England), with partners in the established Local Nature Partnership and deliver a Strategy with a set of clear actions to bring about a reversal of the negative impacts on the natural environment and biodiversity and to develop strategies to mitigate against the possibility of further decline or damage on the habitats, flora and fauna of Somerset.</p> <p>2. To incorporate the details of the Ecological Emergency, the desired</p>

Item No.	Title
	<p>outcomes and any identified actions, including those within the LNRS into the next iteration of the Climate Emergency Strategy.</p> <p>3. To ensure “tackling the climate and nature emergencies” policies are at the heart of everything this council does and is embedded it into all Council decision making processes.</p> <p>4. To add ecological impact implications assessment alongside those for climate and sustainability in committee and council reports.</p> <p>5. In collaboration with the 4 District Councils, the Council will use existing and emerging planning policy and development management to ensure biodiversity is improved, environments enriched and the destruction of habitats is resisted when development occurs.</p> <p>6. Work similarly with the 4 Districts Councils to develop the Councils response to the phosphates issue affecting the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site catchment area.</p> <p>7. That Somerset County Council is already ranked by Climate emergency UK as the UK’s top County Council in tackling climate change and recognised the work done by County Council in recent years to achieve this.</p> <p>8. To encourage residents, businesses and landowners to reduce pesticide use, and seek to become a pesticide-free council.</p> <p>9. To encourage residents, businesses and landowners to eliminate peat use, and seek to become a peat-free council.</p> <p>10. To work with emerging government guidance and across the Planning System with the Planning Authorities to develop the Council’s approach and policies around the Ecological Emergency and will implement, measure and monitor the Biodiversity net gain approach in order to maximise the benefits from development.</p> <p><u>Cost of living emergency</u></p> <p>The Council resolved to declare a ‘Cost of Living Emergency’ and call on the Government to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immediately reduce the standard rate of VAT from 20 per cent to 17.5 per cent for one year, saving the average household in Somerset a further £600 this year. - Immediately re-introduce the pensions triple lock to support Somerset’s pensioners. - Immediately restore the Universal Credit supplement of £20, which was cancelled by the Government in September 2021. - Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to express the Council’s demands for VAT to be cut to

Item No.	Title
	<p>17.5%, for the re-introduction of the pensions triple-lock and for the £20 Universal Credit supplement to be restored.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finally, Council joins other local councils in calling for a local Cost-of-Living Emergency Summit, with stakeholders, including Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Local Trades Unions, and Chambers of Commerce and will invite local MPs to attend this hybrid meeting - Establishing a proportionally representative cross-party working Group to recommend to the Executive and November Full Council other practical steps that this Council can take to alleviate the impact of the cost of living on the most vulnerable. - It was further agreed that the following points be referred to the next available Executive Meeting for consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately making £1 million available from reserves to further assist Citizens Advice, Food Banks and other relevant agencies to offer practical support for those who are suffering most from the crisis • Withdrawing the recently implemented £40 increase to SEND transport and post-16 education travel • Immediately introducing the LibDem manifesto 'Liberteen' bus pass commitment to subsidise young peoples travel around the County • Immediately restoring the Health and Wellbeing fund of £5,000 per Councillor from reserves to enable individual County Councillors to target localised areas of suffering particularly in their deprived communities • Recognising that by harmonising to the lowest District Council tax level as part of the LGR process no further financial strain will be placed on individuals and will support those already under pressure <p><u>Cost of living crisis</u></p> <p>To address these inequalities, the Council resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer condemning the decision to exclude vulnerable people from meaningful support with the cost of living crisis and demanding that they immediately act to address this inequality and ensure that arrangements for paying the rebate to the excluded groups are put into place. • Write to Somerset MPs asking them to lobby the government to increase cost of living help payments available to sick and disabled people with immediate effect. • Build on LGR and work with District partners to produce and publicise an information leaflet for private sector landlords in Somerset who charge for

Item No.	Title
	<p>household fuel as part of rent urging them to pass on the rebate to their tenants especially those in shared houses or HMOs.</p> <p><u>Local Community Networks</u></p> <p>The Council recognised the vitally important role of Town, Parish and City Councils and resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with them to develop and deliver fully-funded Local Community Networks to support our Communities. • Bring forward comprehensive and consulted-on plans for establishing LCN's to the November 2022 Full Council for approval.
11	Report of the Leader and Executive - items for information
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council noted the report.</p>
12	Annual Report of Pensions Committee
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council noted the report.</p>
13	Annual Report of the Health and Wellbeing Board
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council noted the report.</p>
14	Annual Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council noted the report.</p>
15	Annual Report of the Scrutiny for Polices, Children and Families Committee
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council noted the report.</p>

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16	Annual Report of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council noted the report.</p>
17	Any other urgent items of business
	<p>DECISION</p> <p>The Council endorsed the Chair of Council's proposal to convene an Extraordinary Meeting in early October 2022 to consider the Taunton Community Governance Review.</p>