

SWT Executive - 21 July 2021

Present: Councillor Derek Perry (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Councillors Chris Booth, Caroline Ellis, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis and Francesca Smith

Officers: Clare Rendell, Tracey Meadows, Emily Collacott, Chris Hall, Lisa Redston, Malcolm Riches and Richard Sealy

Also Present: Councillors

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

17. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors D Darch, M Rigby, F Smith-Roberts and A Sully.

18. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 June 2021 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 16 June 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

19. Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

20. Public Participation

Mrs Lori Busch from the Mankind Initiative asked the following question on agenda item 11:-

Can the Executive Committee please confirm whether they will honour the original request from 2 December 2020 Scrutiny Committee that a decision on this historic asset be made by Full Council?

The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development replied and clarified that a working group had been set up to discuss the decision on the future of Flook House, which was then fed into a report taken to the Executive. He confirmed that as it was an Executive Decision, the report would not be taken to Full Council.

Mr Robert Barnes addressed the Executive and spoke about his concerns on the cleanliness of Taunton town. He advised members that he went out every night to clear up broken glass and litter from the streets as he did not believe that the council took their responsibilities on the matter seriously. He stressed to the members that something needed to be done on the matter as it should not fall upon a member of the public to carry out such tasks.

The Deputy Leader of the Council replied and thanked Mr Barnes for his comments and that he had taken the time to address the Executive. He advised contact would be made to follow up Mr Barnes' individual concerns.

21. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

Resolved that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

22. **Somerset West and Taunton Volunteering Policy and Procedure**

During the discussion, the following points were raised: -

- Councillors praised the work that volunteers carried out within the local community.
- Councillors queried whether the policy was for Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) volunteers only or would it be used by the wider community.
The Economic Development Manager confirmed that it would be used for SWT volunteers only.
- Councillors warmly welcomed the policy and agreed there were lots of positive points and potential within the scheme.
- Councillors queried the makerable system that would be used.
The Economic Development Manager gave information on how the volunteers would use the system, which included case notes and data protection.

- Councillors were pleased that the policy encouraged those that wanted to give their time to work in the community and gave options to those who maybe didn't want to be in paid employment.
- Concern was raised that some other voluntary organisations would struggle to engage with volunteers as some may only want to go with SWT due to the policy.

The Economic Development Manager advised that they would work closely with SPARK to try and appoint to other organisations. They would also encourage as many volunteer posts as possible across the whole sector.

Resolved that Executive approved the adoption of the SWT Corporate Volunteering Policies and Procedures attached to this report.

23. **Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 4 and Out-turn, 2020/21**

During the discussion, the following points were raised: -

- Councillors praised officers for all their hard work in achieving the green indicators in the report and agreed that they can quite often focus on the red indicators and forget to highlight the good work carried out within the organisation.
- Councillors queried whether there were any plans to reduce the number of complaints received.

The Assistant Director for Customer advised that there was a plan in place and that they had been working on the figures since July 2020. He also confirmed that the percentage quoted in the report was a cumulative figure for the whole year, so they should slowly progress towards the target now.

Resolved that the Executive considered the attached performance report.

24. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public (Agenda Item 9, Appendix H ONLY)**

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (Appendix H ONLY) on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

25. **Financial Monitoring - Outturn Position 2020/21**

During the discussion, the following point was raised: -

- Councillors queried why the Leycroft Grove development had not been mentioned with the Housing Revenue Account report.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing confirmed it had not been forgotten and she would discuss this with officers and report back to the Executive with the information.

Resolved that the Executive: -

- a) Noted the impact of COVID on the Council's cost and income during 2020/21 financial year.
- b) Noted the reported General Fund Revenue Budget underspend of £1.25m in 2020/21 and the General Reserves Balance of £7.915m as at 31 March 2021.
- c) Noted the S151 had approved General Fund Revenue Budget carry forwards totalling £1,139,360 as detailed in Appendix A.
- d) Approved an additional General Fund Revenue Budget carry forward of £939,940 for items greater than £150,000 as detailed in Section 8.
- e) Approved a supplementary budget of £806,000 for the 2021/22 General Fund Revenue budget funded from general reserves as detailed in Section 9.
- f) Noted the reported Housing Revenue Account Budget overspend of £15k in 2020/21 and the HRA General Reserves Balance of £2.8m as at 31 March 2021.
- g) Noted the Capital Outturn position.
- h) Approved the proposed carry forward of £41.6m approved budget to 2021/22 General Fund Capital Programme (as per Appendix C) and the £125.3m HRA Capital Programme for the MTFP period (as per Appendix E).
- i) Approved the retrospective inclusion of £3,789,053 Budget in the 2020/21 Capital Programme funded with matching grant income for the Watchet East Quay Development, as SWTC was the accountable body for the Coastal Communities Fund grant allocated to this scheme which commenced in previous years, noting there was no net cost to the Council.
- j) Noted the Capital Programme schedule identifying the schemes and overview profile providing the basis for future performance monitoring (as per Appendix E).

26. **Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2022/23**

During the discussion, the following points were raised: -

- Councillors supported the Strategy and the work carried out by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources.
- The Chair of Corporate Scrutiny highlighted the points raised by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and that they were aware of the imminent decision to be announced of the formation of a Unitary Authority but that SWT still needed to carry on.

Resolved that the Executive: -

- 1) Approved the Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2022/23.
- 2) Recommended Council approved the revisions to the Budget and planned reserve transfers in 2021/22 as set out in Table 1 and Appendix A.

27. **Future of Flook House, Belvedere Road**

During the discussion, the following points were raised: -

- Councillors were pleased that the consensus of the Working Group was to keep the building and develop the house and surrounding area.
- Councillors queried whether officers had looked at options for an interim use.
The Assistant Director for Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management advised that the Working Group would meet again to discuss what the building could be used for in the interim.
- Councillors thanked the tenants for defending the building.
- Councillors queried how many tenants were in Flook House and what was the length of their tenancies.
The Assistant Director for Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management advised that there were no protected tenancies remaining and that there were no break clauses included.
- Councillors gave some background information from the Working Group and the options that had been discussed.
- Councillors advised that the building could be offered to a Housing Association or charity to set up a Foyer scheme.
- Concern was raised that the report did not include much detail and only included high level options to retain the building.
The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development (Chair of the Working Group) thanked all for their comments and advised that the project was still in the early stages and that he wanted to secure a budget first before discussing any of the finer details.
- Councillors queried whether the Working Group had sight of the schedule of repairs for the building.
The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development (Chair of the Working Group) advised that the Working Group could not look at the design phase yet as they would have had to go through the procurement process to engage with an architect, which would take time and hold up the initial stage of the project. He advised that a condition survey would be required as part of the process and that the report included information on the debate and options discussed by the Working Group.
- Councillors queried how the decision on the Unitary Authority would impact on the work.
The Assistant Director for Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management advised that the work would still carry on until the New Authority was created.

Resolved that Executive agreed: -

- 1) To retain Flook House for its historical interest and potential future social value.
- 2) To establish a new project as part of the business planning process for 2022/23. Taking forward the feasibility works for potential development of the area including the retention of Flook House as part of the longer-term solution.
- 3) That a new budget of £125,000 was established as part of the business planning process for 2022/23 to provide project management resource, engage architects, and the other necessary specialists to produce a costed business case.

- 4) That the Member Working Group continued to support the project and Portfolio Holder, if 2.2 and 2.3 were approved.

(The Meeting ended at 7.40 pm)