

SWT Executive - 15 September 2021

- Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Chris Booth, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis, Ross Henley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Andrew Sully
- Officers: James Hasset, James Barra, Alison North, Paul Fitzgerald, Marcus Prouse, Amy Tregellas, Clare Rendell, Simon Fox, Kerry Prisco, Malcolm Riches and Richard Sealy
- Also Present: Councillors Simon Coles, Roger Habgood, Janet Lloyd, Ray Tully and Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

36. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Marcus Kravis and Derek Perry.

37. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 18 August 2021 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 18 August 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

38. 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 M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke

39. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

40. **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.

41. **Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 1 2021/22**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources for the report.
- Councillors were pleased that there were mainly positive outcomes detailed within the report.
- Concern was raised on the call waiting times; however, councillors were aware that there had been certain contributing factors to the delay in calls being answered.
The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources explained the reasons behind certain spikes in call waiting times. He congratulated the work that Customer Advisors had done and had empathy for them especially when dealing with difficult calls whilst working at home.
- Councillors suggested that there had not been enough publicity to advise customers that the offices were now open, which would allow them to come in and speak to a Customer Advisor face to face, rather than waiting for a phone call to be answered.
- Councillors highlighted the impact the Covid Pandemic had had on the performance figures and that they needed to be aware of the impact that it would have on the budget.
- Councillors agreed it was good to see lots of green indicators within the report and that there had been improvements, but they did not want to become complacent and suggested challenges needed to be set to further improve service delivery.
- Councillors agreed that it was disappointing to see the cases of fly tipping had increased, but they understood that it was probably as a result of the increased amount of missed waste collections due to the current lorry driver shortages.
- Councillors agreed that corporate performance was an important subject and that it was good to see that services had continued to be delivered throughout the Covid Pandemic.

Resolved the Executive considered the performance report.

42. **2021/22 General Fund Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 1 (30 June 2021)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Concern was raised that the reserves had to be used to back fill the lost car park income and councillors queried whether this could be reclaimed from Central Government.
The Management Accounting and Reporting Lead advised that yes some of the lost income had been claimed back, however, not all of it could be, which meant that some of the reserves had to be used.
- Councillors highlighted that Somerset West and Taunton Council had faced so many challenges since its creation back in 2019, that it was great work to see a paper that was able to report some positive outcomes.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- a) reviewed and noted the Council's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2021/22 financial year as at 30 June 2021.
- b) supported the transfer of £1.145m from the Budget Volatility and Risk Earmarked Reserve to contribute towards the estimated shortfall in parking income.
- c) approved a budget virement to realign Capital Budgets funded by Better Care Fund grant income.

43. **2021/22 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 1 (30 June 2021)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors highlighted that it was a challenging time for the construction industry, as many other sectors, it was facing hardship because of the Covid Pandemic.
The Portfolio Holder for Housing agreed, and shared the councillors concern as to whether the sector would ever fully recover.
- Councillors were sad to see the loss in income due to the meeting halls still being closed. They further queried when they would reopen for community use.
The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that officers had made the decision to keep the meeting halls closed for the safety of all that used them. There was a rolling program planned to reopen them once they had all been deep cleaned and all the safety checks had been carried out.
- Councillors highlighted that compliance works were one of the biggest overspends and queried whether it would continue to cause a spend or whether it would level off as the works were completed.
The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that compliance works would continue to cause a spend because as soon as one compliance project was finished, another would start, so it was a rolling program to ensure the Council's properties were safe.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 reviewed and noted the HRA's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2021/22 financial year as at 30 June 2021.

- 2.2 recommended that Full Council approved the reallocation of £869k of earmarked reserves to general reserves to support the Revenue Budget. [Note – this recommendation would be included in summary in the Financial Strategy report to Council 5 October 2021]
- 2.3 agreed in principle that the final pay award would be funded from General Reserves, and delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Communities and the S151 Officer to approve a supplementary budget funded from HRA general reserve to cover the 2021/22 estimated cost of the 2021/22 pay award once agreed.

44. **Monkton Heathfield: SS1 Policy Area and MH2 Concept Plan and Design Principles**

During the discussion, the following points were made:-

- Councillors were surprised to see that the Masterplan would not be adopted but understood the reasons behind the decision and that it had also gone out to public consultation for feedback.
The Major Projects Officer advised that when drafting the recommendations, he had been careful not to place Somerset West and Taunton Council in a negative position.
- Councillors wanted assurance that officers had the ‘tools’ to ensure that developers adhered to certain standards for any works carried out.
The Major Projects Officer advised that officers had many other documentation to assist and guide developers, which included the District Design Guide along with the Garden Town Design Guide.
- Concern was raised on changes made by the developers near the end of phase one which were different to what the developers originally planned for. Councillors wanted to ensure that any changes developers made would not have a negative impact on any development.
The Major Projects Officer gave clarification on the different factors that could impact on developers and their original planning obligations.
- Councillors queried whether ecological standards could be added to planning documentation, such as the Garden Town Design Guide.
The Major Projects Officer advised that ecological standards could be discussed and added to documentation, however, decisions would need to be made on which areas of development were a priority, for example, education, transport, ecology.
- Concern was raised that the district centre was still empty in the phase one area and councillors queried whether this was a risk for the phase two area.
The Major Projects Officer agreed that it was a key issue. He further explained that most housing developers were not necessarily experts in developing a district centre, but they normally worked with partners to fulfil that obligation. There were mechanisms in place, but officers could not force businesses to set up in an area designated for a district centre.
- Councillors were keen to ensure zero carbon methods of construction were used throughout the district.
- Councillors felt confident that officers had the correct framework in place to guide developers to the level of standards and quality that was expected of them and would be adhered to across the whole of the district.

- The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation thanked officers for their work and for the comments made by councillors. He agreed that work always needed to be reviewed to ensure the best work was achieved.

Resolved that the Executive agreed having taken into account the comments received to the consultation and in the light of national guidance, that the Council did not proceed to adopt the SS1 Policy area Framework Plan, the draft MH2 Concept Plan and the draft MH2 Design Guidance as a material planning consideration in the determination of planning proposals.

45. **Monkton Heathfield: Land South of Manor Farm, Langaller – Masterplan and Development Guide**

Agenda item 10 was discussed jointly with agenda item 9, please see minutes as above.

Resolved that the Executive approved having reassessed the situation and taken into account the comments received to the consultation and in the light of national guidance, that the Council did not proceed to formally approve the Masterplan and Development Guide to inform pre-application discussions.

(The Meeting ended at 7.30 pm)