

SWT Full Council - 24 February 2022

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Chris Booth, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Tom Deakin, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Nicole Hawkins, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, Dawn Johnson, Marcus Kravis, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Andy Milne, Derek Perry, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: Emily Collacott, Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Jo Comer, Marcus Prouse and Clare Rendell

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

90. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors M Blaker, H Davies, B Hall, J Hunt, M Lithgow, C Morgan, S Nicholls, C Palmer, M Peters, A Pritchard, N Thwaites and T Venner.

91. 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 L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Barr	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Milne	All Items	Porlock	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & 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 V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Councillor M Kravis further declared a pecuniary interest on agenda item 11, Commercial Investment/Asset Management Strategies. He had owned a piece of land mentioned within the report and would leave the meeting for that item.

92. **Public Participation - To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions, statements or petitions from the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 14,15 and 16**

Mr Roger House submitted questions on agenda item 7, General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Estimates 2022-23:-

In April 2019 alongside the reorganisation to form a new Dorset Unitary Council a new town council for Weymouth was set up with the election of 29 new councillors in May 2019.

The outgoing Weymouth and Portland Borough Council meeting report of the 22nd of February 2018 (14 months before inauguration, just like us today) includes details of the Community Governance Review outlining the new town council and in a financial section a budgeted amount of £200k to set this up. Council reports show six months before the inauguration of the Town Council an advance appointment of Jane Biscombe as the acting Town Clerk and Financial Officer.

She supported the Shadow Town Council with regards the package of assets and duties to be transferred from Dorset Council including a full budget disaggregation exercise, so the money follows the function. There was a transfer of twenty-one staff, to form the Councils own in-house greenspace's maintenance team.

Our Taunton unparished area, in numbers of elector's terms, is three quarters that of Weymouth. We still need to be bold in forming our new parish body (or bodies) by including all advance costs for a similar acting parish clerk position. I think this must be funded by the SWT Council, so please in addition to the One Somerset Unitary Reorganisation Costs, can this cost also be included?

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources thanked Mr House for his questions and advised that a written response would be provided.

93. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

The Chair of the Council made the following announcements:-

- She wished Councillor Roger Habgood a happy birthday.
- The Chair welcomed the newest elected councillor, Nicole Hawkins, to Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- She advised Full Council about the Male Voice Choir Concert taking place on 9 April 2022.

94. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:-

- She thanked all the staff for their hard work helping local residents through the recent storms, Eunice and Franklin.
- The Leader highlighted the atrocities occurring in Ukraine and asked Full Council to take a moment to think about how fortunate we were in the United Kingdom.

95. **To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

No questions were received in relation to Council Procedure Rule 13.

General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Estimates 2022-23

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors welcomed the budget report.
- Councillors thanked officers for their hard work on producing the budget report.
- Councillors queried why there had been changes in the report since it had gone to Corporate Scrutiny for debate, including the addition of the budget book.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources advised that the budget book was only in draft format when the report had gone to Corporate Scrutiny and further clarified that the information included in the report had been updated due to changes received during the budget process.

- The Leader of the Conservative Group spoke on behalf of his members and agreed that the budget did pass muster, however, he was concerned that it was being politically driven and that it was not prudent or sustainable.
- Concern was raised that a one-year budget had been produced which passed the buck to the Unitary Council.
- Councillors were pleased to see that services had been protected within the budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services thanked councillors for their comments and was pleased that money was still being invested in assets, climate change, street scene, open spaces, the crematorium and housing projects, to name but a few.

- Concern was raised that the climate change projects were only given a one-off allocation and had not been included within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources advised that as part of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan, officers would be in a substantive part of the council and therefore would be transferred over to the New Council along with the other officers, the budget had only been set for one year, as the New Council would be responsible for setting the budget post vesting day on 1 April 2023.

- Councillors requested clarification on the precept set for the Unparished Area of Taunton.

Clarification was given.

- The Leader of the Council was pleased to second the budget report. She had first entered into politics to make a difference to the local community which she believed the budget would deliver. She also believed that the budget was sustainable and left a lasting legacy budget for the residents of Somerset West and Taunton.

In accordance with Standing Order 18(2)(i), the Chair called for a recorded vote to be taken and recorded in the Minutes.

The recommendations, which are detailed below, were put and **CARRIED** with thirty-six for and ten abstaining:

Resolved that Full Council:-

2.1 Approved the Revenue Budget, Council Tax Rate and Capital Programme for 2022/23 and Supplementary Budget in 2021/22 including:

- a) Draft Revenue Net Budget of £17.018m for 2022/23.
- b) The basic Somerset West and Taunton Band D Council Tax rate of £174.63 for 2022/23.
- c) General Fund 2022/23 Capital Programme additions totalling £1.896m and 2022/23 Capital Programme Revisions of -£0.181m for previously approved schemes for 2022/23, as set out in Table 18.
- d) A Supplementary Budget in 2021/22 of £1m for additional capital debt repayment funded from General Reserves.
- e) The release of the £2.4m 2021/22 Budget Volatility and Risk Reserve with £0.4m transferred to General Reserves and £2m to fund a supplementary increase in the Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay budget in order to finance capital expenditure in 2021/22.
- f) £570k was transferred from the 2021/22 budget to the Capital Financing Reserve to fund the increase to the Car Park Improvement Project capital budget in 2022/23.

2.2 Delegated authority to the S151 Officer to approve the CIL capital grants budgets to reflect in-year CIL capital receipts passed to town and parishes in line with the CIL policy.

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors I Aldridge, B Allen, L Baker, C Booth, S Coles, D Darch, T Deakin, K Durdan, C Ellis, H Farbahi, E Firmin, A Govier, S Griffiths, J Hassall, N Hawkins, R Henley, M Hill, D Johnson, M Kravis, R Lees, S Lees, L Lisgo, J Lloyd, D Mansell, D Perry, H Prior-Sankey, M Rigby, F Smith, F Smith-Roberts, A Sully, R Tully, S Wakefield, B Weston, K Wheatley, L Whetlor and G Wren.

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting: Councillors M Barr, S Buller, N Cavill, D Durdan, R Habgood, A Hadley, A Milne, S Pugsley, V Stock-Williams and A Trollope-Bellew.

97. **Council Tax Setting 2022/23**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor N Cavill left the room.
- The Leader of the Council was happy to second the report and wanted to remind residents that although they paid their council tax to the district council, that it was distributed to other local authorities and that the district council only kept a small amount of the payment amount.

In accordance with Standing Order 18(2)(i), the Chair called for a recorded vote to be taken and recorded in the Minutes.

The recommendations, which are detailed below, were put and were **CARRIED** with forty-five councillors voting in favour:-

Resolved that Full Council:-

- 2.1 Approved the formal Council Tax Resolution in Appendix A.
 2.2 Noted that if the formal Council Tax Resolution at Appendix A was approved, the total Band D Council Tax would be:

	2021/22	2022/23	Increase
	£		%
Somerset West and Taunton Council	169.63	174.63	2.95
Somerset County Council	1,201.97	1,228.90	2.99
Somerset County Council – Social Care	151.56	165.10	
Police and Crime Commissioner	241.20	251.20	4.15
Devon and Somerset Fire Authority	90.00	91.79	1.99
Sub-Total	1,854.36	1,911.62	3.09
Town and Parish Council (average)	45.35	47.79	5.38
Total	1,899.71	1,959.41	

- 2.3 Delegated authority to the Council Leader to approve a revised tax resolution if there were any amendments to preceptor demand notifications following this meeting.

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors I Aldridge, B Allen, L Baker, M Barr, C Booth, S Buller, S Coles, D Darch, T Deakin, D Durdan, K Durdan, C Ellis, H Farbahi, E Firmin, A Govier, S Griffiths, R Habgood, A Hadley, J Hassall, N Hawkins, R Henley, M Hill, D Johnson, M Kravis, R Lees, S Lees, L Lisgo, J Lloyd, D Mansell, A Milne, D Perry, H Prior-Sankey, S Pugsley, M Rigby, F Smith, F Smith-Roberts, V Stock-Williams, A Sully, A Trollope-Bellew, R Tully, S Wakefield, B Weston, K Wheatley, L Whetlor and G Wren.

98. **Business Rates Pooling - Urgent Leader Decision October 2021**

Resolved that Full Council noted the report.

Councillor N Cavill returned to the room.

99. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public (appendices only)**

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (agenda item 11, appendices only) on the grounds that it 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).

100. **Commercial Investment/Asset Management Strategies**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor M Kravis left the meeting.
- The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services thanked officers for all their expertise and the hard work involved in producing the report.
- Councillors welcomed the income produced by the Strategy. However, they were disappointed to be put in the position of relying on commercial investment to be able to provide local services for the community due to lack of funding received from Central Government.
- Councillors were keen to see more investment in the local area but understood that it might not raise the same level of income.
- Concern was raised on the volatility of income streams.
- Councillors K Durdan and A Govier left the meeting.
- Councillors were pleased to see that great care had been given when the investment properties had been chosen.
- Councillor K Durdan returned to the room.

Resolved that Full Council:-

2.1 Supported the following recommendations: -

- a) Noted the six-monthly update information.
- b) Adoption of the revised Commercial Investment Strategy at Appendix 2.
- c) Adopted the Asset Management Strategy as an interim document pending transition to a Unitary authority (Appendix 3)

(The Meeting ended at 7.25 pm)