



Minutes of a Meeting of the Full Council held in the Hollinsworth Hall, Canalside Conference Centre, Marsh Lane, Huntworth, Bridgwater TA6 6LQ, on Thursday, 26 September 2024 at 1.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Mike Best (Chair)

Cllr Lee Baker (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Steve Ashton

Cllr Marcus Barr

Cllr Alan Bradford

Cllr Simon Carswell

Cllr Nicola Clark

Cllr Barry Clarke

Cllr Simon Coles

Cllr John Cook-Woodman

Cllr Adam Dance

Cllr Hugh Davies

Cllr Martin Dimery

Cllr Michael Dunk

Cllr Caroline Ellis

Cllr Ben Ferguson

Cllr David Fothergill

Cllr Tony Grimes

Cllr Pauline Ham

Cllr Susannah Hart

Cllr Bente Height

Cllr Ross Henley

Cllr Henry Hobhouse

Cllr Dawn Johnson

Cllr Val Keitch

Cllr Tim Kerley

Cllr Liz Leyshon

Cllr Martin Lovell

Cllr Matthew Martin

Cllr Harry Munt

Cllr Mike Murphy

Cllr Oliver Patrick

Cllr Derek Perry

Cllr Tom Power

Cllr Steven Pugsley

Cllr Wes Read

Cllr Mike Rigby

Cllr Diogo Rodrigues

Cllr Peter Seib

Cllr Suria Aujla

Cllr Brian Bolt

Cllr Theo Butt Philip

Cllr Norman Cavill

Cllr Mandy Chilcott

Cllr Peter Clayton

Cllr Shane Collins

Cllr Nick Cottle

Cllr Dixie Darch

Cllr Tom Deakin

Cllr Andy Dingwall

Cllr Sarah Dyke

Cllr Habib Farbahi

Cllr Bob Filmer

Cllr Andrew Govier

Cllr Andy Hadley

Cllr Philip Ham

Cllr Mark Healey

Cllr Alistair Hendry

Cllr Edric Hobbs

Cllr John Hunt

Cllr Helen Kay

Cllr Andy Kendall

Cllr Christine Lawrence

Cllr Tony Lock

Cllr Dave Mansell

Cllr Kevin Messenger

Cllr Tessa Munt

Cllr Stephen Page

Cllr Emily Pearlstone

Cllr Evie Potts-Jones

Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey

Cllr Faye Purbrick

Cllr Bill Revans

Cllr Tony Robbins

Cllr Jo Roundell Greene

Cllr Heather Shearer

Cllr Brian Smedley
 Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts
 Cllr Andy Soughton
 Cllr Andy Sully
 Cllr Sarah Wakefield
 Cllr Richard Wilkins
 Cllr Rosemary Woods
 Cllr Ros Wyke

Cllr Fran Smith
 Cllr Jeny Snell
 Cllr Claire Sully
 Cllr Lucy Trimnell
 Cllr Martin Wale
 Cllr David Woan
 Cllr Gwil Wren

33 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Councillors John Bailey, Jason Baker, Adam Boyden, Hilary Bruce, Mike Caswell, Dawn Denton, Lance Duddridge, Mike Hewitson, Jenny Kenton, Marcus Kravis, Graham Oakes, Sue Osborne, Kathy Pearce, Leigh Redman, Rob Reed, Gill Slocombe and Mike Stanton.

Although apologies had been received, Councillors Adam Boyden, Marcus Kravis, Sue Osborne and Leigh Redman attended the meeting online.

34 Minutes from the previous meeting - Agenda Item 2

Resolved that the minutes of Full Council held on 17 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

35 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

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

SOMERSET COUNCILLOR	CITY, TOWN AND/OR PARISH COUNCIL
Steve Ashton	Crewkerne Town Council / Hinton St George Parish Council / West and Middle Chinnock Parish Council
Suria Aujla	Bridgwater Town Council
Lee Baker	Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council
Marcus Barr	Wellington Town Council
Mike Best	Crewkerne Town Council
Alan Bradford	North Petherton Town Council
Theo Butt Philip	Wells City Council
Simon Carswell	Street Parish Council
Norman Cavill	West Monkton Parish Council
Peter Clayton	Burnham Highbridge Town Council
Nick Cottle	Glastonbury Town Council / St Edmunds Parish Council
Adam Dance	South Petherton Parish Council

Tom Deakin	Taunton Town Council
Andy Dingwall	Westonzoyland Parish Council
Caroline Ellis	Taunton Town Council
Ben Ferguson	Axbridge Town Council
Bob Filmer	Brent Knoll Parish Council
Andrew Govier	Wellington Town Council
Pauline Ham	Axbridge Town Council
Philip Ham	Coleford Parish Council
Alastair Hendry	Burnham on Sea and Highbridge Town Council
Ross Henley	Wellington Town Council
Edric Hobbs	Shepton Mallet Town Council
John Hunt	Bishop's Hull Parish Council
Val Keitch	Iminster Town Council
Andy Kendall	Yeovil Town Council
Tim Kerley	Somerton Town Council
Tony Lock	Yeovil Town Council
Martin Lovell	Shepton Mallet Town Council
Mike Murphy	Burnham Highbridge Town Council
Evie Potts-Jones	Yeovil Town Council
Tom Power	Wincanton Town Council
Wes Read	Yeovil Town Council
Mike Rigby	Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council
Tony Robbins	Wells City Council
Diogo Rodrigues	Bridgwater Town Council
Peter Seib	Brympton Parish Council / Chilthorne Domer Parish Council
Heather Shearer	Street Parish Council
Brian Smedley	Bridgwater Town Council
Federica Smith-Roberts	Taunton Town Council
Jeny Snell	Yeovil Town Council / Brympton Parish Council
Andy Soughton	Yeovil Town Council
Richard Wilkins	Curry Rivel Parish Council
Dave Woan	Yeovil Town Council
Ros Wyke	Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council

36 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

Public questions were received from:-

- Keith Elliot – Somerset Strategic Drug and Alcohol Partnership
- Brian Clarke – Transport

- David Redgewell – Transport
- Nigel Behan – Motion on Winter Fuel Allowance and Bus Services
- Amy Frend – Petition on A361 East Lyng Speed Limit

The questions and responses provided are attached to the minutes in Annex A.

The Council debated the Petition on the A361 East Lyng Speed Limit and the following points were raised:-

- The Lead Member for Transport and Waste Services highlighted the following as part of his response to the Petition Organiser:-
- Somerset Traffic Engineering Officers met with Unitary Councillors, representatives of East Lyng Parish Council and residents of Hill View Terrace in July 2023, where several issues were raised and actions agreed upon. These works would be completed in this financial year and included:
 - To replace two ‘no pedestrian’ warning signposts with taller ones;
 - Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs);
 - Warning signs to go back on the posts;
 - Lining improvements to include refreshing white edge lining through the village;
 - Additional 30mph roundels on the road;
 - Refreshing yellow bar markings on the entrance to the speed limit;
 - Enhanced entry treatment with white hatched markings; and
 - 40mph buffer zone beyond Hill View Terrace.
- Councillors were glad to see actions being taken by the Highways Department.
- Councillors praised the Petition Organiser for obtaining so many signatures in support of the petition.
- Councillors recognised that the area fell within a residential area and that a 30mph could be implemented.
- Local Councillors highlighted that they had attended many of the Parish Council meetings, so were aware of the issues faced along the A361.
- Local Councillors who lived near East Lyng urged the Lead Member to implement a lower speed limit due to the saddening news of the accidents that have occurred along that stretch of road.
- Councillors highlighted their own experiences of using the A361.
- Councillors spoke about the previous measures taken along the road and queried how could the Council take the ‘lessons learnt’ forward to improve the situation.
- Councillors highlighted that the SIDs seemed to be effective and queried whether there was a policy for how they could be implemented across the county.

The Lead Member for Transport and Waste Services thanked all the councillors for their comments and the Petition Organiser for bringing the petition to the attention of Full Council. He hoped that the suggested amendments would help improve the situation.

37 Chair's Announcements - Agenda Item 5

The Chair of Council, Councillor Mike Best, referred to the events detailed on the

Chair's Information Sheet, circulated and published with the agenda.

Council observed a minute's silence in memory of former South Somerset District Councillor Ray Buckler. Councillors paid tribute to him at the meeting, including Councillors Val Keitch, Sue Osborne, Peter Seib and David Woan.

The Chair of Council also thanked Steve Taylor and Angela Cox from the Democratic Services Team, for their support and years of service to the Council and wished them well with their future endeavours.

38 Council Restructure Update - Agenda Item 6

The Chief Executive, Duncan Sharkey, introduced the report which detailed information on the new structure for the Council's Senior Leadership Team. The report also detailed the interim arrangements for the statutory role of the Monitoring Officer as a result of the dismissal by reason of redundancy of the Service Director for Legal, Governance and Democratic Services.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were saddened to see officers leaving the Council and thanked them for all their hard work over the years.
- Councillors raised concern that the Council would be left vulnerable during the process of the restructure as both the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer were being covered by interim positions.
- Councillors requested regular updates on the financial position of the Transformation Programme throughout the project.
The Chief Executive advised councillors that the overall cost would be known in the upcoming months once the structure had gone through the HR process. He was happy to take regular update reports via the Audit Committee for councillors to monitor the budget.

Councillor Bill Revans proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Liz Leyshon.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- 2.1 Note the new structure for the Council's senior leadership team as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 Approve the dismissal by reason of redundancy of the Service Director Legal, Governance and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) as per the recommendation of the Special Members Panel and delegate authority to the Chief Executive to agree the final date of dismissal and the final redundancy payment (in line with contractual entitlements).
- 2.3 With effect from the date of dismissal by reason of redundancy of the Service Director Legal, Governance and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer), Council appointed and designated Alyn Jones, Executive Director – Resources, Strategy and Transformation as the Council's Monitoring Officer on an interim basis until the appointment of a permanent Monitoring Officer.
- 2.4 Approve the redundancy costs for the posts as set out in Appendix B, as Full Council approval was required for costs that exceeded £100,000 and delegated authority to the Chief Executive to agree the final date of dismissal and the final redundancy packages, noting that such settlements would not

exceed contractual redundancy pay or the payment required under statute to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

39 Council Size Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission for England - Agenda Item 7

The Chair of the Constitution and Governance Committee, Councillor Ross Henley, introduced the report which detailed the rationale and proposed number of councillors for the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Leader of the Council thanked the Constitution and Governance Committee and supporting officers for the work carried out on the submission which had received cross party consensus.
- Councillors raised concern on the proposed numbers, as it would mean an increased workload due to the size of the county.
- Councillors highlighted the next part of the review would be more challenging as it would include work on mapping of the areas.

Councillor Bill Revans proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor David Fothergill.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to agree the proposed Council Size submission to the LGBCE, as endorsed and recommended by the Constitution and Governance Committee.

40 Proposed changes to the Constitution - Agenda Item 8

40a Revisions to I6 - Contract Procedure Rules

The Chair of the Constitution and Governance Committee, Councillor Ross Henley, introduced the report which detailed the recent updates made to Part I6 of the Constitution as a result of a review to reflect the recent legislative changes and improvements to processes.

During the discussion, the following point was made:-

- Councillors requested that local businesses were still included in the process.
The Strategic Manager for Procurement and Financial Governance advised that they could include thresholds for the areas and that it was a recommendation put forward by the Constitution and Governance Committee and had been added to the report.

Councillor Ross Henley proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Tim Kerley.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to approve that the Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders were adopted into the Council's Constitution as replacement for the current Section I6 with effect from the date that the Procurement Act 2023 was live – currently 24th February 2025.

40b **Revisions to I1 - Senior Management Structure, I2 - Scheme of Delegations and I3 - Statutory and Proper Officers**

The Chief Executive, Duncan Sharkey, introduced the report which detailed updates made to Parts I1, I2 and I3 of the Constitution as a result of the recent changes made to the Senior Leadership Team.

Councillor Ross Henley proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Tim Kerley.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- 1) Approve the proposed changes to Part I1-Senior Management Structure (see Appendix A).
- 2) Approve the proposed changes to Part I2 – Officer Scheme of Delegation set out in Appendix B2.
- 3) Approve the proposed changes to Part I3-Statutory and Proper Officers; and
- 4) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary changes to the Constitution.

41 Proposed changes to Committee Appointments - Agenda Item 9

The Head of Governance and Democratic Services, Scott Wooldridge, introduced the report which detailed some recent changes to committee compositions and the proposed appointments of co-opted members to the Harbour Management Advisory Committee, Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee for Adults and Health and an employer's representative to the Pension Fund Board.

Councillor Bill Revans proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor David Fothergill.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- i. Approve the following appointments as co-opted members on the Harbour Management Advisory Committee:
 - Neil Adams
 - Nick Dunsby
 - Stuart Scorgie
 - Richard Parsons
- ii. Approve the appointment of Councillor Claire Sully as the Vice-Chair of Scrutiny Committee – Adults and Health.
- iii. Approve the appointment of Alison Wyatt as an employer's representative on the Pension Fund Board.

*The meeting adjourned at 2.25pm.
The meeting restarted at 2.55pm.*

42 Motion - Agenda Item 10

Councillor David Fothergill introduced the Motion which requested the Council to

consider changes being made to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting Somerset pensioners from fuel poverty.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor David Fothergill, as the proposer, introduced the Motion and detailed an amendment that had been put forward by Councillor Sarah Wakefield and Councillor Bill Revans which included some drafting amendments to the recommendations, which the proposer and seconder of the Motion had accepted, so therefore became part of the substantive Motion.
- Councillor John Hunt, as the seconder, highlighted that he believed the Government had made the wrong decision to remove the winter fuel payments and that he had been contacted by many of his local residents who had raised concern on how they would afford fuel during the winter months.
- Councillors raised concern on the total withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance scheme.
- Councillors agreed that Somerset Council needed to take action and show their support for their local residents who had been impacted by this decision.
- Councillors highlighted the impact it would have on the customer and support services of the Council.
- Councillors highlighted the different support and benefits customers could claim for during the winter.
- Councillors raised concern on the most vulnerable residents, who might not realise what support they could claim for.
- Councillors raised concern on the increased 'pull' on the support provided by the Hardship Fund and the impact on the Charity Sector.
- Councillors agreed that the Motion called for some practical steps to be taken.
- Councillors raised concern on residents who lived in rural areas, as they would be impacted more by the removal of the winter fuel payments.

Councillor David Fothergill proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor John Hunt.

Councillor David Fothergill called for a recorded vote to ensure transparency, which was supported by at 15% of members.

The results were 87 FOR the recommendations and 3 ABSTAINED.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- Send a letter from Councillor Bill Revans, Council Leader, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, calling on the Government to postpone cutting the Winter Fuel Allowance and for an impact assessment to be undertaken.
- Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Somerset were supported in claiming their entitlement.

- Work with our Voluntary Charity Faith and Social Enterprise (VCSFE) partners to ensure that a substantial proportion of the Household Support Fund available from 1st October 2024 until 31st March 2025 was spent, awarded and utilised to help people in Somerset who were struggling with fuel poverty.

43 Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board - Agenda Item 11

The Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, Councillor Leigh Redman, introduced the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Lead member for Children, Families and Education thanked all councillors and officers involved in the Board and stressed the importance that all councillors were corporate parents in their roles.
- Councillors thanked Jane Lock for her work as the previous Chair of the Board.
- Councillors raised concern on the increased figures reported on the dashboard for young people not in education, employment or training and requested a detailed breakdown be provided.

Councillor Heather Shearer proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Andy Hadley.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Continue focus on an expanded corporate parenting responsibility following the recommendations of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) in May 2024 – see Background Papers.
2. Support and promote a whole council approach to create practical and specific offers following the decision to view Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic
3. Extend its thanks to the Somerset Care Council's young people for all the hard work that they had undertaken.

44 Annual Report of the Armed Forces Covenant - Agenda Item 12

The Somerset Armed Forces Member Champion, Councillor Henry Hobhouse, introduced the annual report of the Armed Forces Covenant.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors highlighted the importance of the work carried out to support the veterans who lived and worked within Somerset.
- Councillors urged officers to ensure that the armed forces were incorporated in all the work of the Council.

The Council noted the report.

45 Report of the Scrutiny Committees - Agenda Item 13

The Chairs of Somerset Council's Scrutiny Committees, Councillor Leigh Redman, Councillor Gwil Wren, Councillor Bob Filmer and Councillor Martin Dimery,

introduced each of their reports, which detailed the activity of each of the five Scrutiny Committees since the previous meeting of Full Council.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Chair of each Scrutiny Committee thanked councillors and officers for their involvement in each of the committees.
- The Chair of each Scrutiny Committee agreed that the report did not stress the detail and the workload of each committee and they encouraged all councillors to attend the meetings.

The Council noted the report.

46 Annual Report of the Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and, Equalities and Diversity - Agenda Item 14

The Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity, Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts, introduced her annual report.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor thanked the Lead Member for all her work in the area and they enjoyed her update report.
- Councillors from the east of the county raised concern on the lack of funding for the arts sector.
The Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity advised councillors that there was a recent funding application which they would hopefully be able to use in the east of the area.
- Councillors requested an update on the Octagon Theatre project.
The Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity gave an update on the timeline for the Octagon Theatre and that they were working with the Arts Council.
- Councillors raised concern on the Octagon Theatre lying empty during the winter months and the possible damage that might be incurred.
- Councillors queried section 2.15 of the report which stated that they had secured three funding deals for Shepton Mallet, Priorswood, and Ilminster libraries worth £28.5K per annum from the Parish or Town Council and whether this was new funding or had it been extended.
- Councillors requested that Bridgwater was added to the report as an Arts and Culture Hub.
- Councillors requested an update on the outstanding grant and the timeline for works on Westlands.
The Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity advised there was no timeline and that they were waiting for Government to provide an update.
- Councillors praised the Lead Member for the work carried out on the Devolution Project and that they urged the Lead Member to maintain the momentum of the works being carried out.
- Councillors raised concern on the call waiting and handling times and the complaints that had been received. They further requested that an update report on the analysis of those complaints be brought to a Scrutiny

Committee.

The Council noted the report.

47 Summary of key decisions taken since the last Full Council meeting - Agenda Item 15

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bill Revans, introduced the report which included a summary of the key decisions taken by the Leader and Executive between 5 July and 13 September 2024.

The Council noted the report.

48 Questions from Councillors to the Executive - Agenda Item 16

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Mike Best, invited questions from councillors for the Leader and the Executive.

Member questions were received from:-

- Councillor Mark Healey – Planning Service and its Future
- Councillor Leigh Redman – Hinkley Point and EDF
- Councillor Susannah Hart – Glastonbury Town Deal
- Councillor Diogo Rodrigues – Planning Enforcement
- Councillor Andy Dingwall – Deane House Rationalisation Project
- Councillor David Fothergill – Culture – Brewhouse
- Councillor David Fothergill – Housing – Electrical Safety Certificates
- Councillor Gill Slocombe – Customer Contact
- Councillor Tom Deakin – Parking
- Councillor John Hunt – Car Parks
- Councillors Barry Clarke and Phillip Ham – Budget for Adult and Children’s Social Care
- Councillor Sue Osborne – Care Assessments

The questions and responses provided are attached to the minutes in Annex B.

(The meeting ended at 5.30 pm)

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CHAIR