

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Executive

Tuesday, 17 September 2024

New Council Chamber

Meeting Commenced: 3.33 pm

Meeting Concluded: 3.52 pm

Councillors:

Mike Bell (Chairperson)

Catherine Gibbons (Vice-Chairperson)

Mark Canniford

James Clayton

Jenna Ho Marris

Mike Solomon

Annemieke Waite

Roger Whitfield

Apologies: Councillor Hannah Young.

Also in attendance: Councillors Steve Bridger, Clare Hunt, Peter Burden and Oliver Ellis.

Officers in attendance: Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Hazel Brinton (Committee Services Manager) and Jenny Ford (Assistant Director for Placemaking & Growth).

EXE Addresses by Members of the Public (ESO 6)

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Martin Slade addressed the meeting on the subject of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). He noted his concerns on the impact that joining the combined authority with a regional mayor would have on local democracy and the powers which North Somerset residents may give up. He asked members to consider the disadvantages of having a regional mayor, what powers local residents would lose and whether the council would hold a referendum on joining WECA and having a mayor.

Councillor Bell thanked Mr Slade for his address and said he would respond to the points made.

EXE Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

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None declared.

**EXE
144** **Minutes**

Resolved: that the minutes of 17 July 2024 be approved as a correct record

**EXE
145** **Non-Executive Councillors' Addresses**

None.

**EXE
146** **North Somerset Council's response to Government's invitation around devolution**

Councillor Bell explained the background to the report and that local authorities without a devolution deal were required to submit a response on a proforma to express interest in accessing future devolution arrangements. The report's recommendation was in line with current administration's established policy which was to seek admission in the combined authority. He noted that it was not the only option on the table and the partnership administration had explored other opportunities. He added that the proposal was an expression of interest only at this stage.

Members asked questions on the mayoral model with Councillor Bell confirming that the response did not entail adopting a mayoral model for North Somerset but was around adopting the current model within the combined authority.

Resolved: that the Executive approved the response to the government's request around North Somerset's approach to devolution as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Reasons for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the report and discussed above

**EXE
147** **Budget Monitor 2024-25 month 3**

Councillor Bell introduced the report and brought members' attention to the report's recommendations which included recommendations around the capital programme and Household Support Fund and proposals to review the council's development sites and land disposals.

He highlighted the forecast overspend of £24m by year end largely driven by costs around adult and children's social care. He noted the work already undertaken by officers to bring the overspend under control including considering all savings options and implementing spend control panels. Further work would be undertaken to progress transformation work across directorates to deliver savings and efficiencies and maximise income. Assets and commissioning strategies would also be reviewed to deliver savings.

He added that the council had never forecasted the level of overspend this early in the financial year with the council having little control over the factors driving the in year pressures which were the cost of providing care and the demand levels.

A report would be considered by Council later that day and would highlight the changes that members and residents may expect to see in the level of services provided by the council.

Councillor Bell invited the Director of Corporate Services to comment on the report. She noted that the council found itself in a precarious financial situation and as the council's Section 151 officer she had a duty to raise her concerns over the level of risk facing the council. Unless the council could control and reduce spending to control its budget, consideration would need to be given to issuing a Section 114 notice in February 2025. All available mitigation measures would be explored to avoid intervention or the issue of a notice.

Resolved: that the Executive

- 1) Noted the revenue and capital budget forecasts for the current financial year,
- 2) Noted the actions that are being taken to allow the council to balance the budget by the end of the financial year,
- 3) Approved the changes to the revenue and capital budgets as detailed within Appendices 1 and 7 to the report
- 4) Noted that the Household Support Fund will be extended for a further 6 months covering the period October to March 2025,
- 5) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy to review options and where appropriate to approve the sale, disposal, development or transfer of council-owned land at the locations listed in paragraph 3.8 (i) and (iii) and at Grange Farm in Hutton,
- 6) Retrospectively authorised the Section 151 Officer to agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) confirming the council's acceptance of funding from the Local Authority Housing Fund as listed in paragraph 3.7.2 of the report, and to authorise the Assistant Director of Placemaking and Growth to enter into funding agreements with Registered Providers of Affordable Housing for delivery of the homes and transfer of the grant, in line with the funding conditions outlined in the MOU,
- 7) Delegated authority for the Leader of the Council and the Director of Corporate Services to approve and implement a new Household Support Fund scheme when further information has been received from the government as noted in paragraph 3.9 of the report, and to agree the associated budget virements to recognise the additional grant and associated spending.

Reasons for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

EXE 148 Medium Term Financial Plan update September 2024

Councillor Bell presented the report and noted that the pressures being felt in the current financial year would also be present in the new one. The budget gap had grown since the budget had been set initially in February 2024. The 3-year gap was now £29m and the anticipated shortfall for 2025-26 had grown to £15m. The council, its members, officers and were facing increasing challenges to be sustainable in the longer term. Members and officers were working through options to address the budget challenge for future years. Councillor Bell called for clarity from government on the future funding landscape and asked for support from the government for councils across the country including North Somerset.

Resolved: that the Executive noted

- i. The updated range of budget projections for inclusion within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as detailed within the report,
- ii. The process, next steps, engagement plans and timescales associated with finalising the MTFP for the period 2025-2028, and also for setting the revenue budget for the 2025/26 financial year.

Reasons for the decision:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the report and discussed above.

EXE 149 Forward Plan dated 2 September 2024

Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted.

EXE 150 Oral reports of Executive Councillors

None.

EXE 151 Urgent business permitted by the Local Government Act 1972 (if any)

None.

Chairperson
