

SWT Executive - 19 January 2022

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

Councillors Derek Perry, Chris Booth, Caroline Ellis, Marcus Kravis, Mike Rigby and Andrew Sully

Officers: James Barrah, Alison North, Andrew Pritchard, Paul Fitzgerald, Clare Rendell, Mickey Green, Vicky Lowman, Kerry Prisco, John Rendell, Chris Bradley and Emma Matthews

Also Present: Councillors Federica Smith-Roberts, Dixie Darch, Francesca Smith, Simon Coles, Roger Habgood, John Hassall, Dawn Johnson, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Sarah Wakefield, Brenda Weston and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

75. Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor Ross Henley.

76. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 15 December 2021 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 15 December 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

77. 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 S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington &	Personal	Spoke

		Sampford Arundel		
Cllr D Perry	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
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke

78. Public Participation

The following members of the public spoke on agenda item 9, Proposal to increase the maximum hackney carriage fares:-

Mr Robin Colclough highlighted that the previous price increase was made 11 years ago. The original proposed price increase included in the agenda was deemed to be a fair increase for the trade because the increased costs of operating a taxi business were not being met. Running costs had vastly increased over the last few years. The taxi trade could no longer cover the increased costs. Concern was raised on attracting new drivers to the join the trade.

Mr Jared Colclough highlighted the fears raised by many taxi drivers in the area. Concern was raised that the trade would die off based on the issues faced since Brexit and Covid. The taxi trade needed to be able to increase their costs to cover the ever-increasing maintenance and operating costs. He highlighted that Taunton stood out as an area that charged a low fare compared to surrounding areas.

Mr Mike Davis made the following statement:-

A1 Ace Taxis were the largest Taxi operator in the Council District. Over the last eleven years we had continually worked to become more efficient as cost prices and wages had risen. We have now reached the end of those available efficiency savings.

We were returning to pre pandemic levels of activity at 350,000 jobs per annum, having survived some lean months and were now looking to invest in electrification of the fleet and new premises. The self-employed drivers we worked with were beginning to struggle financially after eleven years on the same income. They now worked significantly more hours to make the same income. If the trade was to attract more people and replace a significantly aging workforce, fares had to rise. In real terms the rise was small in Taunton Deane. To not agree to the requested rise would mean consigning a large portion of drivers to fall further behind the living wage.

79. **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.

80. **Somerset Waste Partnership Draft Business Plan 2022-2027**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) gave a presentation on the recent changes and the business plan.
- Councillors agreed it was a good business plan and commended the work of the SWP.
- Councillors queried what the causes of missed waste were.
The Managing Director advised that there were many reasons for missed collections: different crews who were not familiar with the locations, road closures, traffic accidents, extra loads which led to incomplete rounds and confusion on collection days.
- Councillors praised the work carried out on implementing the use of electric vehicles within the fleet.
- Councillors thanked the officers at the SWP for the successful rollout of the Recycle More scheme in the area.
- Councillors requested clarification on the examples of fly tipping stated in the report.
Clarification was given.
- Concern was raised on the shortage in drivers available to work.
The Managing Director advised there were many reasons that had led to the shortage in drivers, but they were hoping to train some of the loaders as drivers to help alleviate the problem.
- Councillors queried the section in the report regarding additional bins for Village Halls.
The Managing Director advised that they wanted to install a trial scheme for additional assistance for composting within the Parishes.
- Concern was raised on the garden waste service, as there had been issues over the last 12 months.
The Managing Director advised that they would be focusing on garden waste service improvement.
- Councillors thanked the SWP for all their hard work on the waste and recycling services in the area.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Approved the draft Business Plan 2022-2027 and draft budget 2022-23 and provided feedback to the Board (see Appendix A).
- 2.2 Noted the progress in implementing Recycle More across the District.

81. **Proposal to increase the maximum hackney carriage fares**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services introduced the report and advised the Executive of an amendment to the fares included in the original report (please see attached appendix 5 to the minutes for the varied table of fares).
- Councillors agreed there needed to be an increase as the predecessor councils hadn't increased the fares for many years, which had meant that the taxi trade had to cover the costs.
- Concern was raised as councillors did not want to raise the fares too high which could negatively impact those who used the trade.
- Councillors advised that they did not want to ignore the data included in the league tables, but they believed that the increase would address those.
- Councillors thanked the taxi drivers for their public statements and how well they had put their case across.
- Councillors urged the New Council to instruct a review be carried out on the taxi fares as soon as possible to address the county-wide variation. And that regular reviews be carried out in regular intervals.
- Councillors highlighted the issues faced by the taxi drivers based in the West Somerset area.
- Councillors agreed that the varied fares would cover the increased costs.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Adopted the table of proposed fares attached at Appendix 1, with the modifications as attached in appendix 5, so that they may come into effect on the 6th of February 2022.

82. **Litter Strategy**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Agenda Items 7 and 8 were discussed together.
- Councillors were pleased with the Strategy and Enforcement reports.
- Councillors highlighted that a good strong communications message would be needed for the implementation of the Strategy.
- Councillors agreed that litter was unacceptable.
- Councillors highlighted that it was costly for the Council to clear up litter along other waste.
- Councillors queried whether the enforcement side would be working towards performance indicators or targets.
The Parking and Enforcement Specialist advised that there would be no incentives for the enforcement agents, the agents would base their work on the lessons learnt at other councils and would report back to councillors with the figures obtained throughout the trial.
- Councillors were keen to receive regular updates.
- Councillors queried whether the penalty fines could be contested.
The Parking and Enforcement Specialist advised that yes, the fines could be either paid or contested at court.

- Concern was raised on whether enforcement agents had received abuse from members of the public whilst working.
The Parking and Enforcement Specialist advised that the agents wore a body cam which often helped in certain circumstances, but they also advised that abusive behaviour would not be tolerated.
- Councillors queried whether the presence of an enforcement agent acted as a deterrent.
The Parking and Enforcement Specialist advised that their presence had an impact on activity.
- Councillors queried how many fines were not paid.
The Parking and Enforcement Specialist advised that those figures were monitored, and the justice procedure was used with success.
- Councillors suggested that work was carried out in collaboration with the fast-food companies.
- Councillors queried what working patterns the enforcement agents would be working.
The Parking and Enforcement Specialist advised that the agents working patterns covered weekdays and weekends but that they did not work overnight as it was too high risk.
- Councillors queried where the trial would be carried out.
The Parking and Enforcement Specialist advised that they were collecting data on the known local hotspots for litter and would be happy for councillors to message them with locations to assist with the trial.
- Councillors thanked the officers for all their hard work on the Strategy.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Approved and adopted the Somerset West and Taunton Litter Strategy with immediate effect. Appendix A to this report.
- 2.2 Authorised the Assistant Director for Commercial Services to carry out all actions necessary to implement the adopted strategy in consultation with the Executive Member for Environmental Services.

83. **External Enforcement - Litter**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Agenda Items 7 and 8 were discussed together.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Agreed that Somerset West and Taunton Council entered into an inter-authority agreement with East Hampshire District Council for a 12-month ethical enforcement trial.
- 2.2 Set the fixed penalty amount to be issued at £100 with a discounted option of £80 if paid within 14 days of the fixed penalty notice being issued.
- 2.3 Delegated authority to the Assistant Director – Commercial Services and S151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Environmental Services to make any changes to the arrangement, covered by this report, with East Hampshire District Council for providing a litter enforcement service.

- 2.4 Approved the expenditure of £5,900 in order to set up Somerset West and Taunton on back-office EH Commercial Services Ltd administration system, to be funded from existing budget in 2021/22.
- 2.5 Approved a one-off provision of £60,000 be included within the proposed 2022/23 budget submitted to Full Council on 24 February 2022. This included a gross income budget of £141,000 and an expenditure budget of £141,000. The one-off provision had been based on a worse case estimate to underwrite the risk of costs not being fully covered by projected income.

84. **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue and Capital Budget Setting 2022/23 including Dwelling Rent Setting 22/23, MTFP Update and 30-Year Business Plan Review**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors requested clarification on Duke Street Car Park.
Clarification was given.
- Councillors queried the recharges and whether they were broken down so they could be assessed.
The Management Accounting and Reporting Lead advised that within the budget there was money set aside, some of the recharges were for shared staff along with other costs.
- Councillors queried how confident officers were that the North Taunton Woolaway Project would be delivered on budget, especially based on the current issues that faced the construction industry.
The Director for Housing advised he was confident. He understood the key pressures and advised that they were in dialogue with the developers for the future phases to try and keep them on target. He also advised that they would use of a mixture of tenures if it was required.
- Councillors highlighted that they were anxious about the rent increase.
The Director for Housing gave advice on the hardship fund.
- Councillors thanked officers for all their hard work.

Resolved that the Executive:-

2.1 Recommended to Full Council the following proposals:

- 2.1.1 To approve the HRA Annual Revenue Budget for 2022/23.
- 2.1.2 To approve the increase of 4.1% (CPI+1%) to Dwelling Rents for 2022/23.
- 2.1.3 To approve the HRA Capital Programme for 2022/23.
- 2.1.4 To note the reviewed and updated assumptions in the 5-Year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 2.1.5 To note the reviewed and updated assumptions in the 2021 HRA 30-Year Business Plan.

2.2 Approved the transfer of Duke Street Car Park from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund and to delegate authority to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Section 151 Officer to approve the final land transfer value.

(The Meeting ended at 8.35 pm)

Varied table of fares prepared for meeting

First 425 yards (400 yards requested)	£2.40 (No change – £2.60 requested)
For each completed 145 yards (140 yards requested)	£0.20
Waiting time: each completed 35 seconds (As requested)	£0.20
Soiling charge	£100.00
For hirings commencing between 22:00 hours and 07:00 hours	+50% (time and a half)
For Saturday and Sunday	+50%
For all Public and Bank Holidays	+100% (double time)
Christmas Eve and New Years Eve from 18:00 hours (As requested)	+50%
In excess of 4 passengers at any point during the hire	+50%
In excess of 4 passengers between 22:00 hours and 07:00 hours	+100%
In excess of 4 passengers on a Saturday, Sunday, Bank holiday or Public holiday	+100%

