

SWT Executive - 15 March 2023

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Derek Perry, Benet Allen, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Andrew Sully and Sarah Wakefield

Officers: James Barraah, Chris Brown, Chris Hall, Paul Fitzgerald, Kerry Prisco, Clare Rendell, Malcolm Riches and Joe Wharton

Also Present: Councillors Brenda Weston and Loretta Whetlor

Present on Zoom: Alison North, Amy Tregellas, Councillors Marcus Kravis and Libby Lisgo

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

176. Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor Chris Booth.

177. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive - to follow

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 15 February 2023 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 15 February 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

178. 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 D Darch	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Kravis	All Items	SCC & Minehead	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke

Cllr D Perry	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Sully	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Wakefield	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

179. **Public Participation**

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

Councillor Loretta Whetlor spoke as Leader of the Opposition and offered her thanks to the Executive for all their hard work and for always allowing her to attend meetings and give her input on the items being discussed.

The Leader of the Council thanked Councillor Whetlor for her kind comments, and that it had been pleasure working together over the past four years.

180. **Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 3 2022/23**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased with the report and that it was a good representation of the Council's performance.
- Concern was raised on the call numbers that the New Council might face within the first few weeks of operation.
- Councillors queried what issues might impact on the number of calls handled by the Customer Services Team.

The Business Intelligence and Performance Manager advised that the reasons were mixed. He acknowledged that calls were more complex in nature which meant they took longer to resolve. Officers hoped to do more future forecasting within the New Council. They also wanted to encourage more online contact by customers but understood the

importance of continuing to provide face-to-face and telephone contact for those who do not have access to the online services.

- Councillors understood the current staffing position, especially with the New Council fast approaching.
- Councillors wanted to promote all roles and encourage people into a career at the Council.

Resolved that the Executive noted the Council's performance report.

181. **Local Authority Housing Fund - New Affordable Housing Supply to support the resettlement of Ukrainian and Afghan Refugees**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors very much welcomed the report.
- Councillors agreed it was an important legacy to leave for the future residents of the area.
- Councillors queried whether anything could be done on the mitigation on cost inflation.

The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that there was risk involved but that Central Government had set up a group to start purchasing properties within the area. He advised that there would need to be a bidding system to spot competition but that there would be certain policies in place that would highlight opportunities to mitigate the risk.

- Concern was raised on the capacity to be able to provide wrap around care for the residents.

The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that there would be a group who would work on support provided for the refugees and that they would look at funding to enable the support to continue.

- Councillors acknowledged that the refugees would have the right to remain, and they wanted to ensure that residents understood that the properties would not have been made available on the Homefinder system and that the Council had been given funding to support the scheme.
- Councillors supported the scheme but acknowledged that it could achieve a lot more.

The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that was based on the support provided by Central Government.

- Councillors queried whether the visa scheme would be extended.

The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that would be for Central Government to decide.

- Councillors queried whether the support given was facilitating the refugees to meet up with others in their area.

The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that welcome hubs had been set up to facilitate contact between the refugees.

Resolved that the Executive approved the following recommendations:

- a) supported the ambitions of the Local Authority Housing Fund as expressed in the report and in the report to Somerset County Council Executive (Appendix 1)
- b) delegated authority to Somerset West and Taunton's (SWT) Assistant Director Development and Regeneration in consultation with the Director of Homes and Communities to progress the scheme up to 31st March 2023 and to SWT's S151 Officer to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of SWT (appendix 2).

182. **2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 3 (31st December 2022)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors requested an update on the North Taunton Woolaway Project. *The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration gave an update and advised that the properties in Phase A should be completed by July 2023 and that the department would need to go out to procurement for the other Phases, which he hoped would not delay the Project.*
- Councillors thanked the Housing Team for all their work.

Resolved that the Executive noted the HRA's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2022/23 financial year as at 31 December 2022.

183. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (Agenda Item 9 - Appendix F ONLY and Agenda Item 10) 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).

184. **2022/23 General Fund Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 3 (31 December 2022)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased with the outturn position.
- Councillors queried whether the inflationary pressures had been managed. *The Deputy S151 Officer advised that the details had been included in section 5.17 of the report and that the majority had been mitigated.*

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Noted the Council's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2022/23 financial year as of 31 December 2022.
- 2.2 Approved the transfer of £1.507m of surplus business rates funding to be returned to General Reserves.
- 2.3 Approved a capital budget return of £200k for Brewhouse Theatre Roof works.

2.4 Approved a transfer of £250k from the Climate Change budget to a capital financing earmarked reserve for the decarbonisation project at both Wellington Sports Centre and Alcombe Children's Centre.

185. **Coal Orchard Commercial Lettings**

Resolved that the Executive approved the recommendations within the confidential report.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Councillors and Officers for all their hard work over the past four years and praised the Council for all that its achieved during the time of Somerset West and Taunton Council.

(The Meeting ended at 7.25 pm)