

Shadow Executive - 6 December 2018

Present: Councillor J Williams (Chairman)

Councillors A Trollope-Bellew, R Habgood, M Dewdney, S Pugsley and A Sully

Officers: Chris Hall, Paul Harding, Mark Leeman, Marcus Prouse, Andrew Stark and Mickey Green

Also Present: Councillors P Berry and S Coles

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

32. **Apologies.**

There were apologies from Councillors A Hadley, B Maitland- Walker and J Warmington.

33. **Minutes of the previous meeting of the Shadow Executive.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2018 were affirmed as a correct record.

34. **Declarations of Interest.**

Councillor Trollope-Bellew declared personal interests as an owner of a listed building and private water supply in relation to item 9.

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

| Name | Minute No. | Member of | Action Taken |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Cllr A Trollope-Bellew | All | Crowcombe | Spoke and voted |

35. **Public Participation.**

No member of the public requested to speak.

36. **New Council Branding**

The purpose of the report was to consider the branding for the New Council.

During the discussion of this item Members made comments and statements and asked questions, and the following main points were raised:

- Members commended the hard work and effort involved in creating the New Council branding.

RESOLVED that the New Council Branding be noted.

37. **New Council Implementation Plan**

The purpose of the report was to consider Implementation Plan for the Creation of a New Council for Somerset West and Taunton.

The focus of the Implementation Plan was to ensure the new council is legal, safe and functioning from 1 April 2019. The Plan sought to identify all of the actions necessary to meet these objectives.

Due to the legislative path being followed to create the new council, there was no precedent regarding the individual elements that an Implementation Plan should include nor what form the Plan should take.

Officers shared the initial draft with MHCLG officials and also looked at the approach being adopted by other councils currently in the process of creating new councils who are following the same legislative path, in order to help shape the content of the plan.

The Plan focused on ensuring Somerset West and Taunton Council:-

- had the staff and contracts in place to deliver services to the community;
- make lawful decisions (constitution, strategies, plans and policies);
- hold the necessary insurances, licences and permits to operate;
- had the necessary governance arrangements in place (statutory officers, auditors, committees);
- order necessary goods and services;
- pay its suppliers, members and staff;
- set, billing and collect income.

The Implementation Plan was set out in Appendix A. It contained the high-level actions and activities on which officers were focused. Supporting these actions were many sub-activities which were tracked within more detailed project plans.

During the discussion of this item Members made comments and statements and asked questions, and the following main points were raised:

- The implementation plan and list of processes had been compared with other Councils that had been going through the same process, which had been helpful in a common understanding.
- The Plan was required by the Change order and approved by the Shadow Council in October. This was owned by the Central Implementation Team and had a planned trajectory.
- There were no concerns with the progression of the implementation plan. Ensuring the critical tasks were complete before the creation of the New Council was the priority.
- The delay of the finance settlement wasn't likely to cause delays in the implementation plan.

- Tasks were being tracked and cross referenced with staff in the organisation that were leaving, a detailed risk register had been created and was regularly updated.
- Councillors remained Shadow Councillors between the 1st April and 2nd May.
- It was agreed that the item would be considered every two months.

RESOLVED that the Shadow Executive noted the report.

38. **Somerset Waste Partnership Business Plan**

The purpose of the report was to seek approval of the Somerset Waste Partnership's Draft Business Plan 2019-2024.

The Somerset Waste Partnership is governed through a Joint Committee known as the Somerset Waste Board. The SWB Constitution required the preparation of a Business Plan on an annual basis. The plan had a five year horizon with particular focus on the next 12 months, and it provided a framework within which the board could make decisions and steer the delivery of waste partnership services. The Board had delegated authority for decision making across all services and therefore must make proposals to the partners on how savings could be made, taking into account any requirements to make savings and proposals on how this could be achieved.

The Board's business planning cycle required a draft report to be approved by the Board in October and circulated to partners for comment prior to the adoption of the Board's Annual Budget the following February. Further to decisions taken by the Board in October 2017 the timetable for approving this plan would again be brought forward, with the Draft Business plan presented for Board Approval in November 2018, scrutinised by partner authorities in November and early December and presented for final approval at the December Board meeting. Once approved or noted by all partners, the plan would be formally adopted by the Board to provide a framework within which the Board could make decisions and steer the delivery of Waste Partnership services.

The Draft Business Plan and associated Action Plan, detailed appendix 1, were the means by which the partnership described its business, evaluated changes to the operating environment, identified strategic risks and set out its priorities. The plan had a five year horizon with particular focus on the next 12 months. It was the primary means to seek approval for and to secure the necessary resources to implement its proposals from the partner authorities.

The plan also set out the draft Annual Budget for the Waste Partnership for 2019/20, which for the Somerset West and Taunton represented an increase of £274,000.

During the discussion of this item Members made comments and statements and asked questions, and the following main points were raised:

- Encouraging recycling was still a focus, supporting and educating residents was still conducted to minimize recycling being disposed of in household waste.
- The legacy of two existing landfill sites would be communicated with Councillors.
- It was questioned if the creation of the New Council would save money through the Somerset Waste Partnership contract; along with how costs could be saved through process redesign.
- The costs has been achieved due to the service being operated through the whole of the county so the savings had already been delivered through the existing contract.
- The greater use of technology enabled smoother processes and prevented problems reoccurring in the service.
- Waste collections on new developments and ensuring these were fit for purpose should be factored in. Planning and customer interaction would was a priority and part of the future success of the process.
- A new depot was not considered necessary as part of future proposals.

RESOLVED that the Shadow Executive:-

- 1) Approve the Somerset Waste Partnership's Draft Business Plan 2019-24.
- 2) Approve the projected budget for 2019/20 subject to the finalisation of the figures.

39. **Somerset Housing Strategy**

The purpose of the report was to set out the content of the Somerset Housing Strategy and support the production of the Somerset West and Taunton Action Plan.

The Somerset Housing Strategy (SHS) is the local response to the national housing crisis. It highlights key facts and challenges within the local housing market, before proposing a vision for homes and housing across Somerset that embraces strong and effective strategic leadership; a local economy that provides opportunity for all; homes in Somerset are good for your health: and a society that supports the vulnerable.

The preparation of the SHS began in July 2017, with the publication of district housing market profiles set out in Appendix A, and a multi-agency workshop. A consultation draft was published in February 2018. TDBC and WS Scrutiny considered the draft SHS during March/April. The consultation closed on 30th April 2018. During the Summer the consultation responses had been considered and have made various amendments to the SHS.

The SHS was developed by the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership (SSHP). TDBC and WSC were active members of SSHP. SSHP is within the governance structure of the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board.

The next stage is for SSHP was to develop a multi-agency delivery plan (work is underway) and for SSHP partners to develop their own response in the form of

strategic housing action plans. Both TD and WS Scrutiny expressed a desire that we (SW&TC) should undertake such work.

During the discussion of this item Members made comments and statements and asked questions, and the following main points were raised:

- The finance around the HRA would be considered to see what can be done and the type of housing solutions such as housing for the elderly.
- The increase of rough sleepers in Taunton was still a concern and how this can be addressed as part of the New Council going forward.
- Second home ownership and the challenge of the elderly population in the West Somerset continued to be ongoing challenges with the New Council. A unified strategy with varied solutions would need to recognise this.
- Growth around housing provision and creation provided increased opportunity in the New Council.

RESOLVED that the Shadow Executive:-

- 1) Approve the content of the SHS (i.e. it's Vision, Themes, Priorities and Objectives)
- 2) To support the production of a SW&T action plan, commencing with conversations with Heads of Function and with Shadow Scrutiny.
- 3) Support the actions set out in 4.9 of the report.

40. **Draft 2019-20 Fees and Charges**

The purpose of the report was to set out the proposed fees and charges that are proposed to be applied to services for the first time for the new council for 2019/20. In determination of these fees and charges the following principles have been applied:-

- i) Harmonisation of fees when it has been practical to do so
- ii) Recovery of costs
- iii) Setting of fees in line with statutory guidance

In the setting of these fees and charges, a pragmatic approach has been taken for the first year of the new council. A detailed review will be undertaken once the new operating model is embedded and fully in place.

During the discussion of this item Members made comments and statements and asked questions, and the following main points were raised:

- Where practical to do so the aim was to harmonise fees and charges where possible.
- All the fees and charges would be located in one book for members of the public to access.
- Listed buildings advice for householders and developments was discussed. The changes would encourage users of the service to take advice before submitting an application.
- Parking Charges were considered, the returns on tangier coach parking charges were requested to be considered due to this car park being the only one to charge coaches across the new district.

- Open spaces would need to be charged to car parks to address the surplus, work was still to be done in relation to the accounting.

RESOLVED that the Shadow Executive recommends that Shadow Council approve the proposed Fees and Charges for 2019/20.

41. **2019-20 Budget Progress Report and Initial Budget Options**

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update on progress with regard to Budget Setting for 2019/20; the latest Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) forecasts, and the areas to be finalised. The Council's current MTFP projects a balanced budgetary position for 2019/20, but with a Budget Gap rising to £343k by 2023/24.

At the Shadow Executive meeting on 26 September 2018 a report provided Members with an initial draft on producing a 2019/20 budget for the new Somerset West and Taunton Council including a Medium Term Financial Plan and overall Financial Strategy. The report was previously shared with and reviewed by the Shadow Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2018.

Since this report, finance officers had undertaken a thorough review of all existing budgets including reviewing the underspends and overspends identified at outturn for 2017/18 to establish if there are any ongoing savings or spending pressures that needed to be taken into account for the 2019/20. This exercise had identified a number of changes to the base budget that need to be incorporated although the overall impact is not significant. In addition, financial projections had been updated for detailed estimates related to service costs and funding based on information available to date.

The previous MTFP Summary showed that there was a broadly balanced position up to 2021/22 with a predicted budget gap of £407k by 2023/24. In overall terms, the position on the MTFP had not changed significantly since the report in September.

Further reported that there remained a number of areas where budget forecasts are to be finalised therefore there was potential for the estimated Gap to change, and this would be reported to Members as the budget process progresses.

During the discussion of this item Members made comments and statements and asked questions, and the following main points were raised:

- News relating to the business rates 75% retention pilot was expected next month.
- The risk around Hinkley B ceasing to generate after 2022/23 was considered. It was requested if the risk should be included in the MTFP. This was an unknown, although the business rate smoothing reserve existed to allow for such risks, it was recognised that this risk had an adverse impact.
- The build for Hinkley Point C was still on schedule and would start generating at the end of 2025. No clarity had been given from the

Secretary of State about the business rate generation from Hinkley Point C.

- New figures for the budgets and levels of reserves would need to be created for the new council. It was envisaged that the levels of reserves would be around the area of the two existing budgets combined.

RESOLVED that the latest Medium Term Financial Plan forecasts be noted.

42. **Forward Plan**

The purpose of this item was to approve the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the Shadow Executive's Forward Plan be circulated to Members of the Shadow Executive after the meeting.

43. **Future Meeting Dates**

The next meeting date had been agreed:-

- Shadow Executive – 22 January 2019 at 3.30pm, Committee Room, Brittons Ash Community Centre.

(The Meeting ended at 8.12 pm)