

SWT Executive - 15 December 2021

- Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Derek Perry, Caroline Ellis, Ross Henley, Mike Rigby and Francesca Smith
- Officers: James Barra, Emily Collacott, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, Kerry Prisco, Andrew Pritchard (Chief Executive), Clare Rendell, Malcolm Riches, Richard Sealy and Jonathan Stevens
- Also Present: Councillors Dixie Darch, Andrew Sully, Ian Aldridge, Simon Coles, Roger Habgood, John Hassall, Libby Lisgo, Ray Tully, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

63. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors C Booth and M Kravis.

64. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 17 November 2021 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 17 November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

65. 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 S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
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 and Voted

Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke

66. **Public Participation**

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

67. **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.

68. **Draft 2022/23 General Fund Budget Update**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried whether officers had been 'conservative' with their calculations on the budget, due to the unknown settlement information. *The Section 151 Officer advised that the Finance Team had been realistic with their calculations and that they had based the budget on the information they had confirmed.*
- Councillors queried what would happen with the New Homes Bonus (NHB). *The Section 151 officer advised that the officers had allowed for the last legacy payment of NHB, which was based upon previous year's figures.*
- Councillors requested further information related to car parking income. *The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that it would take some time to see if the car parking income would ever return to the pre-covid levels and that he would be happy to arrange a member briefing to discuss parking income.*
- Councillors requested clarification on what car parking income could be spent on, as they believed car park income surplus could only be spent on traffic management. *The Finance Business Partner would provide a written response.*
- Councillors praised the work of the Finance Team on the production of the budget especially when Central Government kept reducing the funding issued to local councils.
- Councillors were pleased to see non-statutory functions still being provided, which was a great achievement.

Resolved that the Executive noted the updated estimates for the 2022/23 Budget and latest Medium Term Financial Plan forecasts, and the areas to be finalised.

69. **Draft 2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Budget Update**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors praised the work of the Finance Team and Housing Team, as the Housing Revenue Account was not just about the money, it dealt with and impacted on people's lives .
- Councillors acknowledged it had been a challenging time for the housing developer sector due to the impacts of Covid.

Resolved that the Executive noted the latest Medium Term Financial Plan forecasts and action required to finalise the 2022/23 Budget.

70. **2021/22 General Fund Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2021)**

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Councillors queried whether the 2020-21 pay award had been accepted by the Union yet and whether there was any update.
The Finance Business Partner advised that there was no update, but as soon as they received any information, they would forward it onto the councillors.

Resolved that the Executive noted as the Council's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2021/22 financial year as at 30 September 2021.

71. **2021/22 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2021)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors highlighted that Community Scrutiny had held a good debate on the report at their meeting.
- Councillors were pleased to see compliance work was being carried out.

Resolved that the Executive:-

- 2.1 Noted the HRA's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2021/22 financial year as at 30 September 2021.
- 2.2 Approved the return of £175k from earmarked reserves to general reserves.

72. **Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 2 2021/22**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources highlighted what measures had been taken to tackle call waiting times.

- The Leader highlighted the Scrutiny Committee recommendations/questions stated within the report and agreed it was important to look into employment opportunities across the whole of the district and not just in Taunton.
The Director for Development and Place gave an explanation to the answers given to the Scrutiny Committee questions raised at Corporate Scrutiny on 1 December 2021.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that the average re-let times had taken longer due to the impacts of Covid, but that officers were working hard to rectify the situation.
- The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation highlighted that the planning targets were improving.
- Councillors praised the work carried out by Customer Services on call handling.
- Concern was raised that housing visits had been cancelled during lockdown and what had been done to deal with the repercussions for those that were in need of support.
The Director for Housing advised that during the main times of lockdown, that housing visits had been limited, apart from those for vulnerable tenants and for gas safety checks. He was aware that some schemes were missing the presence of housing officers in the area and that they were working on that. He was also aware that many of those that were struggling with the withdrawal of support services were approaching the council via different routes so that assistance could be given.

Resolved that the Executive noted the Council's performance report for quarter 2.

73. **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 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).

74. **Lease of Monkton Country Park**

Resolved that the Executive approved the recommendations within the Confidential Report.

(The Meeting ended at 7.30 pm)