

## SWT Executive - 22 January 2020

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)

Councillors Benet Allen, Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees, Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby and Francesca Smith

Officers: James Barrah, Stephen Boland, Emily Collacott, Paul Fitzgerald, Mickey Green, Natalie Green, Chris Hall, James Hassett, Steve Hughes, Wendy Lewis, Kerry Prisco, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Ann Rhodes and John Southwell

Also Present: Councillors Ian Aldridge, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Brenda Weston and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 81. Apologies

No apologies were received.

### 82. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 18 December 2019 circulated with the agenda)

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Executive held on 18 December 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

### 83. 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 N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford	Personal	Spoke

		Arundel		
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	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 B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke

Councillor F Smith-Roberts further declared a personal interest as the Chair of RAFT, which was mentioned in Agenda Item 6 as one of the Somerset Waste Partnership's charities.

84. **Public Participation**

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

85. **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.

86. **Somerset Waste Partnership Draft Business Plan 2020-25 and Variations to the Inter-Authority Agreement**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors emphasised the importance of the schemes carried out by Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) and how it fed into the work on climate change.
- Concern was raised on the 3 weekly cycle for waste collections, especially for those who lived in blocks of flats and had no means to store the waste. Councillors urged officers to support those who lived in flats to enable them to recycle.
- Councillors requested assurance that the new waste scheme would be communicated properly to customers to ensure maximum uptake of the scheme.

*The Director of SWP confirmed that they had worked hard to ensure that communications were ready to be rolled out in advance of the new*

*recycling schedule and would be sent out in phases to residents. The new sacks would also be delivered on the first day of the new regime and tags would be placed on the existing containers with the new details. Officers would go out on the rounds to check and knock on resident's doors to guide them on what to do.*

- Councillors requested clarification on the food waste figures included within the report.  
*Clarification was given.*
- Councillors were surprised to hear that the carbon levels produced were higher for food waste than plastics.
- Councillors queried which residents were the least likely to change over to the new recycling regime.  
*The Director of SWP advised that residents who lived in flats were challenged due to the nature of the building, the lack of storage areas and that they would need a bespoke system to enable them to recycle.*
- Councillors queried whether SWT was still assisting the contractors with the loan for the new vehicles required for the scheme.  
*The Director of SWP advised that a procurement process had been set up for bidders to set up capital funding for the vehicles.*
- Councillors queried when cameras would be installed on the waste vehicles.  
*Cameras were placed on the vehicles primarily for crew safety and were then used to monitor windblown litter and could be used as a handheld device to gather evidence for missed collections and contamination issues.*
- Councillors queried whether overnight collections were being looked into as an option.  
*No that had not been looked into.*
- Concern was raised over plastic waste and the missed opportunity to recycle more. Councillors queried the increased cost and whether the figures within the report were for SWT only and had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan.  
*SWP were trying to keep the recycling within the UK which could have cost implications.*
- Concern was raised on the carbon footprint as a result of sending some recycling abroad.  
*The Director of SWP advised that as much as they tried to keep as much within the UK, it was a global industry.*
- Councillors queried the rollout of Electric Vehicles (EV) for waste collections.  
*The Director of SWP advised that due to the lack of supporting infrastructure within the district, the rollout of EV had been delayed. Work was needed in the rural areas to support the introduction of EV usage.*
- Councillors thanked the SWP for their work on recycling.

**Resolved** that the Executive approved:-

- 1) The Somerset Waste Partnership's Draft Business Plan 2020-25;
- 2) The projected budget for 2020-21 subject to the finalisation of the figures; and
- 3) The variations to the Inter-Authority Agreement.

## Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme - Phase 2

During the discussion the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked the officers for bringing the work forward.
- Councillors wanted to ensure that all stakeholders were involved in the work to protect the town from major economic damage.
- Councillors queried whether any other areas had been identified to help with the flood alleviation other than Longrun Meadow.  
*Yes, other areas had been identified, which included Vivary and Bradford on Tone.*
- Concern was raised that not all groups had been consulted with on the work being carried out.
- Concern was raised on the burden placed on the areas located further downstream and queried what support could be given by neighbouring areas to alleviate that.  
*There were much wider projects being carried out to help alleviate flooding in other areas. The report just focused on the Taunton area.*
- Concern was raised on the impact of flooding as a result of planning permission being granted to new developments within the area.  
*The report looked at the existing issues in Taunton.*
- Concern was raised on the cost of the scheme.  
*Many organisations were contributing towards the cost and officers had also looked into what funding was available.*
- Councillors queried whether there was anything within the Agricultural Bill that could assist.  
*The Bill included information on the promotion of better husbandry of soil which would act as the first line of defence.*

**Resolved** that Executive:-

- 1) Accepted the findings of the project development plan report and endorsed the recommended strategic and long term approach to the management of flood risk in Taunton, listed in section 6 of the non-technical summary;
- 2) In partnership with EA to progress the identified short term priorities of: Longrun Meadow, the town centre defence improvements on the left bank of the River Tone (Frieze Hill to Town Bridge) and Firepool Lock to an appropriate design standard to secure the necessary consents and implementation;
- 3) Sought the approval of Full Council for the allocation of £6,000,000 capital funding from already earmarked Community Infrastructure Levy, New Homes Bonus and s106 contributions, to be apportioned in consultation with the S151 Officer, to progress the identified short term priorities of Longrun Meadow and improvements to the left bank of the River Tone (Frieze Hill to Town Bridge);
- 4) Used the project development plan as a basis for future investment planning. To develop a funding strategy to support implementation of the entire preferred approach, noting that a number of schemes had wider benefits such as increased bio-diversity and public amenity that might attract sources of funding other than flood defence related. Work with partners and stakeholders including the Environment Agency to secure

appropriate national 'Flood Defence Grant in Aid' ((FDGiA) and Local Levy; Somerset River Authority grant; as well as partnership opportunities with Somerset County Council, Wessex Water; Natural England; Canal and Rivers Trust and others towards those schemes;

- 5) Noted that consultation and engagement would take place with residents, stakeholders and partners on the individual schemes in the preferred approach as they progressed to detailed design and necessary consents for implementation; and
- 6) Supported the appointment of dedicated project management capacity, to be funded from the capital allocation referred to above for an initial period of two years, to secure the necessary expertise and approvals to progress the shorter term priorities identified in recommendation 3, and to identify funding and wider opportunities as they arose.

88. **Purchase of Otterford B Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site**

**Resolved** that the Executive deferred the item for further investigation.

89. **East Quay Wall**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Concern was raised on the wall and that a very large section had collapsed, but they acknowledged that was due to the age of the structure along with the effects of climate change.
- Councillors supported the work and wanted to see Watchet grow and be a key part in the economic development of the district.
- Councillors believed that the work had given the community trust in the Council and that they would carry out similar work when needed in the wider area of the district. They stated that it was good to see that the asset was in such capable hands.
- Councillors thanked the officers for all their hard work on the project and the presentation given on the item.
- Councillors supported the recommendations.

**Recommended** that the Executive requested Full Council approve the following additions to the Capital Programme, which would be funded through borrowing:

- 1) Add the following to the Capital Programme for 2019/20
  - a. The sum of £100,000 be allocated to the wall design works at Splash Point; and
  - b. The sum of £100,000 be allocated to the wall design works at East Quay.
- 2) Add the following to the Capital Programme for 2020/21
  - a. The sum of £500,000 be allocated to reinforce the East Quay wall in the central section; and
  - b. The sum of £40,000 for project management resource to deliver this project to its conclusion.

90. **Budget Update and Outline Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried whether there were any implications on the New Homes Bonus (NHB).  
*The Government were committed to reviewing the NHB and a consultation was taking place this year which would give a steer on what would happen in 2021-22.*
- Councillors requested clarification on the figures of the ongoing IT costs.  
*Clarification was given and that it included some capital and revenue costs.*
- Councillors thanked officers for the grants received from the Council and that to some organisations they were a life saver.

**Resolved** that Executive:-

- 1) Noted and considered the latest Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan forecasts and the areas to be finalised; and
- 2) Supported the MTFP bids and savings targets/proposals, considering feedback from the Scrutiny Committee, and resolved to finalise balanced budget proposals for presentation to Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council in February 2020.

#### 91. **Budget Monitoring**

**Resolved** that Executive noted the Council's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2019/20 financial year as at 30 November 2019.

#### 92. **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors requested that carbon neutral schemes needed to be included in the document.
- Councillors queried that as the Plan was a working document, that if more money became available, that more homes would be built.  
*The Director for Housing advised that the figures included in the plan were projections and that if more funds became available, they would look to build more. The ring-fence applied to both the general fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA), so the money from the HRA would be reinvested in Housing.*
- Councillors aspired to achieve more than was included in the Plan.
- Councillors wanted to ensure that the work was carried out to a high standard and was incorporated within the Climate Strategy.
- Councillors wanted to ensure that the companies used to carry out the work were ready to provide the best for the tenants.
- Councillors mentioned the amount of larger properties that were available and the possibility of building more to alleviate the pressure on the housing waiting list.
- Concern was raised that existing tenants had been approached and had agreed the charges to be placed on new tenants. Further concern was raised that those charges would be placed on existing tenants who were due to move house.

- Councillors agreed that the document would change the way properties were built.  
*Compliance was high on the agenda as a result of Grenfell.*
- Councillors queried whether shared ownership would be offered.  
*The Director for Housing advised that would be looked as an option and that the Council already had a few shared ownership properties on the books.*
- Councillors were disappointed that retrofitting had not been included in the Plan as that could be used to improve the current housing stock.  
*The Director for Housing would look at the investment options and would need to investigate what could be done to improve carbon neutrality for new builds as well as the current stock.*
- Councillors thanked the officer for giving further clarification on the Plan.
- Councillors thanked the officer for the Member Briefings that had been held and the information that had been shared.

Executive **recommended** that Council:-

- 1) Approved the revised 30 year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan as set out in this report;
- 2) Approved the proposed vision for the Housing service along with three new service Objectives;
- 3) Approved the proposed Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting policy 2020;
- 4) Increased rents i.e. social formula and affordable by CPI plus 1%, in line with the Regulator of Social Housing's new standard; and
- 5) Approved the use of flexibility on social formula rents, to be applied when properties are re-let to tenants new to the Council.

### 93. **Housing Revenue Account Budget Estimates 2020/21**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried the staffing costs and whether they were being offset against any underspend.  
*A written answer would be provided.*
- Councillors requested clarification on the charges for garages included in one of the recommendations.  
*Clarification was given and that all charges would be increased apart from the one exception detailed in the report.*
- Councillors supported the report which allowed the Council to do more with the rental income and invest it back into the community.

Executive **recommended** to Council:-

- 1) In accordance with the Regulator of Social Housing's new Rent Standard from April 2020, the Dwelling Rent for 2020/21 for existing tenants would be an increase of CPI+1% to the average weekly rent, from £80.87 per week to £83.05 per week;
- 2) In accordance with the Regulator of Social Housing's new Rent Standard from April 2020, the Dwelling Rent for 2020/21 for new tenants only would

- be an increase of CPI+1% plus an additional 5% for general needs to the average weekly rent, from £80.87 per week to £87.21 per week;
- 3) In accordance with the Regulator of Social Housing's new Rent Standard from April 2020, the Dwelling Rent for 2020/21 for new tenants only would be an increase of CPI+1% plus an additional 10% for sheltered/supported and extra care dwelling rents to the average weekly rent, from £80.87 per week to £91.36 per week;
  - 4) To increase non-dwelling rent and service charges in line with national policy by CPI+1% for 2020/21, with the exception of garages for private and shared ownerships tenants which would increase from £10.32 (including VAT) to £12.00 (including VAT);
  - 5) To approve the HRA Annual Revenue Budget for 2020/21; and
  - 6) To approve the HRA Capital Programme for 2020/21.

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

**Resolved** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the item numbered 15 on the Agenda as the items contained exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

95. **Housing Revenue Account Acquisitions**

**Resolved** that Executive approved the confidential recommendations.

(The Meeting ended at 9.35 pm)