

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ON WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Members in attendance:			
* Denotes attendance			
∅ Denotes apologies for absence			
*	Cllr K J Baldry	*	Cllr T R Holway
*	Cllr H D Bastone (Vice Chairman)	*	Cllr N A Hopwood
*	Cllr J D Hawkins	*	Cllr J A Pearce (Chairman)

Non-Executive Members also present either in person or remotely for all or part of the meeting:
Cllrs Abbott, Brazil, Brown, Long, O'Callaghan, Pringle, Reeve, Rowe and Spencer

Officers in attendance and participating:		
All items		Senior Leadership Team; Monitoring Officer; Democratic Services Manager; Head of Housing; Principal Private Sector Housing Officer; Deputy Section 151 Officer; Head of Strategy, Corporate Projects and Partnerships; Head of Waste and Environmental Services; and Head of Assets

E.28/22 HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Since this was the first formal Member meeting since Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had sadly passed away, Members proceeded, as a mark of respect, to stand and observe a minute's silence in her memory.

E.29/22 MINUTES

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 7 July 2022 and the Special Executive meeting held on 12 July were both confirmed as a true and correct record.

E.30/22 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Leader informed that no public questions had been received in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules.

E.31/22 EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

Members were advised that, due to the delaying of this meeting, an updated version of the Forward Plan before them had since been published on the Council's website and that this updated version would be circulated to all Members in due course.

E.32/22 2021/22 DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN

The Executive considered a report that provided the draft Revenue and Capital Outturn position for 2021/22 and the schedule of the Reserve Balances at 31 March 2022

In discussion, the Leader expressed her disappointment that this year's External Audit of the Council was not yet complete.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the draft Revenue and Capital outturn figures for the 2021/22 financial year, including the overall Revenue outturn position of an underspend of £214,000 for 2021/22 (2.2% of the total Budget £9.677 million), be noted.

E.33/22 WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES UPDATE

The Executive considered a report which provided an update on progress made following the recommendations and decisions taken by the Executive at its Special Meeting on 12 July (Minute E.27/22 refers) regarding the Waste and Recycling Service.

In discussion, the following points were raised

- a) The Deputy Chief Executive reported that a successful and productive meeting had recently been held with the majority of Waste and Recycling staff that were due to return to the Council's employ at the beginning of October 2022. Members were grateful for this update and wished for a formal acknowledgement of thanks to be sent on behalf of the Executive to those operatives who had been working on the frontline in incredibly difficult circumstances in recent years;
- b) Members welcomed the confirmation received from officers that street cleanliness was recognised as being very high on the list of priorities when the service returned in-house;
- c) It was noted that a detailed (and appropriately worded) letter would be sent from the Council to all of its residents concerning the new in-house Service at the start of October 2022;
- d) In recognition of the environmental and sustainability benefits, it was felt to be disappointing that, despite the Council allocating £200,000, there had yet to be any take up of any additional Community Composting Scheme across the District;
- e) It was vital that the Council took account of the experience and knowledge of the current waste and recycling workforce to help improve the operation of the Service. Furthermore, the local knowledge and expertise of all local Ward Members and Town and Parish Councils had to also be utilised as quickly as possible;

- f) Some Members stated that residents were not appreciative of the repeated reference in Council communications to the Garden Waste service being defined as 'free of charge'. Residents were of the view that they had been paying for the service via their Council Tax precepts and these Members therefore asked that this statement be removed from any related future communications;
- g) With regard to the recommendations to Full Council that related to the Garden Waste Service, it was felt that the proposal to charge for the Service would offer residents the choice on whether to engage with the service or not. In addition, the point was made that a service charge was necessary in order to make the Service viable moving forward.
- h) Members noted that a more detailed report on the operating costs of the service was to be presented to the Executive Meeting to be held on 1 December 2022;

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the actions being taken by the project team to ensure a safe transfer of the service on 3 October 2022 be endorsed;
2. That the approach to the service transition phase be endorsed;
3. That the information in section 5 of the presented agenda report regarding the garden waste collection service be considered and recommended to Council to implement a chargeable garden waste service from March 2023;
4. That a further report be brought back to the Executive at its 1 December 2022 Meeting on the progress of the transition period and the costs incurred to date on the service transfer;
5. That the organisational changes made by the Head of Paid Service be noted and the further changes required to ensure that the Waste and Operations team and the wider organisation, has the capacity and skills required to deliver the Council's key services and corporate priorities be endorsed;
6. That the use of the £120,000 from the Revenue Grants Earmarked Reserve to fund the Council's share of the 2-year fixed term senior role outlined in paragraph 6.3.2 of the presented agenda report be approved;

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to:

7. end the current free non-statutory Garden Waste collection service from Monday, 31 October 2022 to ensure that there are sufficient resources and capacity to deliver the statutory waste and recycling collections services; and
8. introduce a chargeable, fortnightly Garden Waste collection from early spring 2023 at a charge of £49 per bin per household subscription.

E.34/22

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24 TO 2025/26

Consideration was given to a report that presented the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2023/24 to 2025/26.

In discussion, Members were of the view that the recommendations constituted a sensible set of proposals for the three-year period from 2023/24 to 2025/26. When questioned, the Section 151 Officer informed that it was slightly too early to undertake any accurate modelling work on the potential impact of the closure of the Business Rates loophole.

It was then:

RESOLVED1. That Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

- i To set the strategic intention to raise Council Tax by the maximum allowed in any given year, without triggering a Council Tax Referendum, to endeavour to continue to deliver services. (NB. The actual Council Tax for 2023/24 will be decided by Council in February 2023);
- ii To continue to respond to Government consultations on Business Rates Reform;
- iii To continue to actively lobby and engage with the Government, Devon MPs, South West Councils and other sector bodies such as the District Councils' Network and the Rural Services Network, for a realistic business rates baseline to be set for the Council for 2024 onwards, when the business rates reset is predicted to happen (this is the earliest date it might happen);
- iv That the Council continues to lobby in support of the Government eliminating Negative Revenue Support Grant in 2023/24 (and thereafter) and continues to lobby for Rural Services Delivery Grant allocations which adequately reflect the cost of rural service provision; and

- 2. That the forecast budget gap for 2023/24 of £374,616 (3.3% of the projected Net Budget of £11.47million) and the position for future years, be noted.

E.35//22

HOUSING CRISIS UPDATE - ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN HOMES

The Executive was presented with a report that provided an update on the Schemes that the Council was able to promote, enable and administer to assist householders and landlords with improving energy efficiency, improving the thermal comfort of homes and reducing energy usage.

In the ensuing debate:

- a) Members sought reassurance that the Grants and Schemes available were clearly advertised and communicated to local residents and that the application process was as straightforward as Central Government criteria permitted;
- b) the complexities of implementing schemes within South Hams properties was acknowledged;
- c) it was suggested that the number of Schemes and associated contractors were causing some residents to be confused and unsure but a partnership of Local Authorities were operating a Code of Practice amongst the contractors to help inform residents of an 'approved' accredited list.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the content of the presented report, along with progress to date on the schemes, be noted and support for the council's energy efficiency work be continued.

E.36/22

HOMES FOR UKRAINE

The Executive considered a report that provided an overview of how the Council was responding to the needs of people escaping the War in Ukraine, including delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and wider support to other Ukrainian people settling in the District.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to:

- (a) the dedication and hard work of the team. In recognition of the work of officers, an additional recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** as follows:

'That the Executive wishes to put on record its thanks to the team for all its work on this Scheme.'

When put to the vote, this addition was declared **CARRIED**;

- (b) the support provided by Citizens Advice South Hams and the Council for Voluntary Service. In reply to a question, officers confirmed that the support provided to Ukrainian people settling in the South Hams by these organisations was invaluable;
- (c) the £350 host monthly thank you payment. Whilst it was recognised that the position of Minister for Refugees was currently vacant, it was hoped that, when appointed, the new Minister would authorise an increase in the monthly thank you payment.

It was then

RESOLVED

1. That the progress the Council has made under the Homes for Ukraine scheme be noted;
2. That the Leader write to the Minister for Refugees to seek clarity on the future of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and request a more permanent solution;
3. That the significant contribution that our hosts, voluntary and community sector have already played in welcoming Ukrainian guests to the area be noted; and
4. That the Executive wishes to put on record its thanks to the team for all its work on this Scheme.

E.37/22

COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The Executive was presented with a report which considered the support the Council had already put in place and proposed further steps to be taken to ensure our residents were supported over the coming months.

In debate, Members expressed concern for small businesses as well as residents within the District but acknowledged that the Council had no direct access to funding to assist businesses, which were dependant on Central Government providing funding support.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That Cllr Hopwood be appointed as the Council's lead Member to respond to the cost of living crisis;
2. That the Council be requested to mobilise its resources and work with partners to ensure a responsive, co-ordinated approach to the cost of living challenges faced by residents; and
3. That the Leader of Council lobby Central Government to substantially increase the funding provided to address the cost of living crisis and to support the Local Government Association in its call for a solution to address the cost of living crisis to reduce the need for emergency support.

E.38/22 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was then:

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

E.39/22 REQUEST FOR RENEWAL OF LONG LEASE

Consideration was given to an exempt report that sought approval for the renewal of a long lease.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That authority be delegated to the Head of Assets, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Leader of the Council, to progress and conclude detailed negotiations of the lease renewal for a term in excess of 15 years.

(Meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 11.20 am)

Chairman

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES E.33/22 (PARTS 7 &8) AND E.34/22 (PART 1 (i-iv)) (WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2022 (FOR MINUTE E.33/22 PARTS 7&8) AND THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2022 (FOR MINUTE E.34/22 PART 1) WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON MONDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2022 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINYPROCEDURE RULES).

