

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee held in Room 2A - Barnstaple Library on Monday, 1st July, 2024 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Clayton (Chair)

Councillors Bell, Hunt, D Knight, R Knight, Lane, C Leaver and Maskell

Officers:

Chief Executive, Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, Property Manager, Fleet Contract and Transport Manager, Head of Environmental Enhancement, Head of Place, Property and Regeneration, Finance Manager, Sustainability and Climate Officer and Head of Governance

Also Present in person:

Councillors Spear and Walker

Also Present virtually:

Councillor Milton

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roome and Wilkinson.

18. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 MAY 2024 (ATTACHED).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2024 (circulated previously), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

The Chair invited Councillor Prowse to address the Committee with an update on the Ilfracombe Watersports centre.

Councillor Prowse advised the Committee that the Larkstone Watersports Hub, Ilfracombe had won the Michelmores Property Awards 2024.

The project cost in the end was £3.4 million with £250,000 contribution coming from the Council. The creation of this hub meant there was a great facility to visit around the harbour when coming to the town. He wanted to mention all the partners who had been involved in the project particularly the local building firm Pearce's, Grainge Architects from Exeter who designed the project, Hills, Craddys, Hulley and Kirkwood, Hop Consulting, Teignmouth Maritime Services, Aquatronics and of course Pearce construction. He also thanked the Head of Place, Property and Regeneration the project Lead officer and also most importantly the Property Manager, who he invited to say a few words.

The Property Manager addressed the committee, on her return to work at the Council in 2020 she was assigned the job, which has provided many learning opportunities. The link from the balcony to the top of the old Kiln building had recently been completed which would increase the table covers that the café could offer. This project had been a challenge but very worthwhile to be involved with.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of interest announced.

21. URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ATTACHED)

The Chair brought forward item 16 Urgent Decisions taken by the Chief Executive (attached) to allow Councillor Liz Spear to address the committee in relation to the Revocation of Braunton Air Quality Management Area No.1.

The Committee considered the Urgent Decisions taken by the Chief Executive (circulated previously).

The Chief Executive explained that this item was for Committee to note decisions already taken by him.

Councillor Spear addressed the Committee and explained that she had been involved with the issue of air quality in Braunton before the inception of the Air Quality Management Area. She welcomed the revocation as this indicated that there was less pollution and certainly the introduction of Electrically Charged Vehicles had helped with this reduction in pollution.

RESOLVED that the following urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive be noted:

- (a) Review Urgent Decision – 1 Lyndale Terrace – Revocation under s97 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
- (b) Revocation of Braunton Air Quality Management Area No.1; and
- (c) Ilfracombe Public Space Protection Order – Consultation.

22. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT Q4 2023-24

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive (circulated previously) regarding Performance and Financial Management Q4 203-24.

The Finance Manager highlighted the following:

Revenue

- The revenue budget for 2023/24 was approved at Council on 22 February 2023 at £14,766,450.
- As at 31 March 2024, it was pleasing to report that the final out turn position was a budget surplus of £630,000, which was an overall movement of £557,000 from the last forecast at quarter 3. The breakdown showing these movements were shown in “Appendix A – Variations in the Revenue Budget” of the report.
- The last quarter of the financial year had seen a number of variances since the last reported position; most notably, reduction in both Planning fee income, Parking Charge Notice income and additional electricity costs throughout our assets; these had been offset by additional income, interest receivable, less interest payable on borrowing and additional Business Rates income.
- The net movement from quarter 3 of £557,000 can be mainly attributed to:
 - Adverse variances:
 - £89,000 Reduction in Parking Charge Notice income
 - £191,000 Premises Electricity
 - £132,000 Planning fee income
 - £81,000 External Audit fee
 - £70,000 Insurance premiums
 - £75,000 Transfer of Public Conveniences
 - Favourable variances:
 - £66,000 Work and Recycling Transport
 - £54,000 Temporary Accommodation costs
 - £46,000 Building Control Partnership
 - £41,000 Crematorium income
 - £57,000 Additional Grant income
 - £91,000 Interest receivable and payable
 - £760,000 Business Rates income
 - £52,000 Contribution from Community Housing reserve.
- A detailed breakdown of variations in the revenue budget could be seen on pages 37 and 38 of the report.
- The original budget for 2023/24 included a forecast to achieve £250,000 worth of salary vacancy savings. As at 31 March 2024, £332,000 had actually been achieved.
- The National pay award negotiations for 2023/24 had been settled and was paid to staff in November 2023 salary, backdated to 1 April 2023. The pay award worked out to be an average of 6.7%, the original budget included 4%, and the additional costs of £436,000 had been funded from the Budget Management reserve.

- Members approved in June 2021 to proceed with the acquisition of Green Lanes Shopping Centre; which the Council completed the purchase in November 2021. The purchase of Green Lanes Shopping Centre was a once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire this strategic asset and complement other significant regeneration improvements being delivered within the Barnstaple town centre through the Future High Streets project. The financial modelling demonstrated that revenue income generated from the centre would cover both the repayment of the loan and asset management costs and would return a contribution to the Council which could be used towards mitigating future risks on income volatility, investment back into the centre and the overarching council budget.
- The financial outturn for the Centre produced a net return (income less costs) for:
 - 2021/22 year of (£243,600) due to minimal borrowing costs as these commenced in 2022/23.
 - 2022/23 trading position produced a net return of (£291,000), including borrowing costs.
 - 2023/24 trading position produced a net return of (£237,000), this includes £150,000 from the income volatility reserve due to the financial impact of losing Wilko in August 2023. This reserve having been created in 2021/22 for this purpose to protect the council in the event of a tenant loss and smooth the budgetary impact.
- As at 31st March 2024 the Collection Fund reserve balance held was £1,790,180. This earmarked reserve was created to deal with the timing impacts of the Collection Fund (Business Rates), which ensured the revenue budget was not unduly affected in the year the taxes were collected. Collection Fund deficits/surpluses were reversed out to bring the revenue account back to the budgeted figure for the year; the deficits/surpluses were recovered/distributed in the following financial years. This reserve included an £1,246,078 balance that would be utilised in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to mitigate timing differences of business rate reliefs awarded in 2023/24 that from an accounting perspective impacted over the next two financial years; thus leaving the fund reserve with a residue balance of £544,102 protection against future volatility.
- From the revenue budget surplus of £630,000, it was proposed to set aside the amount into the following earmarked reserves:
 - Corporate Property income volatility reserve - £150,000
 - Insurance Reserve - £280,000 – mitigate 2024/25 higher insurance costs
 - Digital Transformation Financial system reserve - £200,000
- As at the 31 March 2024 total external borrowing was £3,000,000. The timing of any future borrowing was dependent on how the authority managed its treasury activity.
- Due to project spend slippages in the Capital programme and using the cash flow balances for internal borrowing, this has reduced borrowing costs and has resulted in a £304,000 underspend on the interest payable revenue budget and in addition an increase in interest receivable of £441,000 over and above the budgeted amount in 2023/24. There was no requirement to use the Treasury Management reserve during 2023/24 and so the full reserve balance

of £275,000 and the proposed additional in-year contribution of £150,000 can be carried forward into 2024/25 to help protect and mitigate against higher borrowing costs in the future financial years.

- The recommended level of general fund balance was 5%-10% of the Council's net revenue budget £738,326 to £1,476,645. The forecast general fund reserve at 31 March 2024 was £1,238,000; which was a level of 8.4%.

Earmarked Reserves 2023/24

- "Appendix B (of the report) – Movement in reserves and Balances" detailed the movements to and from earmarked reserves in 2023/24.

Strategic Contingency Reserve

- Full details of the Strategic Contingency Reserve movements and commitments were attached as "Appendix C (of the report) – Strategic Contingency Reserve".

Capital

- The 2023/24 Capital Programme was attached as "Appendix D (of the report) – Capital Programme 2023/24".
- The Budget and Financial Framework report to Full Council 22 February 2023 outlined the Capital Programme for the 2023/24 financial year of £21,247,098. Project underspend and further variations of (£8,535,958) were approved as part of the performance and financial management report to Strategy and Resources Committee, to produce a revised 2023/24 Capital Programme of £12,711,140.
- Actual spend on the Capital Programme for 2023/24 financial year was £10,146,403. The variance against budget of £12,711,140 was (£2,564,737); the carry forward to 2024/25 was £2,528,087 (the difference being £36,650, relating to):
 - (£94) Greensweep / Bartec migration, small overspend– project complete.
 - £3,158 Landmark Theatre, Fire alarm– project complete, remaining budget not required.
 - £33,311 Ilfracombe Watersports Centre– project complete, carry forwards £22,734 as contingency and return remaining £33,311.
 - £257 Queen Ann's building, flat roof replacement, small underspend, project complete.
 - £18 Queens Theatre replacement flat roof and redecoration, small underspend, project complete.
- In order to pay for the £10,146,403 capital investment the Council funded this from £7,400,238 received from external sources in the form of grants and other assistance, £1,025,988 of earmarked reserves held specifically for capital projects, £277,322 from the Capital receipts reserve and £1,442,855 through internally borrowing.
- The 2024/25 to 2026/27 Capital Programme was attached as "Appendix E – (of the report) Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27".
- The Budget and Financial Framework report to Strategy and Resources 5 February 2024, outlined the Capital Programme for the 2023/24 financial year of £12,711,140, 2024/25 financial year of £20,258,368, 2025/26 financial year of £3,856,140.
- Project underspends of £2,528,087 from 2023/24 year were brought forward to produce a revised Capital Programme for 2024/25 year of £22,786,455.

- Further variations of £1,828,292 were proposed to the 2024/25, £1,211,965 to the 2025/26 and £1,211,965 to the 2026/27 Capital programme as follows:

Schemes	Amount (£)	Notes
Removal of Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2	(552,000)	Approved by Strategy and Resources 8th January 2024
Various S106 schemes	358,020	Approved by Full Council 21st February 2024
Hub fit out in Green lanes	220,000	Approved by Strategy and Resources 5 February 2024
Material Recovery Facility	350,060	Variation to existing budget, Approved by Full Council 27 March 2024
Office Technology – end User assets	(100)	Virement to Green sweep software (spend was in 2023- 24)
Ilfracombe Pool Photovoltaic LED Lighting	88,347	New external grant from Sport England
Disabled Facility Grants	1,363,965	Better Care Fund grant allocation for 2024-25
2025/26		
Disabled Facility Grants	1,211,965	Better Care fund allocation (base amount)
2026/27		
Disabled Facility Grants	1,211,965	Better Care fund allocation (base amount)

Release of Funds – Capital Programme

- Ilfracombe Pool Photovoltaic LED Lighting - £88,347
- Disabled Facility Grants - £1,363,965
- Section 4.5 of the report detailed the Treasury Management activity.

The Head of Programme Management and Performance highlighted the following in relation to Appendix F of the report:

- The Housing and Community Safety Programme – three bids had been prepared to go for the County’s net zero fund, two of which had been invited to go further for two projects in Ilfracombe (community housing and the Community Land Trust), these projects were currently on hold due to the election.
- Households in temporary accommodation remains high, staff are working hard to find alternative solutions.

- National Refugee week was celebrated with a lunch 'meet and eat' Ukrainian and Afghan refugees were invited along to share food from their culture. This was supported by the Pickwell Foundation and other voluntary groups.
- An Expression of Interest had been submitted for round three of the Local Authority Housing Fund to purchase another four houses – currently on hold until a new Government had been formed after the election.
- The Community Safety Partnership bid was submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioners Office for their Anti-Social Behaviour hotspot funding. Barnstaple fell into tier one so would qualify for extra Policing and allowed us to extend the street Marshall Scheme in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe.
- The Community Safety Partnership have support a reintroduced a night bus during the summer time, from Barnstaple to Bideford and a new route to Ilfracombe.
- The Regeneration and Economic Growth Programme had arranged several cultural activities with over 7000 participants as part of the Cultural Development Fund.
- The Pannier Market had been shortlisted in the heritage category of the Michelmores Property awards 2024.
- Works had commenced at Queen Street and Bear Street car parks and at Alexandra Road and Boutport Street.
- The Seafront play area in Ilfracombe had been formally opened in March 2024.
- Customer Focus Programme – the team continued to collate call value versus failure figures and these would be used to drive forward service improvements.
- 1500 people had signed up to the self-serve council tax portal.
- The new Customer Hub plans for Green Lanes were continuing and about to go out to tender.
- ICT continue to implement Cyber security measures and continued to roll out training to staff to ensure the Council is protected from Cyber-attacks. It had been agreed that cyber protection training would also be rolled out to members in the near future.
- The Environmental Enhancement Programme – Yeo Valley Woodland won the Community Woodland Category of the Community Woodland Devon competition.
- Ilfracombe Swimming pool had been awarded £85,000 from the Sport England Swimming Pool improvement fund to install solar and LED lighting at the swimming pool.
- Funding had been secured to draft a green hydrogen road map for Northern Devon.
- The major infrastructure works in the Recycling Hall had commenced.
- The Organisational Development Programme – A Leadership Graduate had been secured.
- A staff party funded by UNISON and the Senior Management Team was held to thank staff for their hard work.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive gave the following replies to questions asked:

- There was a financial consideration behind the purchase of Green Lanes but the key driver was around the Town Centre improvement through regeneration as well as to fill empty units.
- The budgeted net return figure accounted for borrowing costs and after all the service charges for the Centre, vacant unit provision and also included car park income.
- The loss of Wilko in 2023 had an impact on the income stream but staff worked hard to secure a new tenant in the unit but this came with an initial rent-free period, any financial improvement would be seen in 2024/25 when rent payments from the new tenant started to come through.
- An income volatility reserve had been set up previously and reinvestment into that reserve made to cushion future impacts that might affect income.
- The Collection Fund Reserve was set up to smooth the time lag in accounting of Business Rates to receipt of credit for business rates reliefs from Government.
- Any further rate relief gained could be added to the reserve to top up the remaining balance of £544,102, which the balance was felt to be more than comfortable going forwards.
- In relation to the Temporary Accommodation figure, shown on page 26 of the report, of £2.4 million spend on provision of accommodation was the capital programme cost of purchasing the properties.
- The revenue cost for the provision of prevention of homelessness, as shown on page 37 of the report, was £185,000 above the budgeted figure. There were reserves set up which were utilised in 2023/24 to help cushion these additional costs.

Councillor Prowse wanted to highlight the reduction in income, due to reduced parking fines; this showed a flexibility on the Council's part i.e. the introduction of ½ hour parking ticket options and the increased use of the mobile phone application Ringo to pay for parking online.

Councillor Prowse went on to declare an other interest in the Regeneration and Economic Growth Programme as he was a Trustee of Bridge Trust, this was declared for transparency only.

In response to a question about the Cultural Development Fund progress. The Head of Place, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that there was a £2.4 million budget for the Cultural Development Fund and the project was on track and works continuing. Improvement works for access to and use of the Bridge Chambers building was underway as part of this fund. In addition funding had been used for the creation of way finding signage which was progressing. 7000 people had been involved in cultural activities.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive added that the Capital Programme funding table on page 31 of the report showed the capital figure for this project and was on track.

Councillor C Leaver thanked everyone involved in the Fringe theatre fest which had held its 19th event at the weekend.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee in relation to the provision of temporary accommodation put in a national context other Local Authorities were buying up housing stock to use as temporary accommodation. A recently publicised report whereby Crawley, a Council with a similar sized budget to North Devon's, had been paying £5.7 million in temporary accommodation housing costs as opposed to £450,000 in 2019. They were paying £1 in every £3 collected by council tax in temporary accommodation costs.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive added that North Devon Council spent just under £500,000 on temporary accommodation last year the net cost of this would have been a lot higher had we not purchased our own properties.

Councillor Prowse asked for it to be minuted that this was a very positive report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the actions being taken to ensure that performance was at the desired level be noted;
- (b) That the contributions to/from earmarked reserves be approved as detailed in section 4.2 of the report;
- (c) That the movement on the Strategic Contingency Reserve (section 4.3 of the report) be noted;
- (d) That funds be released for the capital schemes listed in section 4.4.13 of the report;
- (e) That the sections dealing with Debt Management and General Debtors (sections 4.5 and 4.6 of the report) be noted.

RECOMMENDED:

- (f) That the Council approve the variations to the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27 as detailed in section 4.4.8 of the report.

23. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2023/24

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Governance (circulated previously), regarding the Annual Treasury Management 2023/24.

The Head of Governance highlighted the following:

- The Council was required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2023/24. This report met those requirements of both the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).
- The table shown on page 75 of the report detailed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) for the financial year 2023/24.
- The Councils CFR as at 31 March 2024 was just over £26 million.

- The figure included projects such as the building of the new leisure centre and the purchase of Green Lanes.
- A further £1.4 million of unfinanced capital expenditure was added to the CFR during 2023/24.
- Despite this increase in borrowing need the external borrowing from the PWLB remained at £3 million for the year.
- There was £2.8 million borrowing in relation to our finance leases bringing the total borrowing to £5.8 million for the year.
- The Council used £20.2 million of its own funds to make up the under borrowed position.
- In terms of investments held by the Council – the Council maintained an average balance of circa £13 million of internally managed funds. The internally managed funds earned £577,506 interest at an average rate of return of 4.45%.

Councillor Prowse gave thanks to the finance team for the report and noted that it was a positive that the Council could borrow from its own funds which lifted the burden on Council tax payers, this indicated good management.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That the annual treasury management report for 2023/24 be noted; and
- (b) That the actual 2023/24 prudential and treasury indicators be approved.

24. VEHICLE FLEET MAINTENANCE PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered a report by the Fleet Contract and Transport Manager (circulated previously), regarding Vehicle Fleet Maintenance Performance.

The Head of Environmental Enhancement highlighted the following:

- Prior to entering into contract with SFS, the Council had an aging waste and recycling collection vehicle fleet, which needed to be replaced and updated.
- Maintenance of the fleet was undertaken by the in-house workshop. It was a continual challenge to carry out the legally required vehicle inspections and react to the breakdowns and other repairs that were required due to the age of the vehicles and the consequential frequency of breakdowns.
- It was agreed at the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting of March 2021 that SFS be appointed as the primary contractor, commencing on 1 October 2021 for a seven-year contract.
- Since October 2021, the Council had acquired:
 - 11 x 26 tonne Refuse collection vehicles,
 - 17 x 12 tonne Romaquip recycling,
 - 2 x 7.5 tonne Romaquip recycling,
 - 16 vans,
 - 2 precinct sweepers,
 - 2 forklift trucks; and
 - 2 mowers (for the parks team).
- The Council had 12 refuse collection vehicles, five of which were replaced in October 2021, which resulted in immediate service improvements.

- In October 2023, six further vehicles were replaced and as a result missed collections due to vehicle breakdowns, had decreased. There was one further refuse vehicle to be replaced.
- With two spare 26 tonne vehicles and one spare 16 tonne vehicle on site, refuse collections could continue to operate seamlessly when breakdowns occurred.
- Furthermore, SFS had access to additional 26 tonne and 16 tonne vehicles through its hire business CTS, these could be swiftly commissioned to minimise service failures where identified.
- The HGV recycling fleet had now been completely replaced as of April 2024 with the introduction of 14 brand new vehicles and one dedicated spare. The fleet of 2014 registration vehicles were old and problematic.
- The collection service now provided to residents was vastly improved, with rounds previously not being completed due to breakdowns.
- Staff morale had improved with the introduction of new vehicles and this had helped to provide a real sense of ownership.

In response to a question regarding when it was hoped to have the whole fleet switched to electric vehicles. The Head of Environmental Enhancement acknowledged this was a good question and one that had been raised at a previous Strategy and Resources Committee meeting. He advised that there was no timescale of when a complete switch to electric or other alternative fuel would happen, as the technology was not yet available for larger fleet vehicles operating in a rural, hilly area like in North Devon. The Council's target to be Carbon neutral by 2030 would need to be looked at as it was possible we would not meet this target without significant off-setting. The team were continuing to look at different options for decarbonising the fleet and would bring future options reports to committee when more progress had been made.

The Fleet Contract and Transport Manager added that as and when vehicles were changed from owned to leased we would look at an electric switch. A report on the cost of this would be presented to a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the Vehicle Fleet Maintenance Performance report be noted.

25. MATERIAL RECOVERY FACILITY INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The Committee received an update the Material Recovery Facility Improvement project.

The Head of Environmental Enhancement gave the following updates:

- The works to improve the material recovery facility at Brynsworthy Environment Centre (BEC) had begun three weeks ago.
- Trenching works had commenced at the entrance to BEC and would be continuing down from the top of the site to the Yard, this was to lay cables and bring services to the site.
- Cleaning and painting of the steel beams in the process hall had begun with any spot repairs being undertaken if needed.

- Over the next few weeks' excavation for drainage channels and the pits for the new conveyer belts would start. The recyclables would be tipped into these conveyor pits for collection when the works were complete.
- Pipe works and electrics would be fitted in the roof void.
- Works in the process hall would stop during August as this was a really busy month for collections. To avoid any disruption to collections it was decided to halt works in the process hall for the month.
- The new modular office building and water tanks would be fitted at the end of August and completed by December 2024.
- The baler system would arrive in pieces throughout December ready for the 35-day installation with completion due end of January 2025.

In response to whether, there would be any disruption likely to collections. The Head of Environmental Enhancement said he could not guarantee there would not be any disruption but that he would ensure members were informed if this did happen. Contingency plans were in place.

26. APPROVAL OF S106 FUNDS - CCTV, ANCHORWOOD BANK

The Committee considered a report by the Place Manager (Town Centres), (circulated previously), regarding Approval of S106 Funds – CCTV, Anchorwood Bank.

The Head of Place, Property and Regeneration highlighted the following:

- There was currently no Council CCTV provision in the area which was considered a strategic location and the S106 agreement connected with the planning permission (for application 60370) specifically provided for the provision of a CCTV contribution to address this need.
- Due to an increase in 5G and Wi-Fi all working on the same 5Ghz frequency as the current Wi-Fi links in the area along with the new buildings compromising the line of sight and resulting in significant buffering, in order to link the camera back to the CCTV control room there was a need to upgrade the Wi-Fi links.
- The additional camera would be managed in adherence with the Council's North Devon Public Space CCTV Scheme as a strategic location, included in the Data Protection and Impact Assessment and operated under the Council's CCTV Code of Practice ensuring that it was managed in full compliance with the regulatory framework.
- The cost of providing the camera and the upgraded links is £11,170 excluding contingency. It was proposed that £11,170 was funding from the S106 capital budget from the following source:

Development Description	Application	Amount
Anchorwood Bank, Taw Wharf	60370	£11,170.00

In response to a question on whether it was considered that there was a problem in the area. The Head of Place, Property and Regeneration advised that she was not aware of any issue but that this was following the process of what was agreed in the S106 provision. The provision was for one camera.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) £11,170 be allocated for the provision of a CCTV camera and associated Wi-Fi links to the CCTV hub (control room) to serve Anchorwood Bank development;
- (b) Contract procedure rules be waived to enter into a contract with the Council's current CCTV contractor to install the additional camera and upgrade the Wi-Fi links, on the basis that the current contractor has the knowledge of the current system; and
- (c) The outcomes of the Equality Impact Assessment as summarised in paragraph 6 of the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED that Council vary the Capital programme by £11,170 and the funds are released.

27. NORTH DEVON COUNCIL OFF-STREET (PARKING PLACES) ORDER - VARIATION

The Committee considered a report by the Parking Manager (circulated previously) regarding North Devon Council Off-Street (Parking Places) Order – Variation.

The Head of Property, Place and Regeneration highlighted the following:

- This variation report was seeking three areas of amendments within the Council's Off-Street (Parking Places) Order.
- The first was an amendment to the boundary of Queen Street/ Bear Street to accommodate the new access from Alexandra Road and to agree the new name of the combined Bear Street and Queen Street car parks, to Barnstaple Central: this had been discussed with local businesses and the key stakeholders.
- The second was for the introduction of a ½ hour fee charge at Belle Meadow car park, which had been requested by users of the nearby medical centre.
- The third was to amend the boundary area of the Tarka car park. The map appended to the report at Appendix B showed an incorrect red line this would be corrected to only include the un-adopted highway.

Councillor Bell declared an other registrable interest as a member of Braunton Parish Council who was named within the Strategy, such a declaration was made for transparency reasons only.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the boundary outline to Queen Street/Bear Street car park be amended to incorporate the new access into and out of the car park from Alexandra Road;
- (b) That the combined Queen Street and Bear Street car parks be renamed to Barnstaple Central car park;

- (c) To approve a proposed tariff change at Belle Meadow car park, to include the ½ hour 50p fee;
- (d) To amend the boundary of the Tarka car park, to include the identified access roads (as seen on the map in Appendix B of the report – to be amended to only include North Devon Council land as reported verbally to Members); and
- (e) That delegated power be given to the Head of Place, Property and Regeneration in consultation with the Leader, Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer to make the Order following consultation subject to there being no material objections or amendments necessary.

28. SITE AT SOUTH VIEW, BRATTON FLEMING

The Committee considered a report by the Property Manager (circulated previously) regarding Site at South View, Bratton Fleming.

Councillor Lane declared a non-registrable interest in this item as he knew the owner of the site but, following consultation with the Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, he made it clear that this was not a close association and that he therefore did not consider that this interest clouded his judgement.

The Property Manager highlighted the following:

- This report related to a site disposed of by the Council as a surplus asset in October 2014.
- The subject site was a small garden plot adjacent to an area of open space still owned by the Council.
- The site was subject to an overage provision for an uplift in value once developed.
- There was now a four bedroomed house, partially completed on the site.
- A report was presented to Strategy and Resources Committee in June 2023 with regard to the overage provisions on the site and vehicular access and parking.
- Members resolved at the June 2023 Committee that the current owner pay £5,000 to release the overage and a sum of £50,000 for the right to create a vehicular access and parking to the property. This being by granting a right of way, the route of which was at the discretion of Council Officers, as seen in Appendix A of the report.
- Following that decision, the site owner reverted back to the Property Manager requesting an additional area for parking be agreed in order for them to be able to dispose of the four bedroomed property begin built on this site.
- The site owner increased their offer of £50,000 for the access rights to £55,000, with the £5,000 to conclude the overage provision, bringing this to a total of £60,000, on the basis of the following:
 - Freehold title to land hatched blue on the attached plan (as seen in Appendix A of the report) be included for the provision of parking, this was still in Council ownership.
 - A right of way for both pedestrians and vehicles over the land to the south of the blue hatched land marked out as a driveway.
 - The right to undertake works on Council retained land to form the gravel driveway at the site owner's expense and thereafter maintain it

into perpetuity as an ongoing responsibility to future owners, as indicated on the attached plan (Appendix A of this report).

- The Council agree to the right to bring services into the property as indicated on the plan, and thereafter maintain and use; and
- The works to set out the retained parking spaces to be carried out by the site owner at their expense as set out in the attached drawing, as seen on the site plan at 4.8 of the report.

In response to a question about what overage was. The Property Manager explained that overage or claw back referred to an agreement that was placed as a means of gaining a share of the uplift in value from the future development of a site.

RESOLVED that the payment of £60,000 be approved to release the overage and grant a right to create a vehicular access to the subject property with an additional defined area of the Council's adjacent site for parking (as can be seen at section 4.8 of the report).

29. 2024 UPDATE OF NORTH DEVON COUNCIL'S CARBON, ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY PLAN

The Committee considered a report by the Sustainability and Climate Officer (circulated previously) regarding 2024 Update of North Devon Council's Carbon, Environment and Biodiversity Plan.

The Sustainability and Climate Officer highlighted the following:

- In July 2019, North Devon Council signed up to the Devon Climate Emergency Declaration. The Council were committed to having a carbon plan and reviewing the plan annually.
- The first Carbon, Environment and Biodiversity Plan was published in June 2022.
- This report was the second annual review.
- The Carbon, Environment and Biodiversity Plan was a lengthy document and not easy to read.
- Appendix A of the report showed the reviewed plan in its new format.
- The report had been worked on jointly with Torridge District Council and North Devon Council's Climate Action Working Team to reduce down the size of the document.

Councillor R Knight, a member of the Climate Action Team and Lead member for Climate and Biodiversity welcomed the new report.

The Chair commented the new format was well organised and easy to read.

RESOLVED that the publication of the 2024 update of the Carbon, Environment and Biodiversity Plan for North Devon Council be approved.

30. CAR PARK STRATEGY - NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

The Committee considered a report by the Car Parking Manager (circulated previously) regarding Car Parking Strategy for North Devon.

The Head of Property, Place and Regeneration highlighted the following:

- The draft Car Park Strategy 2024-2027 (as seen at Appendix A of the report) was a framework for how the Council would manage its parking services.
- Car parking charges changes would still come to Members annually as part of the budget setting process.
- The strategy identified the team structure delivering the car parking service and committed to providing the service in a positive and customer focused way.
- Section 5 of the strategy (as seen in Appendix A of the report), set out the Council's approach to charges and tariffs including permits, variety of payment methods as well as car park designation, business use, EV charging points, signage, our approach to third party car parks, parking bay sizes, coach and lorry parking and enforcement.
- Section 6 of the strategy (as seen in Appendix A of the report), focused on the Council's approach to our car parks in our main towns; Barnstaple, Ilfracombe and South Molton, recognising the different needs of these individual places.
- Section 7 of the strategy (as seen in Appendix A of the report), dealt with the management of Council's Coastal car parks.
- Section 8 of the strategy (as seen in Appendix A of the report), set out the Council's approach to monitoring the condition of its car parks and a further Programme for this was recognised as an Action later in the strategy.
- Section 9 of the strategy (as seen in Appendix A of the report), set out the Service recommendations for improved service delivery over the four-year period of this strategy.
- Section 10 of the strategy (as seen in Appendix A of the report), have regards to the following amendments:
 - Ensure that the website was actively updated to ensure accurate information was available for the public,
 - Include additional information about electric vehicular charging points, which could include a separate strategy; and
 - That the car parking strategy included the Council's approach to managing abandoned and un-taxed vehicles in its car parks.

In response to a question on whether the strategy would be circulated to all members for input. The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive advised that the strategy could be circulated to all members to note but that it was seeking adoption today.

In response to the classification of Croyde's car park as Coastal and the associated costs, where it provided for locals who worked in the village. The Chief Executive advised that workshops were held for members to have their say on budget setting issues and that a separate working group would be set up specifically for car park charges review for the coming financial year.

In relation to future withdrawing of cash payments for car parking. The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive advised that the use of cash to pay to park would be kept under review but that there were no plans to remove this payment method.

The Lead Member for Resources and Commercialisation was invited to comment, she welcomed the report and in particular, the freeing up of parking spaces due to abandoned vehicles and went on to advise the committee that many visitors to the area were often reluctant to use contactless methods for payment and preferred to use cash in car park machines.

RESOLVED that the Car Parking Strategy including the following minor amendments be adopted:

- (a) That the North Devon Council website is updated to ensure accurate information is available for the public;
- (b) To include additional information about electric vehicular charging points, which could include a separate strategy; and
- (c) To include North Devon Council's approach to managing abandoned and untaxed vehicles within North Devon Council car parks.

31. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2023-2027

The Committee considered a report by the Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer (circulated previously) regarding the Procurement Strategy 2023-2027.

The Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer invited the Lead Member for Resources and Commercialisation, Helen Walker to introduce the item.

The Lead Member for Resources and Commercialisation advised of the following:

- Having a strategy which set out how the Council would carry out its business was a very good thing.
- The procurement strategy had been updated and the Council had signed up to work with the Devon County Council procurement team which it was hoped would make improvements on procurement of items going forwards.
- This covered all areas of the Council's corporate plan.
- Items procured would not always be the cheapest but certainly would be the best item.

Councillor gave thanks to the team for their work on this strategy.

The Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer highlighted the following:

- The Council's Procurement Strategy expired at the end of 2022. The Council had been part of the Devon Districts Procurement Strategy since 2019 and had joined in the development of a new Devon Districts Procurement Strategy but the preparation of this new Strategy had been subject to delays.
- The Council has since lost its Procurement Officer and has signed up to partnership working with Devon Procurement Services, which was Devon County Council's procurement team. Devon Procurement Services already works with Mid Devon District Council, East Devon District Council, Plymouth City Council, Exmoor National Park and Dartmoor National Park on the same basis.

- Devon Procurement Services has a Procurement Strategy which Devon County Council has adopted. The Procurement Strategy they have produced is such that its partner authorities are similarly able to adopt it albeit they are also able to personalise the Procurement Strategy to suit their authority but keeping the overriding themes which are common to all.
- The key themes covered included climate emergency, supporting the economy such as local suppliers and SME's, Social Value, Additional Transformation, Contract Management, Value for money, Economic Commercialisation and development, Working efficiently, risk appetite, Work force skills development as well as that of Suppliers, Transparency and legal framework.
- Not all the listed themes would be delivered for every single procurement but was a framework for Officers to keep these themes in mind when going through the procurement exercise.
- There was a sound basis for holding a Procurement Strategy in common with Devon Procurement Services as the service they provided ensured that template documents and how advice was provided had the Procurement Strategy in mind. It was also beneficial for suppliers who did not have to deal with a different set of rules and requirements in different parts of the County.

The Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer highlighted a correction in the report at section 2.1 reference to Appendix 1 should refer to Appendix A.

Councillor D Knight welcomed the strategy which would bring the Council into line with other Authorities.

Councillor R Knight welcomed that the inclusion of being mindful of the climate and environment emergency.

In response to a question about who would make a decision if a procurement came down to a clash between climate versus cost. The Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer set out that at present officers set evaluation criteria in procurement procedures. The Chief Executive confirmed a decision would need to be made on this and a debate held to agree how the Council would proceed in terms of the potential for Member involvement in setting evaluation criteria. The framework presented today did not answer those questions so a discussion around how members would be given oversight of this type of conflict would need to be had.

RESOLVED that the Procurement Strategy 2023-2027 as included in the report at Appendix A be adopted.

Chair

The meeting ended at 11.46 am

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.