

## **Council**

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### **MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2024 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.**

#### **Present:**

Cllr James Sheppard (Chairman), Cllr Andrew Davis (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Phil Alford, Cllr Liz Alstrom, Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill, Cllr David Bowler, Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Richard Budden, Cllr Trevor Carbin, Cllr Daniel Cave, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Zoë Clewer, Cllr Kevin Daley, Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Matthew Dean, Cllr Dr Monica Devendran, Cllr Adrian Foster, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Howard Greenman, Cllr Sven Hocking, Cllr Nick Holder, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Peter Hutton, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Johnny Kidney, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Edward Kirk, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Kathryn Macdermid, Cllr Dr Brian Mathew, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Dr Mark McClelland, Cllr Charles McGrath, Cllr Dominic Muns, Cllr Nabil Najjar, Cllr Kelvin Nash, Cllr Christopher Newbury, Cllr Jack Oatley, Cllr Paul Oatway QPM, Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Bill Parks, Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney, Cllr Antonio Piazza, Cllr Tony Pickernell, Cllr Horace Prickett, Cllr Nic Puntis, Cllr Tamara Reay, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr Martin Smith, Cllr Caroline Thomas, Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Mark Verbinnen, Cllr David Vigar, Cllr Iain Wallis, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Philip Whitehead, Cllr Suzanne Wickham, Cllr Christopher Williams, Cllr Graham Wright and Cllr Robert Yuill

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#### **19 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were previously received from Cllrs Helen Belcher OBE, Steve Bucknell, Ernie Clark, Sarah Gibson, and Tom Rounds.

The Chairman also accepted apologies from those Members who had attended the ordinary meeting but had needed to leave before it had concluded, as follows:

Cllrs Clare Cape, Sam Charleston, Mark Connolly, Caroline Corbin, Brian Dalton, Ross Henning, Ruth Hopkinson, Mel Jacob, George Jeans, Jacqui Lay, Ian McLennan, Dr Nick Murry, Andrew Oliver, Stewart Palmen, Rich Rogers, Ricky Rogers, Paul Sample JP, Ian Thorn, Tim Trimble, and Derek Walters.

#### **20 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

#### **21 Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

#### **22 Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements received.

## 23 **External Auditors Statutory Recommendation**

### Introduction

The Chairman invited Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management, and Strategic Planning, to present a report providing detail of the statutory recommendation issued by the council's External Auditor, Deloitte. This was in relation to the Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

Cllr Botterill explained that the matter related to the technical valuing of assets held by the council, and that as a result of attempts to further regular the audit process there had been an unintended consequence resulting in many councils facing considerable delays with hundreds of delayed audits.

He expressed concern that the conclusion was not proportionate, and that the methodology of asset valuations used by the auditors did not reflect that assets such as roads or bridges were not trading or tradeable assets. It was stated the recommendation and judgement had no impact upon working capital or the finances of the council.

Cllr Botterill concluded that it was a requirement that the statutory recommendation be considered by Full Council within 30 days of it being issued, and that the Audit and Governance Committee had considered the draft report and approved a response. This would enable the council to move forward in relation to other delayed accounts. It was proposed that the meeting note the action taken, and this was seconded by Cllr Iain Wallis, Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.

### Group Leaders and Chairman comments

Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council, noted that the issue of delayed accounts was being faced by councils across the country, and that the response proposed would enable the council to move forward.

Cllr Gordon King, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, supported the preceding comments, and that he was content there was an action plan to work through what was demanded by the external audit process.

Cllr Wallis made reference to hundreds of external audits being outstanding nationally. He stated he was impressed with the work the auditors had put in and the constructive criticism offered. He thanked the Audit and Governance Committee for its work and stated that the issue had been thoroughly reviewed.

### Debate

During debate the long delays towards completing the 2019/20 accounts was noted, and that the process should be mostly concluded with the resolution of the meeting. It was stated that the issue was a technical one not financial, and that the statutory recommendation did not reflect current concerns regarding the finances of the council.

A comment was also raised about whether there had been any external legal

advice regarding the issue of valuation of assets, noting the council had a statutory duty to maintain many roads without owning those assets.

There was also a comment criticising the level of information on the matter that had been provided to Members directly throughout the process, instead relying on updates to the Audit and Governance Committee, and requesting that where there were concerns that these be raised more prominently for the attention of all Members who could not be expected to be familiar with all council papers that were issued. In response a comment was made on the public reporting on the issue of council audits, assurances from the Audit and Governance Committee, and reference within some previous reports to Council.

At the conclusion of debate, it was then,

**Resolved:**

**That Council consider the Statutory Recommendation and note that the response to the section 24 Statutory Recommendation from the External Auditor had been approved by the Audit & Governance Committee and that response will be returned to the External Auditor following this meeting of Full Council.**

*There was a recorded vote on the proposal*

*Votes for the Motion (63)*

*Votes against the Motion (2)*

*Votes in abstention (2)*

*Details of the recorded vote are attached to these minutes.*

(Duration of meeting: 8.25 - 8.45 pm)

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## Full Council Extraordinary Meeting - 20 February 2024 - Members Attendance

Councillor Name	Time in (Meeting start – 20:25)	Time Out (Meeting close – 20:45)
Phil Alford	20:25	Meeting close
Liz Alstrom	20:25	Meeting close
Helen Belcher OBE	Apologies	Apologies
Chuck Berry	20:25	Meeting close
Ian Blair-Pilling	20:25	Meeting close
Nick Botterill	20:25	Meeting close
David Bowler	20:25	Meeting close
Richard Britton	20:25	Meeting close
Allison Bucknell	20:25	Meeting close
Steve Bucknell	Apologies	Apologies
Richard Budden	20:25	Meeting close
Clare Cape	Apologies	Apologies
Trevor Carbin	20:25	Meeting close
Daniel Cave	20:25	Meeting close
Mary Champion	20:25	Meeting close
Sam Charleston	Apologies	Apologies
Pauline Church	20:25	Meeting close
Ernie Clark	Apologies	Apologies
Richard Clewer	20:25	Meeting close
Zoë Clewer	20:25	Meeting close
Mark Connolly	Apologies	Apologies
Caroline Corbin	Apologies	Apologies
Kevin Daley	20:25	Meeting close
Brian Dalton	Apologies	Apologies
Jane Davies	20:25	Meeting close
Andrew Davis	20:25	Meeting close
Matthew Dean	20:25	Meeting close
Dr Monica Devendran	20:25	Meeting close
Adrian Foster	20:25	Meeting close
Sarah Gibson	Apologies	Apologies
Gavin Grant	20:25	Meeting close
Howard Greenman	20:25	Meeting close
Ross Henning	Apologies	Apologies
Sven Hocking	20:25	Meeting close
Nick Holder	20:25	Meeting close
Ruth Hopkinson	Apologies	Apologies
Jon Hubbard	20:25	Meeting close
Peter Hutton	20:25	Meeting close
Tony Jackson	20:25	Meeting close
Mel Jacob	Apologies	Apologies

Simon Jacobs	20:25	Meeting close
George Jeans	Apologies	Apologies
Johnny Kidney	20:25	Meeting close
Carole King	20:25	Meeting close
Gordon King	20:25	Meeting close
Edward Kirk	20:25	Meeting close
Jerry Kunkler	20:25	Meeting close
Jacqui Lay	Apologies	Apologies
Kathryn MacDermid	20:25	Meeting close
Dr Brian Mathew	20:25	Meeting close
Laura Mayes	20:25	Meeting close
Dr Mark McClelland	20:25	Meeting close
Charles McGrath	20:25	Meeting close
Ian McLennan	Apologies	Apologies
Dominic Muns	20:25	Meeting close
Dr Nick Murry	Apologies	Apologies
Nabil Najjar	20:25	Meeting close
Kelvin Nash	20:25	Meeting close
Christopher Newbury	20:25	Meeting close
Ashley O'Neill	20:25	Meeting close
Jack Oatley	20:25	Meeting close
Paul Oatway QPM	20:25	Meeting close
Andrew Oliver	Apologies	Apologies
Stewart Palmen	Apologies	Apologies
Bill Parks	20:25	Meeting close
Sam Pearce-Kearney	20:25	Meeting close
Antonio Piazza	20:25	Meeting close
Tony Pickernell	20:25	Meeting close
Horace Prickett	20:25	Meeting close
Nic Puntis	20:25	Meeting close
Tamara Reay	20:25	Meeting close
Pip Ridout	20:25	Meeting close
Rich Rogers	Apologies	Apologies
Ricky Rogers	Apologies	Apologies
Tom Rounds	Apologies	Apologies
Paul Sample JP	Apologies	Apologies
Mike Sankey	20:25	Meeting close
Jonathon Seed	20:25	Meeting close
James Sheppard	20:25	Meeting close
Martin Smith	20:25	Meeting close
Caroline Thomas	20:25	Meeting close
Ian Thorn	Apologies	Apologies
Elizabeth Threlfall	20:25	Meeting close
Jo Trigg	20:25	Meeting close
Tim Trimble	Apologies	Apologies
Mark Verbinnen	20:25	Meeting close

David Vigar	20:25	Meeting close
Iain Wallis	20:25	Meeting close
Derek Walters	Apologies	Apologies
Bridget Wayman	20:25	Meeting close
Stuart Wheeler	20:25	Meeting close
Philip Whitehead	20:25	Meeting close
Suzanne Wickham	20:25	Meeting close
Christopher Williams	20:25	Meeting close
Graham Wright	20:25	Meeting close
Robert Yuill	20:25	Meeting close

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## Recorded Vote – Council (Extraordinary Meeting) – 20 February 2024

### Item 8 – External Auditors Statutory Recommendation

That Council consider the Statutory Recommendation and note that the response to the section 24 Statutory Recommendation from the External Auditor had been approved by the Audit & Governance Committee and that response will be returned to the External Auditor following this meeting of Full Council.

Vote	Councillors	Count
For	Cllr Phil Alford, Cllr Liz Alstrom, Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill, Cllr David Bowler, Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Richard Budden, Cllr Daniel Cave, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Zoë Clewer, Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Matthew Dean, Cllr Dr Monica Devendran, Cllr Adrian Foster, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Howard Greenman, Cllr Sven Hocking, Cllr Nick Holder, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Peter Hutton, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Johnny Kidney, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Edward Kirk, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Kathryn Macdermid, Cllr Dr Brian Mathew, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Dr Mark McClelland, Cllr Charles McGrath, Cllr Dominic Muns, Cllr Kelvin Nash, Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Jack Oatley, Cllr Paul Oatway QPM, Cllr Bill Parks, Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney, Cllr Antonio Piazza, Cllr Tony Pickernell, Cllr Nic Puntis, Cllr Tamara Reay, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr Martin Smith, Cllr Caroline Thomas, Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Mark Verbinnen, Cllr David Vigar, Cllr Iain Wallis, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Philip Whitehead, Cllr Suzanne Wickham, Cllr Christopher Williams, Cllr Graham Wright and Cllr Robert Yuill	63
Against	Cllr Trevor Carbin and Cllr Christopher Newbury	2
Abstain	Cllr Andrew Davis and Cllr James Sheppard	2

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