

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Brympton Way, YEOVIL, Somerset BA20 2HT on Thursday 4 September 2014.**

(9.30 am - 12.10 pm)

Present:

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

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|--------------------|-----------------|
| Tim Carroll | Sylvia Seal |
| Peter Gubbins | Peter Seib |
| Henry Hobhouse | Angie Singleton |
| Shane Pledger | Nick Weeks |
| Jo Roundell Greene | |

Also Present:

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Dave Bulmer | Nigel Mermagen |
| Tim Inglefield | David Norris |
| Tony Lock | Colin Winder |

Officers

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Mark Williams | Chief Executive |
| Rina Singh | Strategic Director (Place & Performance) |
| Donna Parham | Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) |
| Laurence Willis | Assistant Director (Environment) |
| Martin Woods | Assistant Director (Economy) |
| Kim Close | Assistant Director (Communities) |
| Helen Rutter | Assistant Director (Communities) |
| Andrew Gillespie | Area Development Manager (West) |
| Colin McDonald | Corporate Strategic Housing Manager |
| Emily McGuinness | Scrutiny Manager |
| Angela Cox | Democratic Services Manager |

Note: All decisions were approved without dissent unless shown otherwise.

39. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 6th August 2014, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

40. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Vega Sturgess, Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus).

41. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Tim Carroll declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 13: Lease of floor at Churchfield, Wincanton, as Chairman of the Wincanton Community Venture (Balsam Centre). He left the room during consideration of this item.

42. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public present.

43. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman provided Members with an update on his meetings with other Somerset Council Leaders and the Secretary of State regarding the works being carried out to mitigate future flooding in the district. He confirmed that the agreed flood defence works were slowly progressing, paid for by Government, Environment Agency and Somerset County Council funding, however, he cautioned that South Somerset would be asked to fund the maintenance of the completed works which could prove expensive in the future.

He also reminded Members that their Members Room had moved to the yellow floor of the building and he encouraged Members to make use of it.

44. Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report - 1st Quarter 2014/15 (Agenda Item 6)

The Performance Manager advised that there was only one performance exception for the quarter, that being planning appeal decisions allowed against the authority's decision to refuse. The number of complaints received had also reduced by 9% compared to the previous year.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Strategic Director (Place and Performance) advised that:-

- The 10% of staff sickness attributed to workplace stress had not altered for some years and there was no correlation between it and the recent changes within the organisation.
- The workforce planning figure did not include casual or agency staff.
- The Council did have a current Workforce Strategy which was regularly reviewed by the HR Manager.
- The Lean Service reviews ensured that processes within a service improved whilst standards remained the same and sometimes this was achieved with less staff.

During discussion, several Members expressed concern about the planning appeal decisions allowed against the authority's decision to refuse and it was felt that the Planning Inspectorate had altered their outlook on development. Some discussion ensued on the possible need for further training of Members in planning issues and it was agreed that this should be discussed at the next Area Chairman's meeting.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the contents of the first quarterly performance and complaints monitoring report for 2014/15.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

1. Noted and commented on the corporate performance monitoring report for 2014/15;
2. Noted the additional information concerning the 2013/14 Annual Corporate Performance Report.

Reason: To review the corporate performance monitoring report covering the period from 1st April – 30th June 2014 (Quarter 1).

45. **Affordable Housing Development Programme (Agenda Item 7)**

The Corporate Strategic Housing Manager introduced the report to Members and drew their attention to several details in the report. He noted that the Government's mortgage rescue scheme funding ended in March 2014 and it was proposed to create a contingency fund for SSDC to continue to offer the service as part of homeless prevention.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee and members of the Executive, the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager advised that:

- The Government's mortgage rescue criteria would be refined for SSDC use rather than entirely new criteria written.
- There was always a risk that Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding could be withdrawn if there was a change in government however, if that happened it was likely that allocated schemes would be honoured and only the unallocated element withdrawn.
- Housing Associations were obliged to recycle their useable receipts into new housing schemes as part of their HCA funded programme in order to reduce the headline grant rate.
- Yarlington Homes tenants had a preserved right to buy their home if they were originally council tenants at the point of transfer and had remained Yarlington Homes tenants since.
- People in shared ownership properties tended not to use the mortgage rescue scheme.
- There was a relationship between the amount of capital grant received to build a property for rent and the final rent charged to tenants as greater the grants received by a Housing Association to build a property, then the rent tended to be lower. Inevitably this meant as the capital subsidy reduced, the revenue subsidy (via Housing Benefit) increased.
- The Local Housing Allowance was originally set by reference to the prevailing private rents for housing benefit purposes but had since been frozen and effectively was a cap on the level of housing benefit that could be received for each type of property. Other caps also existed such as the overall benefits cap for a family and the spare room subsidy (so-called 'Bedroom Tax').

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree the recommendations of the report.

- RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:
- a. Noted the outturn position of the Affordable Housing Development Programme for 2013/14 [*ref section 6*];
 - b. Confirmed the de-allocation of funds from Raglan Housing Association, totalling £ 993,000, from the following schemes [*ref paragraphs 9.3 & 9.4*];
 - Great Western Road, Chard Phase 2 (£460,000)
 - Rosebank, Millfield, Chard (£390,000, but leaving £98,000 allocated)
 - Font Villas, West Coker (£143,000)
 - c. Confirmed the de-allocation of £180,000 from Knightstone Housing's scheme at Furnham Road (phase II) [*ref paragraph 9.5*];
 - d. Confirmed the de-allocation of £80,000 from Yarlington's purchase and repair scheme at Crewkerne, reducing the commitment to £89,000 [*ref paragraph 9.6*];
 - e. Agreed the reduction of the remaining Bought not Built allocation for Jephson Housing from £401,000 to £200,000 [*ref section 10*];
 - f. Approved the allocation of £240,000 from the rural contingency fund to Yarlington Housing to underwrite Broadway Farm, Merriott, subject to appropriate planning permission [*ref section 11*];
 - g. Agreed the setting aside of £276,500 to create a mortgage rescue contingency fund [*ref section 12*];
 - h. Confirmed that individual allocations for mortgage rescues from this fund be delegated to the Portfolio Holder, subject to a formal report [*ref section 12*];
 - i. Confirmed the allocation of an additional £14,000 to Knightstone Housing in order to make the purchased property in Somerton available on a hybrid rent [*ref paragraphs 13.2 & 13.3*];
 - j. Agreed the allocation of £65,000 to Yarlington Housing to enable the buying back of a shared ownership property and make it available as a property for rent [*ref paragraph 13.4*];
 - k. Confirmed that the Housing Association selection review process be brought forward by one year to be undertaken broadly in the manner described in the report, if possible in collaboration with Sedgemoor and Mendip District Councils, or any other neighbouring local housing authority that may choose to join in [*ref section 14*];
 - l. Agreed that authority to confirm the outcome of that review be delegated to the Portfolio Holder, subject to a formal report [*ref section 14*].

Reason: To update the Executive on the final position of the Affordable Housing Development Programme for 2013/14 and future prospects in the light of recent confirmations of grant from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

46. Update on the creation of a Day Centre and related accommodation at 80 South Street, Yeovil (Agenda Item 8)

The Corporate Strategic Housing Manager said that although the project was not straightforward, some progress has been made by securing funding from the Avon and Somerset Rough Sleepers Group and the Bournemouth Churches Housing Association. Issues still remained about physical aspects such as the damp in the property and the terms of the lease, which would be reported again to the District Executive.

In response to questions from the Members, the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager and the Assistant Director (Environment) advised that:

- It was hoped that Bournemouth Churches would take the lease on the building within the next 3 months but it could take 9 to 12 months for the works to finally be completed.
- Capital funding from the Rough Sleeper Group (Government funding) and BCHA would create the day centre but the day to day running would be operated by various agencies.
- The accommodation part of the project would be self-funding, following receipt of capital subsidy from SSDC.

During discussion, Members expressed their support for the project and hoped it would be concluded as soon as possible.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the progress made in delivering the day centre at 80 South Street, Yeovil.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the progress made thus far in delivering a Day Centre and Related Accommodation at 80 South Street, Yeovil.

Reason: To update members of the progress of the creation of a Day Centre and Related Accommodation at 80 South Street, Yeovil

47. **Community Right to Bid - Nominations Received for Assets of Community Value (Agenda Item 9)**

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that the presentation of the information in the table was currently being reviewed to make it clearer to read. In response to questions from the Members, she confirmed that:-

- The Castle Cary Constitutional Club remained on the register but was exempt from disposal as it was in the hands of the Receiver. There was currently an appeal to remove it from the register.
- The Montacute Working Mens Club moratorium period had passed with no community interest bids received and she would check the current status of the asset.

During discussion, it was noted that whilst most of the assets listed were public houses, there was no intention that they would be allowed to be converted into dwellings in the future.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the report.

Reason: To inform members of the nominations received from community groups in South Somerset using the Community Right to Bid.

48. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 10)

The following additions and amendments to the Forward Plan were noted:

- Investing in Infrastructure – Progressing SSDC Projects (confidential) – October 2014
- Scrutiny Review of Somerset Civil Contingency Partnership – moved to November 2014
- Main Modifications to the Local Plan (2006 – 2028) submission to the Inspector – November 2014
- Securing future facilities for Chard – moved to December 2014
- Anti - Social Behaviour - New Tools and Powers – February 2015

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A with the following amendments;

- Investing in Infrastructure – Progressing SSDC Projects (confidential) – October 2014
- Scrutiny Review of Somerset Civil Contingency Partnership – moved to November 2014
- Main Modifications to the Local Plan (2006 – 2028) submission to the Inspector – November 2014
- Securing future facilities for Chard – moved to December 2014
- Anti - Social Behaviour - New Tools and Powers – February 2015

2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document

49. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 2nd October 2014 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

50. Exclusion of the Press and Public (Agenda Item 12)

RESOLVED: That the following item be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under Paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

51. Confidential - Lease of Floor at Churchfield, Wincanton (Agenda Item 13)

The Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change introduced the report and reminded the Committee of the Council's policy to minimise its property costs.

During discussion, the majority of Members were supportive of proposals and suggested a capital sum to complete the necessary conversion works. This was proposed and seconded and on being put to the vote, was carried (voting: 5 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention).

RESOLVED: That the District Executive agreed the amended recommendations of the report.

Reason: To agree the principle of the conversion of the lower ground floor plus an outside area at Churchfield, Wincanton for commercial let, and to delegate responsibility for decision making to the relevant Members and Officers within the framework indicated.

(Voting: 5 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention)

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Chairman

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Date