

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 5 February 2015**.

(9.30 am - 1.50 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:

| | |
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| Carol Goodall | Martin Wale |
| Graham Middleton | Colin Winder |
| Sue Steele | |

Officers

| | |
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| Mark Williams | Chief Executive |
| Rina Singh | Strategic Director (Place & Performance) |
| Vega Sturgess | Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) |
| Ian Clarke | Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) |
| Donna Parham | Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) |
| Steve Joel | Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being) |
| Helen Rutter | Assistant Director (Communities) |
| Alasdair Bell | Environmental Health Manager |
| Steve Brewer | Community Safety & Projects Co-ordinator |
| Vicki Dawson | Principal Environmental Protection Officer |
| Mike Holliday | HR Manager |
| David Julian | Economic Development Manager |
| Alice Knight | Welfare & Careline Manager |
| Emily McGuinness | Scrutiny Manager |
| Heidi Hallam | South West Local Enterprise Partnership Manager |
| Angela Cox | Democratic Services Manager |

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

121. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 8th January 2015, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

122. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

There were no apologies for absence.

123. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

124. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public present.

125. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that he had attended a meeting of Chief Executives and Leaders of Somerset Councils the previous day to discuss the Somerset County Council proposal regarding the Pathway for Adults arrangements to discontinue all homeless duties. The recommendation of the meeting was for SCC to continue to fund the service for a further 6 months to enable full consultation to take place.

126. Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (presentation) (Agenda Item 6)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development introduced Heidi Hallam, the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Partnership Manager who was attending to explain the role between LEPs and the District Councils.

The LEP Partnership Manager provided a full presentation on the role of the LEPs in England and the lobbying and enabling work they carried out. She explained their purpose to deliver transformational economic change for the area and reposition the Heart of the South West's profile and reputation - nationally and globally - as a business location to invest in through its Strategic Economic Plan for 2014-30. She explained the organisation, its partners and its priorities to develop and deliver investment in the area.

In response to questions from Members, the LEP Partnership Manager advised that:-

- LEP had been lobbying the Government regarding Broadband for rural areas and there should be an improvement in the Connecting Somerset & Dorset programme shortly.
- She would follow up individual instances of Broadband issues and asked that Members contact her with detailed evidence.
- The LEP had no funding of its own for projects but it could help with partner organisations who had discretionary funding.
- A scoring mechanism was being designed to assist projects to assess their eligibility and this would be shortly available on the LEP website.
- LAG and Leader funding was not channelled through the LEP but they were key partners. She would ensure the ensure the Yeovil Western Corridor link was added to the list of projects to be progressed.

During discussion, several Members regretted the slow roll-out of Broadband by the Connecting Somerset & Dorset programme, particularly the ringfencing of business parks by BT which was affecting many small and medium employers in the area.

At the conclusion of the debate, the chairman thanked the Partnership Manager for attending and providing an informative presentation. It was agreed the presentation slides would be published with the minutes.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to note the content of the report and the accompanying presentation made by the LEP Partnership Manager

127. Somerset Waste Partnership Business Plan 2015/16 (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development advised that the Partnership had 3 main actions for the coming year: to find alternative methods of waste treatment, to address the impact of waste and, to upgrade the fleet of collection vehicles. She noted that the Annual Audit letter for the Partnership had given an unqualified opinion on their financial statement and Appendix 2 detailed their action plan with costings for the future.

The Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership outlined the alternative methods of waste treatment being considered to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. He also mentioned the innovative projects which were encouraging more recycling, including reuse shops at the HWRCs at Highbridge and Chard, and, the stickers proposed for household waste bins to encourage more food recycling. He noted that the current fleet of waste collection vehicles were now in need of replacement and the options being considered including the hire of vehicles in the future.

Whilst noting that information was provided on the Partnerships website, the Scrutiny Committee asked that the previous years outturn figures be provided as a comparison to the future budget forecasts.

In response to questions from Members, the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership confirmed that:-

- Due to the complex makeup of disposable nappies, it was currently not possible to recycle them.
- The trial of 3 weekly collection of household waste could be extended to other partner authorities, however, the savings achieved would not be so great unless all the partners agreed. Weekly collections of recyclables would continue unchanged.
- The current waste collection vehicles were owned by SCC on behalf of the Partnership.
- The Partnership were currently trialling the recycling of plastic triggers from household cleaning products, which was funded by Unilever.
- There was a business waste recycling directory on the Waste Partnership website.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members thanked the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership for attending and they were content to confirm the Somerset Waste Partnership Business Plan for 2015/16.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

1. Approve the Draft Business Plan 2015-20 on behalf of the authority.
2. Provided the following comment for the Board to consider for inclusion in the next iteration of the Plan:-
 - When setting out the budget forecasts it would be useful to have the previous years outturn figures as a comparison.

Reason: To agree the Somerset Waste Partnership's Business Plan 2015-20.

128. 2014/15 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter ending 30th December 2014 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning drew Members attention to the revised budget as at 30th December noting the budget underspend variations and the delivery of major savings detailed. He also drew Members attention to the General Fund Balance of £4,783,000 and he asked that the recommendations be confirmed.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that the Council's disaster recovery plan had been completely refreshed recently and she agreed to detail the capital and revenue useable reserves separately in the future. It was also noted that the Local Plan Enquiry Reserve would be required to pay the Planning Inspector fees and to cover the cost of renewing certain strategies once the plan was adopted.

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

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. Note the current 2014/15 financial position of the Council;
- b. Note the reasons for variations to the previously approved Directorate Budgets as detailed in paragraphs 3.2;
- c. Note the transfers made to and from reserves outlined in paragraph 11.1 and the position of the Area Reserves as detailed in Appendix C and the Corporate Reserves as detailed in Appendix D;
- d. Note the virements made under delegated authority as detailed in Appendix B;
- e. Approve a £5,000 contribution for a Thorney Bund pump and £5,000 for a boat from the Flood Reserve as detailed in paragraph 11.5.

Reason: To update Members on the current financial position of the revenue budgets of the Council and to report the reasons for variations from approved budgets for the period 1st April to 31st December 2014.

129. 2014/15 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter ending 30th December 2014 (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised that this was the standard quarterly budgeting report. He drew Members attention to the delayed projects on page 56 of the report and he noted that the Area Committees also received quarterly monitoring reports on the Section 106 deposits within each area.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that the Somerset Waste Partnership were now looking at leasing waste vehicles and so the finance set aside to purchase new vehicles may be re-profiled within the budget.

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

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the net spend of £1,306,000 so far on capital for 2014/15 and approve the revised capital programme for 2014/15 and beyond (paragraph 6 and 7);
- b. note the progress of individual capital schemes as detailed in Appendix A;
- c. note the slippage over £50,000 in the capital programme as detailed in paragraph 10;
- d. approve the virement of £29,000 outline in paragraph 11;
- e. approve the re-allocation of funding of £60,000 as detailed in paragraph 12 & 13;
- f. note the schemes that were approved prior to 2010, as detailed in Appendix D, and confirm approval for those projects that they wish to remain in the programme;
- g. note the total land disposals to registered social landlords as detailed in Appendix B;
- h. note the balance of S106 deposits by developers held in a reserve as detailed in Appendix C;
- i. note the current position with regard to funds held by the Wessex

Home Improvement Loans as detailed in paragraph 17.

Reason: To update Members on the current financial position of the capital programme of the Council and to report the reasons for variations from approved budgets for the period 1st October to 31st December 2014.

130. Revenue Budget 2015/16 - Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme (Agenda Item 10)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised that the budget was for confirmation by Full Council on 26th February and although it was a prudent budget, this was the first year the Council were participating in Business Rate pooling. He said the quarterly monitoring process was robust so that action could be taken quickly if any variations occurred.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that there had been a number of announcements from the Government including the Business Rate Pooling and New Homes Bonus figures. She also advised that the income for Engineering and Property Services had increased due to the office sharing arrangements with SCC and the CAB and also electricity savings from the photovoltaic panels installed.

The Chairman thanked the members of the Scrutiny Task and Finish group for their involvement in the budget process and at the conclusion of the debate, the majority of Members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report to Council.

RESOLVED: That District Executive recommended to Council to:-

- a. note the report of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group attached at Appendix A;
- b. approve the overall Revenue Budget for 2015/16 of £17,389,600 and the General Account Summary as shown at Appendix B and note future year projection;
- c. approve the detailed budgets for the District Executive and four Area Committees as shown at Appendix C;
- d. approve there is no increase in the Council Tax for 2015/16 for South Somerset District Council, which will result in a continuing Band D charge of £150.74;
- e. approve the additional expenditure for budget pressure bids as shown in Appendix D;
- f. approve the savings proposals in Appendix E in conjunction with the Equalities Impact Schedule at Appendix G;

- g. approve the once-off items of expenditure as shown in Appendix F;
- h. approve the transfer of the NDR surplus (£0.9595 million) to the NDR Volatility Reserve;
- i. note the current position and future estimation of reserves and balances as shown in paragraphs 53-56;
- j. approve the revised Capital Programme as shown in Appendix H;
- k. approve the new schemes to be included in the Capital Programme as shown in Appendix I;
- l. note the scoring of new capital schemes outlined in Appendix K;
- m. note the proposed funding of the Capital Programme as shown in paragraph 66;
- n. note the detailed Capital Investment appraisal forms for new schemes, as shown at Appendix J.

Reason: To seek approval for the proposed 2015/16 Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan (Revenue Budgets for 2015/16 to 2019/20) and the Capital Programme that will be recommended to Full Council.

(Voting: 8 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions)

131. Investing in Market Housing (Agenda Item 11)

The Chairman advised that it was likely that any properties purchased would be managed through an arms-length letting agency so that no Right to Buy issues ever arose. He noted that although the Scrutiny Committee had requested that each property purchase was confirmed by the District Executive, he felt it was more suitable to include a member of the Scrutiny Committee in a Portfolio Holder decision in case of any time issues involved in a purchase.

During discussion, Members were supportive of the proposal and requested that a review of the scheme be brought to them in 12 months time.

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

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed:-

1. To note the current position on the council's housing property portfolio as in the appendix.
2. To continue to take an opportunistic approach to purchasing properties for housing purposes which fulfil a defined housing need and provide a reasonable rate of return on the capital investment of

up to £600,000.

3. That each purchase be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Policy as advised by the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager, Assistant Director (Economy), the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) and a member of the Scrutiny Committee.
4. The criteria for acquisition of new dwellings as set out in this report. (Para 6.3).
5. To note the longer term options available should the council may wish to explore for developing a property portfolio as set out in para 6.1.
6. To authorise officers to begin a review of the overall management arrangements for existing properties.
7. To note that a report would be brought back in a years' time including the full costs income and yield from the implementation of the policy and receive recommendations for further capital investment.

Reason: To confirm current position in relation to acquisition of homes for strategic housing need and put forward options for investing in housing for local people which can assist with meeting local needs whilst providing a reasonable rate of return on the investment.

132. Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance (Agenda Item 12)

The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that there was currently £750,000 available to assist with private sector housing and he advised that following comments from the Scrutiny Committee, there had only been one loan default involving a gypsy or travelling family.

During discussion, Members felt that, given the total amount of loans made compared to the default amount, the risk was very low and at the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to confirm the Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed that the Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance in Appendix 1 concerning the provision of financial assistance for dealing with private sector housing matters be adopted as the future policy of the Council.

Reason: To adopt the Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance.

133. Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (Agenda Item 13)

The Community Safety Coordinator provided Members with an outline of the new powers available to the Police, the District Council and other agencies under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, particularly the Community Trigger, which was available through the Avon & Somerset website and via the 101 telephone number which gave communities the right to a review of actions taken where there were on-going anti-social behaviour problems.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee noted they had received a presentation on the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 at a previous meeting and had no additional comments to make.

In response to questions from Members, the Community Safety Coordinator and the Principal Environmental Protection Officer confirmed that:-

- The Public Space Protection Order would supersede existing Dog Control Orders.
- All existing alcohol zones and other orders would need to be reviewed and reassessed by March 2017 as Public Space Protection Orders.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to confirm the implementation and use of the new provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed:

1. To the implementation and use of the new provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, as described in the report,
2. To delegate powers to other agencies to issue Community Protection Notices to be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory & Democratic Services.
3. That the decision to set penalty charges in relation to Fixed Penalty Notices be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory & Democratic Services.

Reason: To agree to implement tools and powers as provided by the 'Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014'.

134. The Living Wage (Agenda Item 14)

The Chairman advised that the proposal would currently only affect one staff member with the exception of apprentices, casuals and interns and it was right that the District Council were moving towards the adoption of a living wage

In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, the HR Manager advised that in order to fully sign up to the Living Wage, the Council would also have to ensure that all

Council Contractors were paying the Living Wage. By deleting the two bottom spinal points below the current living wage, SSDC was making a step towards it.

During discussion, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning confirmed that although the Council were adopting the policy internally, they were not applying it externally due to the possible disruption to the local economy. He asked that the word 'criteria' be added to the end of the resolution for clarification and Members were in agreement with this.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to confirm the amended recommendation of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed that from the 1st April 2015 the two spine points 9 and 10 remaining below the current living wage level on our permanent and fixed pay scale are deleted so that all main pay scale rates meet the living wage criteria.

Reason: To move towards meeting the living wage rate by deleting the lowest two spine points from the SSDC main pay scales.

135. Councillor Induction Programme 2015 and Future IT Proposals for Councillors (Agenda Item 15)

The Chairman advised that the starting times of the evening training sessions within the Councillor Induction Programme had been amended to start at 6.00pm to allow working Councillors to attend.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Democratic Services advised that:-

- There were several options of tablets, laptop computers and printers which could be purchased for less than £320.
- The Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 allowed for paperless meetings for those Councillors who wished to opt in to this provision.
- It was possible to have Microsoft Office programmes installed on an iPad.

During discussion, it was noted that:-

- The Council would have no right of access to the content of any device in the ownership of a Councillor.
- The IT Helpdesk staff would help with advice on suitable devices to purchase and could transfer information from the existing Council laptops onto new devices.
- One to one tuition would be available in the use of the ModGov app to access Council agendas and minutes.
- the £320 one off sum to purchase an internet enabled device would be subject to tax and NI deductions and so it was proposed to increase this allowance to £400 to take account of this as a Benefit in Kind.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members agreed to increase the allowance for an IT device to £400 were content to confirm the amended Member Induction Programme.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed

1. the Member Induction Programme (as amended) attached at Appendix A to this report;
2. that from May 2015, Members be offered a one off sum of £400 to purchase an internet enabled device (tablet or laptop) of their choice to enable them to access their SSDC emails, agendas and minutes and the internet in order to conduct their SSDC business. This payment is defined as a Benefit in Kind for tax purposes;
3. that with effect from 1 May 2015 Members will be encouraged to receive their meeting papers and other circulated documents digitally through the Mod.Gov app;
4. to delegate the necessary changes to be made to Part 6 (Members Allowances Scheme) of the Council's Constitution to the Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services).

Reason: To agree the Member Induction programme for 2015 and to agree Councillors future IT requirements.

136. Family Focus Programme Update (Agenda Item 16)

The Welfare and Careline Manager advised that Phase 1 of the Family Focus programme was now coming towards its end and the results of what the families in the programme had achieved were now being recognised. Phase 2 would start from April 2015 with a target of 3,000 families to engage with across Somerset. Somerset County Council would deliver the programme through their Get Set Service, using their Childrens Centres. They had already set up a South Somerset Advisory Board which was chaired by Councillor Cathy Bakewell.

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-Being) confirmed that SSDC would continue to operate the Family Focus programme through the Yeovil4Family project at the Yeovil Community Church with funding up to December 2015 to ensure continued support for the families in the programme.

In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, the Welfare and Careline Manager advised that the Family Focus programme also operated in Langport, Wincanton and Chard with referrals coming from the Police and other agencies.

During discussion, it was noted that:-

- Although the Government were disappointed at the low employment results, (of the 85,000 families in the programme, only 8,000 had secured better employment opportunities) it was hoped that the children in the families were more likely to secure employment in the future.
- SSDC should continue to support Yeovil4Family with early family intervention through working in partnership with Yarlington and other Housing providers.

- The scale of the challenge for Phase 2 was huge and SCC may struggle to meet the required Government targets.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the progress of the South Somerset Family Focus programme.

RESOLVED: That District Executive noted the progress made in delivering South Somerset Family Focus, the multi-agency family support programme in the District.

Reason: To update Members on progress of the South Somerset Family Focus Programme for supporting families with multiple and complex issues in the District.

137. Access from Memorial Hall car park to land at the rear of the Dolphin Hotel, Wincanton - WITHDRAWN FROM AGENDA (Agenda Item 17)

This item was withdrawn from the Agenda.

138. Monthly Performance Snapshot (Agenda Item 18)

Members were pleased to note the monthly performance snapshot data.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the monthly performance snapshot data.

Reason: To update The report is provided for Members information.

139. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 19)

Members noted the following addition to the Executive Forward Plan:-

- Upgrade of Licensing Software – March/April 2015

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A with the following addition:-
 - Upgrade of Licensing Software – March/April 2015
2. Noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

140. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 20)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 5th March 2015 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

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Chairman

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Date