

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Brympton Way, YEOVIL, Somerset BA20 2HT on Thursday 2 April 2015.**

(9.30 am - 12.35 pm)

Present:

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Tim Carroll	Sylvia Seal
Henry Hobhouse	Angie Singleton
Shane Pledger	Nick Weeks
Jo Roundell Greene	

Also Present:

Cathy Bakewell	Nigel Mermagen
Carol Goodall	Patrick Palmer
Mike Lewis	Sue Steele

Officers

Mark Williams	Chief Executive
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Laurence Willis	Assistant Director (Environment)
Chereen Scott	South Somerset Together Co-ordinator
Colin McDonald	Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Martin Hacker	Communications Officer
Jo Wilkins	Policy Planner
Steve Brewer	Community Safety & Projects Co-ordinator
Kim Close	Area Development Manager (South)
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Mike Vaughan	Atkins Ltd
Madubuchi Ani	Highway Agency
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

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

166. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 5 March 2015, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

167. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Gubbins and Peter Seib and Mark Williams (Chief Executive).

168. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

169. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

It was agreed that members of the public present would speak at the relevant agenda item.

170. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Jo Roundell Greene advised that a recent audit of the Economic Development service had reported substantial assurance in the service which she said was very important and she congratulated them on the excellent report.

171. Presentation from Highways Contractor on flood prevention works on the A303 (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman welcomed Mr M Vaughan, Principal Engineer at Atkins Ltd who provided members with a power point presentation on the flooding which had occurred on the A303 trunk road at Ilchester in December 2013 and the proposals to mitigate any future flooding in that area. He described the hydraulic modelling which had taken place and the preferred solution of 4 new culverts underneath the A303 together with a stepped control weir to take water from the fields into the culverts when required and a raised containment feature to prevent the underspill being bypassed.

Brig. N Knudsen of Ilchester Parish Council said they were content that the proposed design would protect the village in the future and they would work with the Environment Agency and the County Highway Authority to protect the properties at The Mead. He confirmed that monthly meetings with all interested parties took place.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Vaughan and Mr M Ani of the Highways Agency confirmed that:-

- A construction programme for the works had not yet been set but it was expected to commence in 2016/17.
- The control weir would have stepped two stage trash screens to prevent debris from blocking the culverts.
- The hydraulic modelling took account of the impact of the water flow as far as Long Load.
- A sluice gate had been considered as part of the scheme, however, there was always a risk that it could be unofficially opened early.
- The scheme would not to change the amount of floodwater but would divert it under the A303 rather than over it.
- The scheme would have a very subtle effect on floodwater near Mudford.

- There was huge water storage capacity in the fields around Ilchester.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- The raising of the road either side of Long Load bridge should be prioritised to prevent the road being closed by flooding in that area.
- The flood prevention works on the A303 should be carried out at night to ensure minimum disruption to traffic.
- Was it possible to incorporate a sluice gate into the scheme to let the water through quicker
- The Internal Drainage Board and the Environment Agency were currently designing a ringbank around Long Load and so there was a need to ensure that floodwater did not arrive any sooner at Long Load bridge.
- the Somerset Rivers Authority had mapped every river and rhyne and these maps would be made available to all Members.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked Mr Vaughan and Mr Ani for attending and providing an interesting presentation on the works to be completed.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to note the presentation on flood prevention works on the A303, provided by the Highway Contractor.

172. South Somerset Together (SST) Strategic Partnership (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman of the South Somerset Together Strategic Partnership, Councillor Cathy Bakewell, said the Partnership met every 6 weeks and held 3 Annual Assemblies to which all District Councillors were invited. She outlined several projects which they were supporting which had attracted external funding including the Community Resilience Project at Westfield led by Kim Close, the Symphony Project led by Yeovil District Hospital, Yeovil One led by the Police and the Family Focus Project. She said the Partnership had recently agreed a new priority on transport and access to services which would be jointly led by SSDC and Yarlinton Homes. She concluded that the work was funded by several of the Partnership members.

The Assistant Director (Communities) confirmed that the next Annual Assembly would take place on 22nd May and would focus on local Healthcare and encouraging joint working to develop sustainable services. In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, she confirmed that the Partnership's 3 year funding agreement was in its last year but it was hoped to renew this for a further 3 years.

During discussion, Members congratulated the Chairman and the Assistant Director (Communities) for their work in the Partnership and for its focused work projects and links with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the Partnership's achievements and endorse the revised Partnership Agreement.

RESOLVED: That District Executive:-

1. Noted the achievements of the South Somerset Together

Partnership in 2014/15;

2. Endorsed the revised Partnership Agreement as presented.

Reason: To note the overview of the progress made on strategic priorities during 2014/15 and to clarify the revised governance and funding arrangements for the South Somerset Together Strategic Partnership.

173. Adoption of a Balanced Rural Lettings Policy (Agenda Item 8)

The Chairman, as Portfolio Holder, introduced the report and commended the Balanced Rural Lettings Policy which he said had been needed for some time to address inequalities in rural housing allocation.

The Corporate Strategic Housing Manager explained the policy which sought to address the need to protect rural housing vacancies for people with local connections with the Council's statutory obligation to the people in greatest need of housing. He explained the tiered approach which would be followed and confirmed that two consultation periods with relevant stakeholders had taken place and the Policy would be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee three years after implementation.

In response to questions from Members, the Chairman and the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager replied:-

- The policy would try to meet a housing applicants first preference of area every time and would not force people to live where they did not wish to.
- The properties listed in Appendix 2 were existing properties and did not include those planned to be built.
- Rural housing exception schemes generally needed to be 10 or 12 properties to make the scheme viable.
- Local connections would be given priority but local anomalies could arise depending upon Section 106 Agreements on properties.

In response to a request from the Scrutiny Committee, it was agreed that they would review the policy in 12 months time and a fundamental review would take place in 3 years time.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were pleased to formally adopt the balanced Rural Lettings Policy as presented.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to formally adopt the balanced Rural Lettings Policy.

Reason: To adopt a rural lettings policy which balances the need for very local lettings and the council's wider statutory obligations.

174. South Somerset District Council Advertising Policy (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised that although some limited advertising already existed there was no formal district wide formal policy. He drew Members attention to the list of precluded categories from the policy and said it was now appropriate that a policy was in place.

In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, the Communications Officer confirmed that there was a need to generate income from advertising and there would be an approval procedure to consider applications which were to the advantage of the local economy.

During discussion, concern was expressed how local businesses could be promoted without also promoting drinking or gambling and it was noted that discretion could be applied where there were benefits to the local community.

At the conclusion of the debate, it was agreed to add a further point in the Basic Principles of the Policy that advertisements should support the local economy and with this amendment, Members were content to approve the SSDC Advertising Policy.

RESOLVED: That District Executive approved the new SSDC Advertising Policy (as amended).

Reason: To gain approval for the introduction of South Somerset District Council's Advertising Policy.

175. Loan to Kingsdon Parish Council (Agenda Item 10)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised of the Parish Council's aspiration to acquire the school playing field for recreational use with a secured loan backed by a first charge on the land. He confirmed that Kingsdon Parish Council were a precepting authority who had received permission to borrow from the Secretary of State and had demonstrated that the loan could be repaid through their precept.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee and Members, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that:-

- The Parish Council had approached SSDC for a loan and there would be the opportunity for grant applications at a later stage.
- Delivery of the scheme was very likely as permission had already been obtained from the Secretary of State and the Parish Council had chosen to borrow from SSDC because there was an intention to pay off the loan early (SSDC do not charge a penalty for early repayment).

During discussion, Members were supportive of the scheme which included plans for a community shop and play area. It was noted that support from SSDC often opened other funding opportunities and grant applications for the scheme would be made in due course. The project was also being supported by Area Development.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to approve the loan to Kingsdon Parish Council.

RESOLVED: That District Executive approved a loan of £27,500 to Kingsdon Parish

Council, to be repaid over 10 years, from available capital resources subject to a first charge being made on the land.

Reason: To approve a loan of £27,500 to Kingsdon Parish Council to purchase land for recreational use.

176. Designation of Neighbourhood Area - South Petherton Parish (Agenda Item 11)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised that the application from the South Petherton Parish Council was to include the whole of the parish area. He said this was the fourth settlement to make such an application.

The Policy Planner confirmed that no objections had been raised during the consultation period.

Mr P Robathan confirmed that the Parish Council had committed funding to start the process of designation and they were keen to start. He said their aim was to protect green space and plan for a new school and car parking places as traffic and land use were issues in the area.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee confirmed their support for the designation.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to designate the Civil Parish of South Petherton as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan as set out in the Localism Act 2011.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to designate the Civil Parish of South Petherton as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan as set out in the Localism Act 2011.

Reason: To confirm the formal designation of South Petherton Parish Neighbourhood Area in accordance with The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

177. Safer Somerset Partnership - Update Report (Agenda Item 12)

The Chairman confirmed that SSDC had a joint responsibility for community safety issues and that being part of the Safer Somerset Partnership could influence its funding priorities.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that there were 10 statutory members of the Partnership who were all contributing towards its statutory activities and there were significant benefits to being part of the Partnership. In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, she further confirmed that the Partnership's priorities were designed jointly by the members and there was limited influence to change them. She also advised that although the Yeovil One Team could be replicated in the Chard area, it was not designed to operate in rural areas.

During a brief discussion Members commented on the issue of slavery in the district and it was confirmed that the police were aware of this and it was on their agenda. It was also requested that a letter be sent to the Police Crime Commissioner to request that Community Justice Panels continue and at the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive:-

1. agreed to continue fully supporting the activities of the Safer Somerset Partnership;
2. agreed to help fund the partnership statutory activities and set an upper limit of funds (£3,000) to be made available for finance year 2016/17 with the addition of £3,000 to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 on the agreement that all of the SSP responsible authorities fund a similar amount.

Reason: To confirm ongoing support and note the potential for a future requirement to provide funding to cover our share of the statutory duties of the Safer Somerset Partnership (SSP).

178. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 13)

There were no amendments or additions to the Executive Forward Plan.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

179. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 4 June 2015 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30am.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman thanked all Members of the Executive Committee for their work together of the past 4 years. In turn, Members thanked the Chairman for his impartial chairing of the meetings.

.....
Chairman

.....
Date