

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 16 July 2015** in the Council Chamber, SSDC Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT.

(7.30 pm - 9.52 pm)

### **Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Mike Best (Chairman)  
Councillor Tony Capozzoli (Vice-Chairman)

Clare Aparicio Paul	Tim Inglefield	David Recardo
Jason Baker	Val Keitch	Jo Roundell Greene
Cathy Bakewell	Andy Kendall	Dean Ruddle
Marcus Barrett	Jenny Kenton	Sylvia Seal
Mike Beech	Mike Lewis	Gina Seaton
Neil Bloomfield	Sarah Lindsay	Peter Seib
Amanda Broom	Mike Lock	Garry Shortland
Dave Bulmer	Tony Lock	Angie Singleton
John Clark	Paul Maxwell	Alan Smith
Nick Colbert	Sam McAllister	Sue Steele
Adam Dance	Graham Middleton	Rob Stickland
Gye Dibben	David Norris	Andrew Turpin
Sarah Dyke-Bracher	Graham Oakes	Linda Vijeh
John Field	Sue Osborne	Martin Wale
Nigel Gage	Tiffany Osborne	William Wallace
Carol Goodall	Stephen Page	Nick Weeks
Anna Groskop	Ric Pallister	Colin Winder
Peter Gubbins	Shane Pledger	Derek Yeomans
Henry Hobhouse	Crispin Raikes	
Kaysar Hussain	Wes Read	

### **Officers**

Vega Sturgess	Interim Chief Executive
Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Amanda Card	Finance Manager
Anuska Gilbert	Performance Officer
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

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### **17. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Williams, Chief Executive, Rina Singh, Strategic Director, and Donna Parham, Assistant Director.

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### **18. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following corrections:-

Page 6 – Area South Committee: Councillors John Field and Sam McAllister should be listed as Conservative group members

Page 7 - Area West Committee: Councillor Dave Bulmer should be listed as an Independent member.

Page 8 – Licensing Committee: Councillor Alan Smith to be added to the list of members of the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting (subject to the above corrections).

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### **19. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest made.

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### **20. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)**

Mr J Burlington addressed the Council and asked if Members were willing to face the reality of global warming and to adopt appropriate policies. He said that he had set up the South Somerset Climate Action group who held awareness raising events and he had been invited by a previous Council Leader to join the South Somerset Together Local Strategic Partnership to help them address climate issues. He asked that the Council adopt the necessary policies to allow all children to have a decent future.

Councillor Henry Hobhouse, as Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change responded that the Council agreed with his sentiments and were slowly moving forward. Every Executive report was required to consider the carbon impact of its recommendations and most SSDC buildings contained solar panels to reduce energy consumption.

Mr J Lewes said that he helped at a co-ordination centre in Ilminster where pensioners were already planning for the cold winter months and he asked to what extent the District Council were engaged with local households on energy efficiency measures.

Councillor Henry Hobhouse, as Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change responded that the District Council had conducted a photographic infra-red test of houses in the district and had found that most heat was lost from front doors. He said the Council was working with a community energy company to insulate houses and generate electricity.

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### **21. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)**

There were no announcements from the Chairman.

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### **22. Chairman's Engagements (Agenda Item 6)**

The list of Chairman's Engagements was noted.

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### **23. SSDC Annual Performance Report 2014/15 (Agenda Item 7)**

The Leader of Council, as Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Policy, advised that the report had previously been considered by the Scrutiny and Executive Committees.

In response to a question relating to the percentage of planning applications allowed at appeal, the Assistant Director (Economy) advised that if a Council was regularly refusing up to 50% of planning applications which were subsequently overturned at appeal then developers could directly approach the Planning Inspectorate. However the SSDC trend of allowed appeals was changing since the Local Plan had been adopted and the 5 year land supply had been demonstrated.

Members were content to note the report.

**RESOLVED:** That Council noted the 2014/15 performance information at Appendices A, B and C.

**Reason:** The Council is accountable for its performance to the local community and performance data is published to demonstrate achievements against targets.

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### **24. Termination of shared CEO arrangements with East Devon District Council and proposed future management arrangements (Agenda Item 8)**

The Leader of Council introduced the report and explained the discussions which had taken place with East Devon DC to terminate the existing CEO arrangement and the tentative discussions with Mendip DC to form a closer working arrangement. Following those discussions, he proposed an amendment to recommendation 4 to set up a working group to progress the closer working arrangement and to commission a joint independent evaluation of both Councils

Councillor Tim Inglefield, as Leader of the Conservative Group, confirmed that he had been part of the discussions and he proposed that each of the recommendations of the report be voted upon individually.

In response to questions from Members the Leader of Council confirmed that:-

- The termination of the shared CEO arrangement with East Devon DC had been mutually agreed with a 6 month pay settlement.
- The start of a new Council term was the logical time to make such changes.
- He anticipated the outcome of discussions with Mendip would be clearer by September 2015.
- He expected the temporary CEO role to last up to December 2015.

During discussion, it was agreed to amend recommendations 4 and 5 to clarify that discussions would be with Mendip DC in the first instance and all other options would be

considered. Also, that there would be no uplift in in the Strategic Directors salaries whilst they undertook the role and function of CEO for a temporary period.

At the conclusion of the debate, each recommendation was voted upon in turn.

**RESOLVED:** That Council agreed:

1. to terminate the existing agreement with EDDC to receive the services of the joint chief executive for the purpose of the council's functions in accordance with section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 with effect from 31st July 2015;

*(Voting: 56 in favour, 4 abstentions)*

2. that a sum of £42,124.87 be paid to East Devon District Council in lieu of 12 months formal notice of termination being given and to be funded from the 2015/16 salary saving;

*(Voting: 51 in favour, 2 against, 7 abstentions)*

3. that £88,700 be added to the Medium Term Financial Plan as a saving for 2016/17;

*(Voting: 31 in favour, 1 against, 27 abstentions)*

4. that:-

- a working group of 6 be appointed, consisting of the Leader of Council, Deputy Leader of Council, Leader of the Conservative Group, spokesperson of the Independent Group and both SSDC Strategic Directors. (Mendip DC to form a similar arrangement of up to 4 Members and 2 officers);
- the working group be given delegated authority to act on behalf of the Council in progressing discussions with Mendip DC in the first instance and all other options;
- the working group be authorised to commission a joint independent evaluation of both Councils in the first instance, which would result in a feasibility appraisal of the concept, subject to the approval of SSDC's S151 Officer. Subject to availability, that work to be carried out by Local Partnerships, an organisation created jointly by the Treasury and Local Government Association;

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

5. that the role and function of the CEO be rotated on a monthly basis (subject to leave arrangements) between SSDC's existing Strategic Directors, at no uplift in salary, for an interim period pending the outcome of exploratory talks on future alternate management arrangements. Specific projects to continue to have

individual Director leads;

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

6. to note that there would be regular reports to Council on the progress of the discussions referred to in recommendation 4 and that Council notes that any final decision on any option will need to be reported to Council for formal approval before it can be implemented. At that point the full and actual financial consequences of any decision would be known and available.

*(Noted)*

**Reason:** To agree that the current arrangements with East Devon District Council (EDDC) in relation to the sharing of a Chief Executive be terminated and that exploratory talks are initiated with Mendip District Council.

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## **25. 2014/15 Treasury Management Activity Report (Agenda Item 9)**

Councillor Derek Yeomans, as Chairman of the Audit Committee, confirmed that they had considered the report in detail and were content that the Council's treasury management was sound.

There was no debate and Members were content to note the report.

**RESOLVED:** That Council agreed to:

1. note the Treasury Management Activity for the 2014/15 financial year;
2. note the position of the individual prudential indicators for the 2014/15 financial year;
3. note the outlook for the investment performance in 2015/16.

**Reason:** To review the treasury management activity and the performance against the Prudential Indicators for the 2014/15 financial year

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## **26. Honorary Aldermen - Agreement of criteria and privileges (Agenda Item 10)**

The Portfolio Holder for Democratic Services advised that the report had been considered by both the Scrutiny and District Executive Committees and whilst there were no issues with the criteria for appointing Honorary Aldermen, the privileges had been amended. The cost of providing an annual parking permit and £100 Octagon Theatre gift voucher was not justified and the use of the Members Room at Brympton Way offices was not appropriate. Neither was representation of Chairman or Vice-Chairman at civic events. She said it was an honour to be appointed an Alderman as it recognised past service but that honour did not bring rights and there was no need to extend their privileges.

During discussion it was confirmed that the appointment of Aldermen would take place on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September, immediately prior to the Full Council meeting. The names of the people to be appointed would be agreed by the Group Leaders in advance of the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

1. reviewed and agreed the criteria for appointing Honorary Aldermen of the Council as listed in paragraph 6 and agreed to hold a Special meeting in September 2015 to make the appointments.
2. agreed to extend the privileges of Honorary Aldermen as listed in paragraph 7.

**Reason:** To approve the criteria and procedure to appoint Honorary Aldermen and to extend their civic rights.

*(Voting: 59 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention)*

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## **27. Increase in Councillors on Yeovilton Parish Council - Community Governance Review (CGR) (Agenda Item 11)**

The Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) advised that a valid request had been received from Yeovilton Parish Council to increase the number of Parish Councillors and so the necessary public consultation would be conducted by a Community Governance Review.

The Ward Member, Councillor Tony Capozzoli, asked that the review be conducted with all speed. During discussion, Members expressed concern at the bureaucratic system involved to increase the number of Parish Councillors and it was agreed that a letter be written to the Government to express the Council's concerns at the process.

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

1. noted the receipt of the request and its validity;
2. agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review of the Parish of Yeovilton;
3. agreed the Terms of Reference of the review as detailed in Appendix A, including the timetable and arrangements for public consultation;
4. agreed that the review would be carried out by the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with Ward Members, Area Development Manager (East) and the Area East Committee;
5. noted that further reports would be brought to Council in order that decisions may be made in respect of draft proposals and final recommendations of the Review.

**Reason:** To commence a Community Governance Review of Yeovilton Parish Council to increase the size of the Parish Council from 5 to 6 Councillors (under the provisions of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007).

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

**28. Membership of Committees - Appointment of new Councillors to the Audit and Standards Committees and changes to representation on Outside Bodies (Agenda Item 12)**

The Leader of Council reminded Members that some Committee and outside body appointments had been deferred from the last meeting of Council. There was no debate and Members unanimously agreed the appointments.

**RESOLVED:** That in accordance with Section 16 (1) Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the duty therein to give effect to the wishes of the political group to which seats on any committee are allocated, the Council confirmed that:-

1. Councillor Mike Beech be appointed to the Audit Committee;
2. Councillor Gye Dibben be appointed to the Standards Committee;
3. Councillor Carol Goodall replaces Councillor Cathy Bakewell as a member of the Audit Committee;
4. Councillor Sarah Dyke-Bracher replaces Councillor Mike Lock as the appointed SSDC representative to Access for All outside body;
5. Councillor Tim Inglefield replace Councillor Derek Yeomans as the appointed SSDC representative to the South West Audit Partnership outside body;
6. Councillors be appointed to represent SSDC on the following outside organisations:

Somerset Armed Forces Community Partnership	Carol Goodall
Somerset Water Management Partnership	Nick Weeks
Parrett Drainage Board	Nick Weeks Mike Lewis Jo Roundell Greene
Somerset Rivers Authority	Ric Pallister Jo Roundell Greene (substitute)

**Reason:** To confirm several changes to Committee appointments following the appointment of Councillors to various committees at Council on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015.

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

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**29. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 13)**

The Leader of Council introduced the item and invited questions from Members.

There were no questions and the report of Executive Decisions was noted.

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**30. Audit Committee (Agenda Item 14)**

Councillor Derek Yeomans, Chairman of the Audit Committee, introduced the report and invited questions from Members

There were no questions and the report of the Audit Committee was noted.

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**31. Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 15)**

Councillor Sue Steele, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report and drew Members attention to the Local Council Tax Support consultation which was currently open on the Council's website.

The report of the Scrutiny Committee was noted.

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**32. Motions (Agenda Item 16)**

The following motions were submitted by Councillor Andrew Turpin:-

**1. Reinstating Member Representation on the South West Home Safety Partnership**

Proposal – That this Council reinstates its Membership representation on the South West Home Safety Partnership.

Councillor Andrew Turpin introduced the Motion, saying the South West Home Safety Partnership was related to the ROSPA Home Safety Committee and its meetings were also attended by the SSDC Environmental Health Manager. He said the value of the meetings were its outcomes in reducing accidents and injuries.

During discussion, varying views were expressed. Some Members felt that there was duplication in both officer and Member representation whilst others felt the information provided by Councillor Turpin appeared to make the representation worthwhile. As the Scrutiny Committee had conducted the review of membership on outside organisations, it was proposed that they be asked to reconsider this representation at their next meeting



in line with the policy on outside body representation. Councillor Turpin confirmed that he was in agreement with this proposal.

**RESOLVED:** That Council agreed to refer the decision to reinstate its Membership representation on the South West Home Safety Partnership to the Scrutiny Committee (who conducted the outside body representation review). The recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to be confirmed by a Portfolio Holder decision (if required).

## **2. Promoting and facilitating Sustainable Living in South Somerset**

Proposal - That, in relation to South Somerset, at its bimonthly meetings, this Council reviews its proactive role in promoting / facilitating sustainable living.

Councillor Andrew Turpin introduced the Motion, saying that although SSDC employed a Climate Change officer, everyone should think globally and act locally. He said that both the Council and Councillors should be promoting sustainable living in its decisions and initiatives where appropriate.

Councillor Henry Hobhouse, as Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change, reminded Members that every Executive and Council report included the carbon emissions and climate change implications of taking the decision. He also noted that Councillor Turpin had been invited to attend the Carbon Reduction Board and any suggestions put forward would be implemented provided their capital costs broke even and drew Members attention to the successful photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of several SSDC buildings which had halved the Council's electricity spend and the use of electric streetscene vehicles. He said all Members were welcome to attend the Carbon Reduction Board meetings but he did not feel that a bi-monthly report to Council was necessary.

During discussion, although Members supported the sentiment of the Motion, it was felt that bi-monthly reports to Council was too frequent. The Motion that the Council reviewed its proactive role in promoting / facilitating sustainable living at its bimonthly meetings was put to the vote but was defeated (voting: 6 in favour of the Motion, 15 against, 37 abstentions).

**RESOLVED:** That Council did not support the Motion to review its proactive role in promoting / facilitating sustainable living at its bimonthly meetings.

*(Voting: 6 in favour of the Motion, 15 against, 37 abstentions)*

## **3. Completing the Stop Line Way through South Somerset**

Proposal – That with the known economic benefits completing the Stop Line Way through South Somerset is treated as a priority and reviewed bimonthly by Full Council.

Councillor Andrew Turpin introduced the Motion, saying the cycleway between Chard and Ilminster was well used and completing the section from Chard to the Dorset border would complete the South Somerset section of the Coast to Coast Cycleway from Ilminster south.

During discussion, several Members noted that the project had stalled when funding had been withdrawn by Somerset County Council in 2009 and that there had been issues over the route and land ownership. The Leader and Deputy Leader noted that the project was scheduled to be discussed at a meeting of the Somerset Growth Board the following day and it was hoped to re-start the project. The Chairman of Area West Committee said they supported the project and agreed to assist in re-starting the project.

Councillor Turpin accepted the offer that the completion of the Stop Line Way through South Somerset would be progressed by the Area West Committee and the Somerset Growth Board.

**RESOLVED:** That Council agreed to prioritise the completion the Stop Line Way through South Somerset and agreed this would be progressed by the Area West Committee and the Somerset Growth Board.

#### **4. Reopening Chard Junction Station**

Proposal – In the light of possible changing circumstances at the site, this Council reinvigorates its aim to reopen Chard Junction Station.

Councillor Andrew Turpin introduced the Motion and advised that he had been part of a working group who had been looking at re-opening Chard Junction station but this had been disrupted by the British Rail Property Board who had sold the site. He said there was now redundant land for sale at the site which could be used and it was an opportunity for Chard and the surrounding area to re-open the station.

During discussion, Members felt the costs would be huge and re-opening this station could put either Axminster or Crewkerne stations at risk of closure. Councillor Turpin pointed out Devon County Council had opened the three stations Whimple, Cranbrook and Pinhoe within a five mile section of the line as part of the Devon Metro.

It was also noted that neither Network Rail or Somerset County Council had expressed any interest in assembling a business case for the project. Members did feel that the Local Plan Policy TA2 relating to the promotion and development of land for both passenger and freight rail hubs where there was robust evidence of support sufficiently kept the proposal open in case there was any major increase in population in Chard or the surrounding area.

The original Motion that Council reinvigorate its aim to reopen Chard Junction Station was put to the vote but was defeated (voting: 5 in favour of the Motion, 36 against, 17 abstentions).

**RESOLVED:** That Council did not support the Motion to reopen Chard Junction Station.

*(Voting: 5 in favour of the Motion, 36 against, 17 abstentions)*

The following Motion was submitted by Councillor Martin Wale:

#### **5. Proposal for a period of free car parking to reinvigorate High Street shopping in South Somerset**

Proposal - That this Council investigates a change to the Council Car Parking Policy to enable an initial free period of up to 2 hours of parking to be made available, where parking is currently charged at a timed rate. A report with the full cost to the Council, in both loss of income and re-equipment, be brought back to Council at the October meeting.

Councillor Martin Wale introduced the Motion which he said the purpose was to assist the shops in the high streets across the district and he asked that a group be formed to investigate the proposal as a matter of urgency so that the outcomes could be fed into the 2016/17 budget.

During discussion, Members were generally supportive of the proposal and it was proposed that a Scrutiny task and finish review be set up to consider the proposal. The Assistant Director (Economy) suggested that a light touch review was the way forward and at the conclusion of the debate, Councillor Wale accepted the offer of the light touch review provided that it was conducted in time for its outcomes to be included in the 2016/17 budget process. He also agreed to remove the final sentence of his proposal to report back to Council in October 2015 and with this removed his Motion was put to the vote and carried (voting: 52 in favour, 5 against, 1 abstention).

**RESOLVED:** That Council agreed to investigate a change to the Council Car Parking Policy to enable an initial free period of up to 2 hours of parking to be made available, where parking is currently charged at a timed rate.

*(Voting: 52 in favour, 5 against, 1 abstention)*

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**33. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 17)**

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

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**34. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 18)**

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Full Council would take place on **Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2015** in the Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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Chairman

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Date