

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 21 January 2016** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(7.30 pm - 8.25 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Tony Capozzoli (Chairman)
Councillor Martin Wale (Vice-Chairman)

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

Officers

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| Vega Sturgess | Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) |
| Ian Clarke | Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) |
| Donna Parham | Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) |
| Ian Potter | Revenues and Benefits Manager |
| Jo Gale | Scrutiny Manager |
| Angela Cox | Democratic Services Manager |

89. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

At the beginning of the meeting, with the agreement of all Members, the Chairman asked Councillor Martin Wale to join him as Vice Chairman for the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Best, Nigel Gage, Henry Hobhouse, Andy Kendall, Jenny Kenton, Sam McAllister and Rina Singh, Strategic Director.

90. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 17th December 2015, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 17th December 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

91. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

92. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

Mr N Whitsun-Jones, as Chairman of the South Somerset Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) asked the following question:-

In its 'Five Year Housing Land Supply Paper (September 2015)' the Council said as follows:

1.3. The Council recognises that the five-year housing land supply position should be updated annually; but is also mindful that the information in these reports only ever represents a 'snap-shot' in time. The five-year housing land supply position is volatile and constantly subject to change. Every house built, each planning permission granted, and every major change to the delivery timetable for a housing site affects the five-year housing land supply position. As such, the five-year housing land supply position will be regularly monitored and updated to ensure that significant changes in circumstances are captured and publicised.

Does the Council now have a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites for the purposes of paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework? If the answer is still 'No', then:

1. What, please, is the current evidence to demonstrate this lack of a 5 year housing land supply?
2. What steps has the Council taken, is taking, and will be taking to address this issue and within what definitive timescale?
3. Further, and in accordance with the Council Resolution of 17 September 2015 on the 'SSDC Five Year Land Supply', what investigations has the Project Management Board carried out to accelerate the Local Plan review process, and with what result?
4. Can the Council please post all this information on its website in an easily accessible format so that the public can be kept informed of the up to date position, with updates being made as necessary?"

Councillor Angie Singleton, as Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning (Place Making) responded:

1. As per the September 2015 report, it is the Council's position that it does not have a five-year housing land supply of deliverable sites. Only four months has passed since that report was published and there is no evidence to indicate that the Council can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.
2. The Council continues to work with landowners, developers, agents and the community to ensure that development which is shown to be acceptable is approved without delay. This will help boost the future supply of homes in South Somerset. In addition, the Council is working with developers to agree and sign Section 106 Agreements, and other necessary approvals, so that development which has planning consent can commence and proceed as soon as possible. This is an ongoing and daily activity within the Council as it responds to the Government mandate to "*significantly boost the supply of housing*". The evidence to update the five-year housing land supply position will be available after the end of the financial year (i.e. after the 31st March 2016). A report will be presented to District Executive soon after this date, once the range of data and statistics have been analysed.
3. In August 2015, the Council approved the latest Local Development Scheme (2015 – 2018). This sets out the agreed workload and programme of technical evidence base documents which need to be prepared in order to carry out the Early Review of the Local Plan. The timetable for this, in accordance with the instructions provided by the Local Plan Inspector in his report, are to complete the Early Review of the Local Plan by 2018.
4. All evidence base and project management information is available within the Spatial Policy section of the Council's website. All evidence and documentation relating to the five-year housing land supply is, on satisfactory resolution of the District Executive, also published on the Council's website.

Mr Bud Budzynski asked if it was possible to place one or two benches to the south of the groundsmans house at the Yeovil Recreation Ground to allow those walking around the recreation ground to take a rest.

Councillor Sylvia Seal, as Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture said she would forward the request to the Community Health and Leisure Manager to progress.

93. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor David Recardo spoke as the SSDC appointed Governor to Yeovil District Hospital. He updated Members on the new modular ward to be completed soon, a new multi-storey car park and access arrangements and the new Trust Chairman, Paul von der Heyde. He advised that there would be a drop-in event on Tuesday 26 January between 2.30pm and 5.30pm at Yeovil Baptist Church to promote these future developments at the hospital.

Councillor Peter Gubbins advised that the Councillors Christmas dinner had been booked for Thursday 15th December 2016 at the Yeovil Golf Club and he asked Members to note this date in their diaries. .

94. Chairman's Engagements (Agenda Item 6)

The list of Chairman's Engagements was noted.

95. Setting the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) for 2016/17 (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Peter Seib, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services, advised that this was the annual review of the Council Tax Support Scheme which had been updated by a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. He drew Members attention to the equality impact assessment which demonstrated the care which had been taken to isolate the effects of the changes in the policy on individual people and the recommendation to keep the Hardship Scheme at the current level of £30,000.

In response to questions from Members, the Scrutiny Manager and the Revenues and Benefits Manager advised that:-

- The Task and Finish group reviewed all the measures in the original scheme, considering best practice and learning from the approach and experience of other Local Authorities. In particular, the measure that introduced a minimum Council Tax contribution had been applied across many Authorities; some authorities that had introduced this measure at 25% or higher had found that their collection costs had increased and the amounts collected had reduced.
- The suggestion from Revenues and Benefits Managers across Somerset was to pursue a Council Tax Band C cap to calculate entitlement as it was considered that this better balanced the needs of the community.
- The reference to the masculine 'he' throughout the policy document was generally accepted to cover both sexes in terms of legislation.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were pleased to confirm the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17.

RESOLVED: That Full Council agreed:

- a. that personal allowances and premiums are updated in line with those for Housing Benefit;
- b. that non-dependent deductions are updated in line with the annual percentage increase in Council Tax;
- c. that the non-dependent income bands are increased by the same percentage as those in the Prescribed Requirements relating to pensioners;
- d. that approval is given for proposals A and C to be incorporated into the 2016/17 scheme;
- e. that proposals B and D be rejected;
- f. that the hardship scheme budget be set at £30,000 for the 2016/17 financial year;
- g. to consider the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix 2 in approving (d) and (e) above;

- h. to consider the public consultation responses at Appendix 3 in approving (d) and (e) above;
- i. to note the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group attached at Appendix 4;
- j. to note the scheme has been amended to reflect changes to the Prescribed Requirements;
- k. that the 2016/17 Council Tax Support Scheme at Appendix 1 is adopted;
- l. to note that the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme has been reflected within the overall Council Tax Base.

Reason: To agree the Council Tax Support scheme (CTS) for the 2016/17 financial year.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

96. The Somerset Rivers Authority and Flood Action Plan - Update Report (Agenda Item 8)

The Leader of Council advised that the DCLG review of the flooding situation in 2013/14 gave a number of funding options and the decision of the Somerset Authorities was to request that the Somerset Rivers Authority become a precepting body. The DCLG had agreed a 'shadow' precept for 2016/17 and this would be detailed as a separate amount on the Council Tax bills with an explanatory sheet or message. The funding raised would be for additional flood prevention work and not for the replacement of existing pumping equipment.

In response to a question, the Leader confirmed that all the Somerset Authorities had agreed to propose the 1.25% addition to their Council Tax which would sit outside the Government Cap on Council Tax increases.

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

RESOLVED: That Full Council:

1. Noted progress to date in the development of the Somerset Rivers Authority and South Somerset District Council's position on the way forward as set out in the report.
2. Agreed to take up the offer to create a shadow precept on the basis that Central Government has agreed that it will continue to work with the Somerset Authorities on developing a long term funding solution.
3. Agreed that £108,122, the equivalent of 1.25% increase in council tax is passported to the Somerset Rivers Authority in 2016/17.

Reason: To note the progress to date in the development of the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) and agree the ongoing proposals for its future funding.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

97. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 9)

The Leader of Council drew Members attention to the Portfolio Holder decision to withhold consent to dispose of a property in Curry Rivel. He noted that this decision and another similar one at Donyatt had led Yarlington Homes to review their policy and increase their public consultation in similar circumstances.

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

- The Somerset District Authorities Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy 2015-2020 and the Environmental Protection Enforcement Policy 2015-2020 were under review as other Somerset Authorities were adding additional information to them and they would be re-presented to District Executive in May 2016.
- A report on additional income streams for the Council would be presented to District Executive in March 2016.
- He would ask Yarlington Homes to account for the income from rural properties disposed of by them, as they were supposed to be redeployed in the local area, however, Yarlington Homes were not obliged to provide the information.

At the conclusion of the debate the report of Executive Decisions was noted.

98. Audit Committee (Agenda Item 10)

It was noted that there had been no meeting of the Audit Committee since the last meeting of Full Council.

99. Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 11)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee noted that the Scrutiny call-in of the Portfolio Holder decision to allow the disposal of a property in Rimpleton had been dealt with amicably and the decision was now confirmed, however, the process of future property disposals would be reviewed. She thanked the officers involved in the task and finish review of the Council Tax Support scheme and advised that there was a current task and finish review of the journey of exploration with Sedgemoor District Council.

The report of the Scrutiny Committee was noted.

100. Motions (Agenda Item 12)

There were no Motions submitted.

101. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 13)

The following question was submitted by Councillor Colin Winder under Procedure Rule 10:-

How much to date in direct and indirect costs has been spent on the Westlands Sports and Social centre by SSSDC?

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture responded with the following points:-

- The direct cost of work undertaken prior to the 1st October District Executive decision amounted to £7,213 whilst the direct cost of work undertaken since the District Executive decision amounts to £7,210
- No costs had been incurred on any pre-lease maintenance works. Until such time as the lease was agreed, AgustaWestland would undertake those at their own cost.

Note:

Members will remember that they were made aware in the 1st October District Executive report (para 60) that the figures assumed that “the Council undertakes and completes both the detailed design work and prepares the supporting tender packages at risk whilst the proposal is determined by AgustaWestland”.

- The Project Board had allocated up to £45,000 for these detailed design works to be undertaken whilst negotiating the Heads of Terms and Lease with AgustaWestland. Of this £7,210 has been spent to date.
- The primary indirect cost is the staff time assigned to the project. However, the Council does not have a time recording system for projects and we therefore cannot provide any evidenced information for members to consider.

In response, Councillor Winder asked if the allocation of £45,000 would be sufficient as more work became apparent as the project went forward.

Councillor Seal replied that all the notes and paperwork from the project board meetings were open for all Members to scrutinise.

102. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Full Council would take place on **Thursday 25th February 2016** in the Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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Chairman

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Date