

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 7 January 2016**.

(9.30 am - 11.23 am)

Present:

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Carol Goodall	Peter Seib
Shane Pledger	Angie Singleton
Jo Roundell Greene	Nick Weeks
Sylvia Seal	

Also Present:

Jason Baker	Tim Inglefield
Val Keitch	David Norris
Sue Steele	

Officers

Rina Singh	Interim Chief Executive
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
Alasdair Bell	Environmental Health Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

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

110. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 3rd December 2015, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

111. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Henry Hobhouse and Peter Gubbins.

112. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

113. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public present.

114. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that he had attended a meeting of the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) where it had been announced that the Government were preparing primary legislation to allow the Rivers Authority to become a separate precepting body. In the meantime, Council Tax would be allowed to rise by 1 ¼ % to raise ringfenced funding for the work of the SRA. Each District Council in Somerset would be asked to confirm their agreement to this at their budget setting meetings in February 2016. If the increase was agreed then it would be carefully explained in the Council Tax leaflets.

During discussion, it was noted that the County Council were also being allowed to raise their precept to fund Adult Social Care and concern was expressed at the possible large increase and its effect on SSDC taxpayers. The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that the combined increases in Council Tax on a Band D property would equate to approximately an additional £65 p.a.

At the conclusion of a short debate, it was noted that this would be discussed further at Full Council on 25th February 2016.

115. Setting the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2016/17 (Agenda Item 6)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services thanked the Scrutiny Task and Finish group for their work in reviewing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. He said many different approaches were tested including the effect of Universal Credit and some were rejected because of this. He outlined the four proposed changes, two of which were not supported and he noted that the Hardship Scheme had been set at £30,000 for the year.

The Scrutiny Chairman noted that the scheme had been considered in great depth by a Task and Finish Group and she drew attention to a small error within the report which would be corrected before presentation to Full Council.

In response to questions from Members the Portfolio Holder, Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) and the Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that:-

- The proposal to reduce the amount of savings held whilst remaining in receipt of council tax support had been supported by the majority of consultation respondents and those affected by the proposal was on a sliding scale as capital between £16,000 and £6,000 is currently taken into account.
- The Somerset Rivers Authority levy would increase the amount of council tax support claimed and the impact to SSDC would be less than £200,000.
- The respondents to the consultation process were a representative cross section of people who were in receipt of council tax support and those who were not.
- None of the assertions in the consultation were taken at face value but had been calculated to identify how many people they would affect.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) agreed to provide a briefing note on the Council Tax Support Scheme for Town and Parish Councillors.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to recommend the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17 to Council for approval.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive recommend to Council:

- a. that personal allowances and premiums are uprated in line with those for Housing Benefit;
- b. that non-dependent deductions are uprated 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 1 in approving (d) and (e) above;
- h. to consider the public consultation responses at Appendix 2 in approving (d) and (e) above;
- i. to note the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group attached at Appendix 3;
- j. to note the scheme has been amended to reflect changes to the Prescribed Requirements;
- k. that the 2016/17 Council Tax Support Scheme attached at Appendix A is adopted;
- l. to note that the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme has been reflected within the overall Council Tax Base.

Reason: To recommend the proposed amendments to the Council Tax Reduction scheme for the 2016/17 financial year to Full Council for approval.

116. Approval of the Somerset District Authorities Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy 2015-2020 and the Environmental Protection Enforcement Policy 2015-2020 (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman advised that this item was being deferred to the next District Executive meeting on 4th February 2016 for further equalities information to be included with the policy documents.

117. Proposed leasing of 80 South Street, Yeovil, BA20 1OT (Agenda Item 8)

The Chairman, as Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Policy, reminded Members of the previous proposal to convert the property into a day centre with accommodation. However, the P4A project was no longer in operation and the conversion work had never started. Similar projects at Goldcroft and Mirrolds in Chard had brought empty properties back into the rental market and it was now proposed to do the same with this property using the same local developers.

The Environmental Health Manager advised that the proposal would ensure that SSDC had an increased asset after the 15 year lease, and, as SSDC would have nomination rights for the tenants of the flats, then people on the housing waiting list would be rehomed.

The Scrutiny Chairman asked if the Council would receive New Homes Bonus funding for the flats and it was confirmed that this would be £8,000 per flat plus the council tax payments. It was also confirmed that planning permission for the conversion had already been granted and the developer would be the responsible landlord for the flats when completed.

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

RESOLVED: That the District Executive approved:

1. the granting of a full repairing lease for 15 years to two local developers for 80 South Street, Yeovil BA20 1OT for conversion into four one bedroom flats in accordance with the rental value and conditions set out in this report.
2. that SSDC would retain nomination rights for the occupiers of the new flats with preference going to key workers and that the rent values will be set at Local Housing Authority (LHA) rental rates.
3. that the annual rental difference of £2,430 from the previous proposed scheme be found from the general fund for 2015/16 and added to the medium term financial plan for future years.

Reason: To approve the lease 80 South Street, Yeovil BA20 1OT to two local developers with whom SSDC have worked with in the past.

118. Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme Update (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the report to Members and drew their attention to the announcements in the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, particularly noting the removal of all Revenue Support Grant by 2019/20 and the review of the New Homes Bonus scheme. He also noted the work undertaken to investigate the proposal made at Full Council in July 2015 to change the SSDC Car Parking Policy to allow a free period of up to two hours free car parking to encourage shoppers to the market towns. Although there had been little evidence to support a discounting period of parking due to the forecast drop in car parking income, officers would continue to investigate the proposal.

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

- The outcome of the proposal to join with Sedgemoor DC was not yet known but if SSDC decided to engage a new CEO officer then this would be considered 'in year'.
- The vacant posts removed were mainly part time hour adjustments and would not impact upon service delivery.
- As the Governments Revenue Support Grant figure was not known, it had been agreed at District Executive in October 2015 to use balances where appropriate to achieve a balanced budget.
- The optimum reserve balance was between £3.4m and £3.8m to meet the Council's key risks and £1.6m was being used to support the revenue budget in future years.

The Interim Chief Executive advised that a Transformation Business Case report would be presented to District Executive in February and some Members Workshops may be held to explain this new approach to service delivery to Members.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to confirm the medium term financial plan and capital programme as presented.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

1. noted the current position and timetable for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme;
2. approved in principle the savings and additional income outlined in Appendix A.
3. approved in principle the additional budget pressures outlined in Appendix B.

Reason: To update members of the current position on the Medium Term Financial Plan (Revenue Budgets for 2016/17 to 2020/21) and the Capital Programme.

119. Community Right to Bid Quarterly Update Report (Agenda Item 10)

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that:-

- 5 new properties had been added to the register of assets of community value within the last 3 months and SSDC was currently reviewing the arrangements for adding properties to the register to ensure it was simple, effective and complied with legislation.
- Representations had been made on the recent DCLG survey and changes to the legislation were anticipated.
- Agents for the Church Commissioners had requested a copy of the SSDC Compensation Scheme relating to Barrington Primary School.

In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director (Communities) confirmed that any church currently in use could be nominated and placed on the register, however, although Church of England churches could be nominated there was separate legislation which covered these. She also agreed to check how many successful Community Rights to Bid to buy an asset had occurred as none had taken place within South Somerset.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the report and agree the Council's 'Compensation Scheme and Procedure for the Community Right to Bid'.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

1. agreed the Council's 'Compensation Scheme and Procedure for the Community Right to Bid' at Appendix C.
2. agreed to note the report.

Reason: To inform members of the current status of the register of Assets of Community Value in South Somerset for quarter three of 2015/16. Also to approve the adoption of a Compensation Scheme and Procedure for the Community Right to Bid.

120. Monthly News Snapshot (Agenda Item 11)

Members were content to note the monthly news snapshot information.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the monthly news snapshot information.

Reason: The report is provided for members information.

121. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the following additions to the Executive Forward Plan:

- Transformation Business Plan – February 2016
- Review of SSVCA Funding – February 2016
- Consultation on New Homes Bonus – closing date 10/03/16 – SSDC response to be discussed at District Executive – March 2016

- Somerset Waste Partnership New Waste Collection Model – moved to March 2016

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following additions;
 - Transformation Business Case – February 2016
 - Review of SSVCA Funding – February 2016
 - Consultation on New Homes Bonus – March 2016
 - Somerset Waste Partnership New Waste Collection Model – moved to March 2016
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B..

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

122. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 4th February 2016 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

123. Exclusion of Press and Public (Agenda Item 14)

RESOLVED: That the following items 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).

124. Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision: The installation of a 90.09 kW photovoltaic array at Brympton Way (Confidential) (Agenda Item 15)

The Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) advised that because the energy performance of the Brympton Way building had not been known at the time of the previous urgent decision taken to install the photovoltaic array on the extension and council chamber roofs at Brympton Way, the amount of Feed in Tariff to be received was unknown. The building had now been rated as category D and so a higher rate of Feed In Tariff would be received.

The Scrutiny Chairman asked if it would be possible to include the interest which the capital sum would have earned if not allocated to the project. The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that it would have been £2,900 and agreed to include it in future reports.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

1. noted the urgent Executive decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder under section 3.50(4) of the Constitution.
2. approved a Save to Earn bid for the installation of a 90.09 kW photovoltaic array on the extension and council chamber roofs at Brympton Way.
3. agreed that the net savings be added to the medium term financial plan for 2016/17 and beyond.

Reason: To update members on an urgent executive decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder.

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Chairman

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Date