

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT on Thursday 3 March 2016.**

(9.33 am - 12.00 pm)

**Present:**

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Carol Goodall	Sylvia Seal
Peter Gubbins	Peter Seib
Henry Hobhouse	Angie Singleton (from 10.00am)
Shane Pledger	Nick Weeks

**Also Present:**

Jason Baker	Mike Beech
Val Keitch	Mike Lewis
Sue Steele	Colin Winder

**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)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Steve Joel	Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being)
Andrew Gillespie	Performance Manager
Charlotte Jones	Performance Manager
Laurence Willis	Assistant Director (Environment)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Pauline Burr	Arts Development Officer
Ian Potter	Revenues and Benefits Manager
David Crisfield	Third Sector & Partnerships Co-ordinator
Anna-Maria Lenz	Performance Officer
Steve Barnes	Play and Youth Facilities Officer
Jo Morgan	Equalities Officer
Catherine Hood	Management Accountant
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

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

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### 142. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

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### **143. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jo Roundell Greene.

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

There were no declarations of interest made.

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

Mr J Bowman, a local Post Master, addressed members regarding agenda item 10 – Proposed Amendments to the Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief. He highlighted to members there were differences in the relief available between some town Post Offices and those in rural areas. With changes to contracts in the future many more Post Offices were likely to become less viable. He hoped members would reconsider the item and think of the implications to the rural Post Office network.

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

The Chairman noted that he and the Interim Chief Executive had recently attended a Heart of the South West devolution meeting, where it had been agreed to undertake a governance review. He also provided a brief update on the latest situation regarding devolution.

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### **147. Report from Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (Agenda Item 6)**

Councillor David Recardo, as SSDC appointed governor to Yeovil District Hospital, had given his apologies for the meeting, as he was attending a governor's meeting.

In response to a comment from the Scrutiny Committee, it was confirmed that the problems the hospital had encountered since introducing ANPR parking arrangements would be noted, and forwarded to the SSDC Engineering & Property Services Manager to consider when implementing any similar arrangements for SSDC.

The Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) also provided a brief update on health prevention programmes.

At the conclusion of the short discussion, members were content to note the report.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

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### **148. SSDC Transformation Programme (Agenda Item 7)**

The Chairman introduced the report and noted that if approved at Council, it would be the biggest decision the authority had made for over fifteen years. It would be a significant decision and not without risk, but at the moment members were only being asked to approve the concept. He acknowledged the transition through transformation

would not be smooth, but there were experiences to draw on from elsewhere and SSDC would design its own model. No matter what option was taken, the funding shortfall for future years would have to be found.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation commented the programme would enhance the customer experience and that there would be substantial savings which is why it was being recommended to Full Council. The proposals should also free up staff to work on priorities such as income generation. She also thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their comments.

The Performance Managers explained aspects of the report in more detail including:

- The report sets out the design principles for a citizen centric council.
- In essence it describes a commissioning model, there is a degree of separation between strategy and delivery roles.
- The Headline Business Case sets out the main roles.
- Technology is essential to the model, but the technology enables transformation it does not lead it.
- Significant financial implications

The use of funding from New Homes Bonus to support the Medium Term Financial Plan via the Revenue Support Reserve was queried. It was agreed that the Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) would re-word the explanation to provide more detail in the report to full Council.

During further discussion other comments included:

- This will be a colossal change for our staff but we can benefit from the experience of others who have taken a similar route, so lessening our risks.
- There are positives for SSDC in better, more efficient and sometimes different delivery to citizens.
- Case work will be followed through in a shorter time.
- Performance measures will be much improved and assist better performance management.
- Transformation is open ended and SSDC will need to be open to data sharing with other agencies in the future.
- There is a need to be radical to get the required savings.
- Selecting the right IT will be key.
- Although it may not look the same as it does now, feel a commitment to Area Working should remain.
- As members, we need to be clear on where we want to arrive as there may not be enough funding to do all that we want to do.
- The proposed governance through the programme board, which will periodically report back to District Executive, will allow everyone to ask questions and know what is going on.
- The sooner the end aspirations and structure are clear the better.
- Unions have not been formally consulted to date.
- Staff are important and need to be happy in their work, properly involved and have their fears acknowledged. They must also be helped to cope with change, including possible redundancies.
- Fully support transformation and confident it will work, but concerned we don't know the structure of the Council when going into the programme.

- If the concept of transformation is agreed, then work will be done to develop new staffing structures.
- Councillors need to look at how they work too – and look to see how they can contribute to savings.
- All 60 members must be engaged in the process.
- Communication will be important and the process must be explained in stages and an overview provided as to the current position and where the authority is going.

Scrutiny Committee had raised a number of comments and these had been emailed to members prior to the meeting. One of their main concerns was the lack of attendance by members at briefing sessions regarding transformation.

In response to comments made the interim Chief Executive wished to reassure members that they had tried to learn from other authorities, especially with South Hams. She noted there would be a need to be flexible, and so would staff.

At the conclusion of debate, members recommended the report, including a revised explanation of the New Homes Bonus element, to Full Council for approval.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive recommends Full Council to:

- Accept the Headline Business Case for Transformation, attached in Appendix A including the vision and principles for transformation and note the headline risks, and equality impact assessment included in this report.
- Agree the Transformation Programme governance arrangements as set out in section 6 of this report.
- Delegate authority to deliver the Programme to the Leader of the Council with the approval of the Programme Board.
- Approve that savings of £2,000,000 be added to the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- Approve that £59,975 for ongoing software maintenance costs is added to the Medium Term Financial Plan as an ongoing commitment from 2017/18.
- Approve that the £394,000 currently held in the Voluntary Redundancy Reserve is transferred to a new Transformation Reserve to fund this programme.
- Allocate £1,314,300 from capital receipts set aside in the budget for transformation to fund for this programme.
- Agree that the further revenue cost of £2,754,000 is funded from the Revenue Support Reserve.

**Reason:** To seek member approval of the principles and vision for the Council Transformation Programme that will lead to the adoption of a new operating model.

## 149. District-wide Voluntary Sector Grants 2016/17 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture introduced the report and the Third Sector & Partnerships Co-ordinator presented it in more detail. He reminded members that funding for Citizens Advice South Somerset and South Somerset Voluntary & Community Action had already been agreed but data monitoring to date was included within the report.

In response to comments made by members and by the Scrutiny Committee, officers responded to points of detail and explained that:

- Use of digital technology and being involved with carnivals in South Somerset had increased participant numbers significantly for Somerset Film.
- As Somerset Rural Youth Project had been successful with projects to help reduce anti-social behaviour, the requests for them to work in communities with such issues had reduced.

At the end of a brief discussion members acknowledged the valuable work of volunteers, and were content to approve funding to the organisations numbered 3 to 5 as indicated in table 1 on page 65 of the agenda.

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive:

1. approved the proposed funding for 2016/17, for the organisations numbered 3 to 5 in Table 1 below;
2. noted that 2016/17 funding for Citizens Advice South Somerset and South Somerset Voluntary and Community Action were subject to separate reports following reviews commissioned by the Portfolio Holder. In both cases District Executive recommended a further 12 month funding at the 2015/16 level.

Description	What is it for	Budget for 2016/17 £	Budget Holder/Lead Officer	Funding recommended £	
1) CAB Grants	SLA with Citizens Advice South Somerset	121,730	Kim Close	121,730	Previously agreed by District Exec 03/12/15
2) CVS Grants	SLA with South Somerset Voluntary and Community Action	74,260	Helen Rutter	74,260	Previously agreed by District Exec 04/02/15
3) Equalities & Diversity	SLA with Access for All	10,000	Jo Morgan	<b>9,000</b>	
4) Youth Development	SLA with Somerset Rural Youth Project	8,000	Rob Parr	<b>8,000</b>	

5) District Wide Health and Well-being grants	SLAs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actiontrack Performance Company,</li> <li>Take Art,</li> <li>Somerset Art Works,</li> <li>Somerset Film.</li> </ul>	20,150	Pauline Burr	2,000 10,500 3,500  2,000 <b>18,000</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>234,140</b>		<b>35,000</b>	

**Reason:** To approve the levels of funding for the District-wide voluntary sector organisations seeking financial support from SSDC in 2016/17.

### 150. Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report - 3rd Quarter 2015/16 (Agenda Item 9)

The Performance Officer presented the report as detailed in the agenda and highlighted two performance indicators of interest which were below target – PI 003 and PI 032. She noted with regard to PI 031 that data was still being collated, but figures were unavailable for the third quarter as monitoring software for the call centre had only recently been installed.

Scrutiny Committee had noted a slight rise in complaints within Arts and Leisure but acknowledged the service had also been engaging with more customers. It was also noted by the Chairman that a show at the Octagon had been cancelled by a director at very late notice, which understandably had generated some complaints.

In response to a question raised during discussion, the Chairman noted there would be a separate discussion with officers, regarding the timeframes involved with completing the legal paperwork for Section 106 agreements.

At the conclusion of discussion members were content to note the corporate performance monitoring report.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive noted the corporate performance monitoring report.

**Reason:** To review the corporate performance monitoring report covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 (Q3).

### 151. Proposed amendments to the Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy (Agenda Item 10)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the item, and referring to the comments made at public question time, noted there were two ways in which Post Offices received rate relief, with the criteria laid out by government. He noted that substantially the policy document was same as previously but with some re-wording.

During debate there was much discussion about Post Offices and local examples provided of the issues some communities were facing. The Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) and the Revenues & Benefits Manager responded to points of detail and noted:

- If members wished to do something specifically for Post Offices then the whole policy would need to be revised accordingly.
- Struggling Post Offices could apply for hardship relief but this was only short-term.
- The policy regarding Post Offices had not been amended in the document.
- The order in which reliefs were applied was laid down by government
- If members were happy to approve the changes in the policy, as they are not specific to Post Offices, it was suggested officers including Area Development representatives, meet with Mr Bowman to discuss the wider issues affecting Post Offices, especially those in rural areas.

Scrutiny Committee had not raised any concerns and noted the detailed work of the Task and Finish group on the matter.

Members were content to approve the amended Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, (DRRP) to come into effect on 1 April 2016, and to note the work of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive:

- (a) Approved the amended Discretionary Rate Relief Policy (DRRP) which will come into effect on 1 April 2016;
- (b) Noted the DRRP Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group have considered and support the proposed amendments.

**Reason:** To approve the proposed amendments to the Council's Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

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## 152. **SSDC Response to New Homes Bonus Consultation (Agenda Item 11)**

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning introduced the item noting the document was very technical. Due to the importance of the consultation, District Executive were being asked to approve the response.

The Assistant Director (Economy) explained the consultation in more detail and highlighted elements of the report.

During discussion some members felt Question 7 was a little strange and the response could be worded more strongly. In response, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) explained that when read in conjunction with Question 6, the detail was more clear.

Scrutiny Committee felt the response was very detailed and thorough and thanked officers for their work.

At the conclusion of discussion members were content to approve the response to the Government consultation on the future criteria for payment of new Homes Bonus.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive approved the response to the DCLG Consultation on New Homes Bonus attached at Appendix A.

**Reason:** To review and confirm the response to the current Government's Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) consultation on New Homes Bonus (NHB).

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**153. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12)**

Members noted the following additions and amendments to the Executive Forward Plan:

Additions:

- Draft Charging Schedule – Community Infrastructure Levy (May)
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (June)
- Five-Year Housing Land Supply / Authorities Monitoring report (July)
- Rural Broadband (April/May)

Amendments:

- Somerset Waste Partnership New Waste Collection Model – April or May

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following amendments;
  - Draft Charging Schedule – Community Infrastructure Levy (May)
  - Strategic Housing Market Assessment (June)
  - Five-Year Housing Land Supply / Authorities Monitoring report (July)
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

**Reason:** The Forward Plan is a statutory document

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**154. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)**

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016 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