

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 6 October 2016**.

(9.30 am - 11.15 am)

Present:

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Clare Aparicio Paul	Sylvia Seal
Carol Goodall	Peter Seib
Peter Gubbins	Angie Singleton
Jo Roundell Greene	Nick Weeks

Also Present:

Mike Beech	Sue Steele
Mike Lewis	

Officers

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
David Crisfield	Third Sector & Partnerships Co-ordinator
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager

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

66. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 1st September 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

67. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Henry Hobhouse.

68. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

69. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public.

70. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that Mrs Joyce Terry, receptionist, was retiring from SSDC after 47 years service to the District Council. Members joined him in congratulating Mrs Terry on her retirement.

The Chairman also welcomed Alex Parmley, Chief Executive, to his first District Executive meeting.

71. Report from Musgrove Park Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Sue Steele introduced the report and noted that at a recent board meeting of Musgrove Park Hospital, the issue of bed blocking had been raised.

The Portfolio Holder for Health & Well-Being advised that the Health and Well-Being board had discussed the need for links between Occupational Therapists, access to Disabled Facilities Grants and other services to help with bed-blocking in local hospitals.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that a conference to discuss supporting loneliness in the community was due to be held the following week at Haselbury Mill. The focus was to draw in community groups to look at practical ways to identify and help isolated groups and individuals.

During discussion, Members voiced their support for the Symphony Project across the county and at the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the briefing papers provided.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the report.

Reason: To note the briefing reports from Musgrove Park Hospital.

72. Community Right to Bid Quarterly Update Report - July to September 2016 (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning (Place Making) advised that since the last report, two assets had been removed from the register and the ownership of one other was being investigated prior to its removal. She recommended that the reports be presented to District Executive on a six-monthly basis in the future.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that the results of the DCLG consultation on the scheme had yet to be published and in the meantime, the Register of Community Assets continued to grow. One request for compensation under the scheme was still being evaluated.

The Third Sector and Partnerships Co-ordinator clarified the details of the compensation claim

The Chairman reported that he had written to the Government Minister to register the Council's concerns on the shortcomings of the scheme, however, the response was that they were still listening to stakeholders.

During discussion, several Members expressed their concern that parishes were nominating assets with no real thought or ability to raise the funds to purchase them and the consequential effect this had on both the seller and any subsequent purchaser. It was requested that the Leader write to the Government Minister again to express the Council's concerns on the shortcomings of the scheme.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree that the reports be presented to District Executive on a six-monthly basis in the future and to note the contents of the report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the report.

Reason: To inform members of the current status of the register of Assets of Community Value in South Somerset using the Community Right to Bid, for quarter two of 2016/17.

73. Somerset Armed Forces Covenant - Overview of Progress 2016 (Agenda Item 8)

The Third Sector and Partnerships Co-ordinator outlined the work being done at a national level between the Government, the MOD and Local Authorities. He also mentioned the SSDC Working Group which was working on an action plan to address any deficiencies locally. There was also a Covenant Fund which SSDC had joined with other authorities to bid for funding under the priority: Strengthening local government delivery of the covenant.

Councillor Carol Goodall, the appointed representative to the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant, advised that there was a general lack of information on armed forces personnel, particularly those who had just left the service. She noted that the British Legion were campaigning to have two questions added to the National Census relating to Armed Forces personnel. There was also now information on the SSDC website which was aimed at Armed Forces personnel however, this did need expanding.

During discussion, it was noted that:-

- The MOD did not provide any information to the British Legion on personnel leaving the service.
- An officer from Yeovilton now attended the Equalities Group.
- The liaison officers from Yeovilton were involved in several local groups.
- The Commonwealth War Graves Commission were responsible for maintaining all war graves.

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

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the report.

Reason: To note the progress with the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership.

74. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan - Flexible use of Capital Receipts (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that from December 2015, under certain circumstances, Local Authorities could use capital receipts for revenue expenditure. Agreeing the recommendation would allow SSDC to use its capital more flexibly and possibly for Transformation costs.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that any capital expenditure would be reported as part of the budget monitoring process. Any capital used had to be for specific projects and any amendments to that must be reported to Council.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee confirmed that they agreed with the recommendations of the report.

There was no debate and Members were content to propose the recommendations to full Council for approval.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive recommends to full Council the approval to utilise the capital receipts outlined in the Efficiency Strategy attached at Appendix A for revenue costs.

Reason: To agree the new ability to utilise new capital receipts to fund revenue projects.

75. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan - Four Year Settlement (Agenda Item 10)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) advised that there had been discussions with the DCLG and the Government Minister regarding the Government's proposed 4-year grant settlement. She said that although she did not agree with the negative rate support grant proposal in 2019, the offer did provide certainty over the next 3 years.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that the offer was grossly unfair to the electorate in the final year (2019) as it amounted to spending SSDC ratepayers money outside the area. He said the proposal would put SSDC into a referendum situation which he did not feel the public would accept. He asked that the Government Minister be challenged to explain how they had arrived at the proposal for SSDC and that a communication plan be drawn up to prepare local residents for the proposal.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said they had acknowledged the differing points of view expressed by the Assistant Director and the Portfolio Holder and noted that neither option was particularly favourable. The Committee had also noted that DCLG had reiterated that no authority would be better off if they did not accept the deal.

Consideration was also given to the reputational risks of informing the public that the council had willingly accepting a negative RSG position versus informing them they had not accepted three years of certainty in defence of a principle. They had also considered the example of Wokingham where the period of certainty offered within the deal was accepted but the negative RSG was not.

During discussion, Members expressed concern at the offer but hoped that in accepting it and continuing dialogue with the Government Minister then an improved offer could be realised by 2019.

At the conclusion of the debate, the majority of Members agreed to propose to Council that the offer be accepted but, also, a letter be sent to the Government Minister to ask for an explanation of the proposal settlement and SSDC's ability to raise council tax. A vote was taken and 7 were in favour with 2 against.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive recommend that full Council accept the 4-year settlement deal offered by the Department for Communities and Local Government and agree to publish the Efficiency Plan at Appendix A.

Reason: To note the outcome of the meeting with Marcus Jones MP – the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Local Government) and recommend that full Council accept and publish the Efficiency Plan.

(Voting: 7 in favour, 2 against, 0 abstentions)

76. Infrastructure Projects and Funding for Feasibility Studies (Agenda Item 11)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development advised that now the Regeneration Board and Area Regeneration Boards were established there was a need for some flexibility to progress stalled infrastructure projects without requesting funding from District Executive on each occasion.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee asked that any executive decisions be delegated to the Portfolio Holder in consultation with the Strategic Regeneration Board (rather than to the Regeneration Board itself) and that those decisions be published and subject to the usual call-in procedures. This was confirmed by the Chairman.

During discussion, minor amendments were suggested to the criteria specific questions in the application form and it was agreed to delegate the final approval of the form to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development in consultation with the Strategic Regeneration Board.

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

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:

1. delegate to the Strategic Regeneration Board the re-prioritisation, as and when required, of the 'Investing in Infrastructure' programme of projects originally agreed by District Executive Committee, using

the criteria approved by District Executive.

2. delegate the spend of the remaining Infrastructure Reserve to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development in consultation with the Strategic Regeneration Board, with £150,000 allocated to area schemes including £50,000 to the 'Yeovil Refresh'.
3. delegate approval of the application form set out in Appendix 1 as the basis for allocation of feasibility funding to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development in consultation with the Strategic Regeneration Board.

Reason: To agree the delegating of financial control and decision-making from the District Executive Committee to the Strategic Regeneration Board for project prioritisation, and delivery, and the setting aside of funding for feasibility work to progress new 'Investing in Infrastructure' projects

77. Monthly News Snapshot (Agenda Item 12)

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.

78. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 13)

The following additions and amendments to the Forward Plan and Consultation Database were noted:

- Review of Private Sector Housing Grants and Loans Policy – moved to February 2016
- Somerset Waste Partnership – Recycle More Project – moved to December 2016
- Employment Monitoring Report – December 2016
- Community Governance Reviews of Yeovilton & Brympton – November 2016
- Homes and Communities equality objectives 2016 to 2020 consultation
- Call for Evidence - Review of England Local Authority Environmental Regulation Fees and Charges
- Business rates Revaluation 2017 - consultation

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following amendments;
 - Review of Private Sector Housing Grants and Loans Policy – moved to February 2016
 - Somerset Waste Partnership – Recycle More Project –

moved to December 2016

- Employment Monitoring Report – December 2016
- Community Governance Reviews of Yeovilton & Brympton – November 2016

2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B, with the additional consultation:

- Homes and Communities equality objectives 2016 to 2020 consultation
- Call for Evidence - Review of England Local Authority Environmental Regulation Fees and Charges
- Business Rates Revaluation 2017

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

79. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 3rd November 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