

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 16 March 2017** in the Council Chamber.

(7.30 pm - 8.25 pm)

Present:

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

Clare Aparicio Paul	Val Keitch	Jo Roundell Greene
Jason Baker	Andy Kendall	Sylvia Seal
Cathy Bakewell	Jenny Kenton	Gina Seaton
Mike Beech	Mike Lewis	Peter Seib
Neil Bloomfield	Mike Lock	Angie Singleton
Amanda Broom	Tony Lock	Alan Smith
John Clark	Paul Maxwell	Sue Steele
Nick Colbert	Sam McAllister	Rob Stickland
Adam Dance	Graham Middleton	Gerard Tucker
Sarah Dyke	David Norris	Andrew Turpin
John Field	Graham Oakes	Linda Vijeh
Nigel Gage	Sue Osborne	Martin Wale
Carol Goodall	Ric Pallister	Nick Weeks
Anna Groskop	Crispin Raikes	Colin Winder
Peter Gubbins	Wes Read	Derek Yeomans
Henry Hobhouse	David Recardo	

Officers:

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Ian Clarke	Director (Support Services)
Ian Potter	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

At the beginning of the meeting, the Chairman, the Leader of Council, the Leader of the Conservative group and the Vice Chairman all paid tribute to Councillor Tim Inglefield (Blackmoor Vale Ward) who had passed away suddenly on 27th February. Members and officers joined them in standing for a moment of silence in his memory.

119. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marcus Barrett, Dave Bulmer, Gye Dibben, Kaysar Hussain, Sarah Lindsay, Tiffany Osborne, Stephen Page, Dean Ruddle, Garry Shortland, William Wallace and Donna Parham, Assistant Director.

120. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2017, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

121. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

122. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

Ms V Cornelius asked why the Council were proposing to sell part of Yeovil's heritage, namely the four Barwick Park Follies?

Councillor Ric Pallister, Leader of Council, apologised for not publicising the proposal earlier to Councillors, however, at this early stage, he said the Council were doing no more than a market test and no decision had been made to dispose of the historic structures. By undertaking a marketing exercise, the Council were inviting 'informal tenders', to explore whether there were any interested parties, including individuals, organisations from the private sector, historic building trusts or public bodies who may be in a position to maintain the structures in the future via grants and funding streams that the Council was not able to access. Advice had been sought from the conservation team and SSDC fully appreciated its role as guardians of the listed structures. This was not being carried out with an expectation of any financial return for the Council but to determine if there was a better way of safeguarding their future.

Mr G Czapiewski of Cucklington asked that the council take all steps possible to work with the local communities and the County Council to care for the roads in the district. A recent incident in his parish had been resolved by the SSDC streetscene service clearing a blocked drain, for which he commended them, but he felt that in a time of financial awareness, it was important that SCC and SSDC worked together co-operatively to reduce costs.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development confirmed that the SSDC streetscene service did operate some gully clearing and they always tried to work in collaboration with the SCC highways service and would continue to do so in the future.

Councillor Ric Pallister, Leader of Council, noted that some parishes had undertaken a mapping exercise of the critical drains within their parish and could engage the SSDC streetscene service to empty them on a more regular basis for a small fee.

123. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that in preparation for the 2021 National Census, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) would be carrying out a census test in South Somerset that year. He said SSDC was one of seven local authorities across England and Wales chosen to take part in the test on 9 April 2017.

124. Briefing by the Local Government Boundary Commission on the forthcoming electoral review of South Somerset District Council (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman introduced Alison Lowton, (Lead Commissioner), Lucy Dunkeyson, (Review Manager) and Laura Taylor from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

The Lead Commissioner introduced the presentation, advising that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England were independent of Government and completed around 25 boundary reviews per year. She said they intervened where there was electoral inequality and they were dependent upon a good contribution of local information from the authority to achieve the best outcome.

The Review Manager then provided Members with a short power point presentation of the process which they would follow to address the electoral imbalances now and into the future in the district. She said they particularly welcomed community evidence and practical examples to back up any proposals. Any changes to Ward boundaries would be effective from May 2019.

In response to questions from Members, the Review Manager confirmed:-

- The key submission dates of 17th July for Council size, 30th October for Ward patterns and 19th March 2018 for the Boundary Commission's final recommendations.
- Data would be live on the LGBCE website after the council size submission stage, however, guidance information would already be on the website.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked the officers from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for attending to explain the process to Members.

RESOLVED: That Full Council noted the presentation by officers of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

125. Council Tax Penalties and Civil Penalties in Housing Benefit (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that the Council offered a wide range of council tax discounts and housing benefits to residents and any over-claims were a loss which the Council could not afford. The proposal made it clear to residents that they must inform the Council in a timely manner of any change in their circumstances. The Council would retain the right to quash any penalty imposed and any penalties collected would be retained but would not form part of the collection fund.

In response to questions from Members, the Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that there were a number of staff in the team involved in compliance and it was hoped that the proposal would reduce the overall workload of the team.

There was no debate and Members were content to confirm the application of Council Tax and Housing Benefit Civil Penalties with effect from 1 April 2017.

RESOLVED: That Full Council approved the application of Council Tax and Housing Benefit Civil Penalties with effect from 1 April 2017.

Reason: To approve the application of Council Tax Penalties and Civil Penalties in Housing Benefit with effect from 1 April 2017

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

126. Proposed Changes to Business Rates Relief Policy (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services confirmed that as a result of changes to Rural Rate Relief announced in the Government's Autumn Statement the recommendations updated the current Business Rates Relief Policy. One recommendation resolved an anomaly relating to the interaction between Small Business Rate Relief and Charity Relief rules.

In response to a question, the Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that there were two local newspapers who qualified for the local discount within the district, however, one already qualified for full business rate relief. If further newspapers came forward they would be considered.

There was no debate and Members unanimously confirmed the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That Full Council:

- a. approved a change to the DRR Policy on Discretionary 'Top up' Charity Relief to 100% where the rate payer would, apart from entitlement to Mandatory Charity, otherwise qualify for 100% Small Business Rate Relief;
- b. noted that the DRR Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group had considered and supported the proposed amendments.

That Full Council noted that District Executive:

- c. approved the use of the Council's local discount powers to grant 100% Rural Rate Relief to eligible ratepayers from 1 April 2017;
- d. approved the use of the Council's local discount powers to introduce a local discount of £1,500 a year for Local Newspapers which would come in to effect on 1 April 2017;
- e. noted that the Retail Relief which was in place for 2014/15 and 2015/16 had been removed from the policy as the deadline for applications had now passed;
- f. noted that the Flood Relief which related to premises flooded between 1/12/13 and 31/03/14 had been removed from the policy

as the deadline for applications had now passed;

- g. noted that the temporary Transitional Relief scheme had been removed from the policy as it came to an end on 31 March 2017. A new national Transitional Relief Scheme was being introduced alongside the new 2017 Rating List.

Reason: To approve the proposed amendments to the Council's Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy (DRR Policy) relating to Discretionary Charity Relief.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

127. Membership of Committees - Appointment of Councillors to Committees and Panels (Agenda Item 9)

Councillor Mike Lewis proposed that Councillor Martin Wale be appointed to the Appointments Committee. It was also agreed that Councillor Colin Winder be appointed to the Income Generation Board, to replace Councillor Clare Aparicio Paul.

There was no debate and Members were content to confirm the appointments listed in the report.

RESOLVED: That Full Council, 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, confirmed that:-

- a. Councillor Martin Wale be appointed to the Appointments Committee;
- b. Councillor David Norris be appointed to the South West Internal Audit Partnership Ltd;
- c. Councillor Derek Yeomans be appointed to the Transformation Board;
- d. Councillor Nick Weeks be appointed to the Somerset Rivers Authority (substitute);
- e. Councillor Colin Winder be appointed to the Income Generation Board.

Reason: To confirm changes to Committees, Panels and outside organisation appointments following requests from the Liberal Democrat and Conservative groups.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

128. Draft Meetings Calendar for 2017/18 (Agenda Item 10)

There was no debate and Members were content to confirm the 2017/18 SSDC meeting timetable as presented.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the SSDC meetings timetable for 2017/18 subject to any amendments made by the Annual Council meeting in May 2017.

Reason: To confirm the proposed meetings timetable for 2017/18.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

129. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 11)

The report of Executive Decisions was noted.

130. Audit Committee (Agenda Item 12)

Councillor Derek Yeomans, Chairman of the Audit Committee, introduced the report and invited questions upon it.

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

131. Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 13)

Councillor Sue Steele, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, presented the report. She noted that following the recent Scrutiny call-in of a decision of the Somerset Waste Partnership, the committee had made suggestions to the Waste Partnership to clarify their agenda and decision publication to make it clearer to the public.

Councillor Jo Roundell Greene, as SSDC representative on the Somerset Waste Partnership, thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their helpful suggestions.

There being no debate, Members were content to note the report of the Scrutiny Committee.

132. Motions (Agenda Item 14)

There were no Motions submitted by Members.

133. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 15)

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

134. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 16)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of Full Council would take place on Thursday 20th April 2017 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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Chairman

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Date