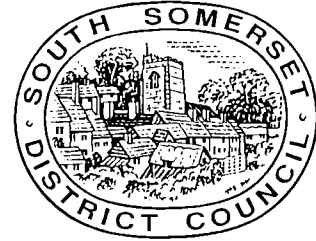


South Somerset District Council

Notice of Meeting



South Somerset District Council

Making a difference where it counts

Thursday 18th January 2018

7.30 pm

**Council Chamber
Council Offices
Brympton Way
Yeovil, BA20 2HT**

(disabled access and a hearing loop are available at this meeting venue)



All members of Council are requested to attend this meeting:

If you would like any further information on the items to be discussed, please contact the Democratic Services Specialist on 01935 462148 or democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk

This Agenda was issued on Wednesday 10 January 2018.

Alex Parmley, Chief Executive Officer

This information is also available on our website
www.southsomerset.gov.uk and via the mod.gov app



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

South Somerset District Council Membership

Chairman: Mike Best
Vice-chairman: Tony Capozzoli

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

Information for the Public

The meetings of the full Council, comprising all 60 members of South Somerset District Council, are held at least 6 times a year. The full Council approves the Council's budget and the major policies which comprise the Council's policy framework. Other decisions which the full Council has to take include appointing the Leader of the Council, members of the District Executive, other Council Committees and approving the Council's Constitution (which details how the Council works including the scheme allocating decisions and Council functions to committees and officers).

Members of the Public are able to:-

- attend meetings of the Council and its committees such as Area Committees, District Executive, except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Area Committees, District Executive and Council meetings;
- see reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council and Executive;
- find out, from the Executive Forward Plan, what major decisions are to be decided by the District Executive.

Meetings of the Council are scheduled to be held monthly at 7.30 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month in the Council Offices, Brympton Way although some dates are only reserve dates and may not be needed.

The agenda, minutes and the timetable for council meetings are published on the Council's website – www.southsomerset.gov.uk/councillors-and-democracy/meetings-and-decisions

Agendas and minutes can also be viewed via the mod.gov app (free) available for iPads and Android devices. Search for 'mod.gov' in the app store for your device and select 'South Somerset' from the list of publishers and then select the committees of interest. A wi-fi signal will be required for a very short time to download an agenda but once downloaded, documents will be viewable offline.

The Council's corporate aims which guide the work of the Council are set out below.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the agenda co-ordinator named on the front page.

South Somerset District Council - Council Aims

South Somerset will be a confident, resilient and flexible organisation, protecting and improving core services, delivering public priorities and acting in the best long-term interests of the district. We will:

- Protect core services to the public by reducing costs and seeking income generation.
- Increase the focus on Jobs and Economic Development.
- Protect and enhance the quality of our environment.
- Enable housing to meet all needs.
- Improve health and reduce health inequalities.

Ordnance Survey mapping/map data included within this publication is provided by South Somerset District Council under licence from the Ordnance Survey in order to fulfil its public function to undertake its statutory functions on behalf of the district. Persons viewing this mapping should contact Ordnance Survey copyright for advice where they wish to licence Ordnance Survey mapping/map data for their own use. South Somerset District Council - LA100019471 - 2018.

South Somerset District Council

Thursday 18 January 2018

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday, 16th November 2017.

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (as amended 26 February 2015), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting.

Members are reminded that they need to declare the fact that they are also a member of a County, Town or Parish Council as a Personal Interest. Where you are also a member of Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council within South Somerset you must declare a prejudicial interest in any business on the agenda where there is a financial benefit or gain or advantage to Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council which would be at the cost or to the financial disadvantage of South Somerset District Council.

4. Public Question Time

5. Chairman's Announcements

Items for Discussion

6. Chairman's Engagements (Page 6)

7. Heart of the South West (HotSW) - Joint Committee (Pages 7 - 25)

8. Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19 (Pages 26 - 31)

9. Monitoring Officer Appointment (Pages 32 - 33)

10. Report of Executive Decisions (Pages 34 - 38)

11. Audit Committee (Pages 39 - 41)

12. Scrutiny Committee (Pages 42 - 47)

13. Motions

There were no Motions submitted by Members.

14. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

15. Date of Next Meeting (Page 48)

Agenda Item 6

Chairman's Engagements

18th November

The Chairman attended the Yeovil Christmas light switch on.

25th November

At the invitation of the Mayor of Yeovil, the Chairman and his wife attended the Mayor's Ball in aid of St Margaret's Hospice and School in a Bag.

8th December

At the invitation of the Mayor of Ilminster, the Chairman and his wife attended the Ilminster Civic Evening and enjoyed a performance of Goodnight Mr Tom.

9th December

The Chairman and his wife attended a performance of Cinderella at The Octagon Theatre.

16th December

At the invitation of the Somerset Community Foundation, the Chairman and his wife attended the Annual Carol Service, held at Wells Cathedral.

17th December

The Chairman attended the Salvation Army Christmas Carol Service in Yeovil.

19th December

The Chairman attended the Blue Light Christmas Carol Service at Exeter Cathedral.

20th December

The Chairman attended the Wadham School Christmas Carol Service which was held at St Bartholomew's Church, Crewkerne.

Agenda Item 7

Heart of the South West (HotSW) – Joint Committee

Executive Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ric Pallister, Strategy and Policy
Chief Executive: Alex Parmley, Chief Executive
Contact Details: Alex.parmley@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462101

Reason for the Report

1. On 23 February 2017, South Somerset District Council gave 'in principle' approval to the establishment of a HotSW Joint Committee, subject to approving the Joint Committee's constitutional arrangements and an inter-authority agreement necessary to support the Joint Committee. This report sets out the necessary documents which, if agreed, will enable the Joint Committee to be formally established.

Public Interest

2. Under the Localism Act 2011, Councils have a duty to cooperate in planning for the needs and the development of their areas, recognising development can impact across boundaries and can need planning, infrastructure and support at a wider level than local authority boundaries. The Local Government Act 1972 allows Councils to establish Joint Committees to take forward shared responsibilities. The proposed Heart of the South West Joint Committee would involve the County Councils, Unitary Councils, District Councils and National Park Authorities of the Heart of the South West Area coming together formally to share responsibility for planning for the needs and development of the area. This is with a view to increasing cooperation and to securing devolved powers and funding from the Government to support economic growth and improved living standards.

Recommendations:

3. That Council:
 - a) Approve the recommendation of the HotSW Leaders (meeting as a shadow Joint Committee) to form a Joint Committee for the Heart of the South West;
 - b) Approve the Arrangements and Inter-Authority Agreement documents set out in appendices A and B for the establishment of the Joint Committee with the commencement date of Monday 22nd January 2018;
 - d) Appoint Councillor Ric Pallister and Councillor Jo Roundell Greene as the Council's named representative and substitute named representative on the Joint Committee;
 - c) Appoint Somerset County Council as the Administering Authority for the Joint Committee for a 2 year period commencing 22nd January 2018;
 - e) Approve the transfer of the remaining joint devolution budget to meet the support costs of the Joint Committee for the remainder of 2017/18 financial year subject to approval of any expenditure by the Administering Authority;
 - f) Approve an initial contribution of £1,400 for 2018/19 to fund the administration and the work programme of the Joint Committee, noting that any expenditure will be subject to the approval of the Administering Authority;

- g) Agree that the key function of the Joint Committee is to approve the Productivity Strategy (it is intended to bring the Strategy to the Joint Committee for approval by February 2018);
- h) Authorise the initial work programme of the Joint Committee aimed at the successful delivery of the Productivity Strategy;
- i) Agree the proposed meeting arrangements for the Joint Committee including the timetable of meetings for the Joint Committee as proposed in para 23.

Introduction

- 4. Since August 2015, Devon and Somerset County Councils, all Somerset and Devon Districts, Torbay Council, Plymouth City Council, Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the three Clinical Commissioning Groups have worked in partnership to progress towards securing a devolution deal for the HotSW area focusing on delivering improved productivity. Since that time the partnership has continued to progress its objectives in spite of policy shifts at a national level.
- 5. On 23 February 2017 (Minute 106 refers) South Somerset District Council gave 'in principle' approval to the establishment of a HotSW Joint Committee, subject to approving the Joint Committee's constitutional arrangements and an inter-authority agreement necessary to support the Joint Committee. This report sets out the necessary documents which, if agreed, will enable the Joint Committee to be formally established.
- 6. Since then the General Election has further shifted the national policy position. On the 13th October representatives of HotSW (from the Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay upper tier authorities) met Jake Berry MP, Minister for devolution to clarify the position of the Government and the HotSW Partnership on the devolution issue. The meeting was very positive and although no agreements were reached at the meeting, the partnership's representatives were given a clear message that the Government would welcome a bid from the partnership to progress our productivity ambitions by identifying areas where we can work together with Government. Importantly the Minister indicated that there would be no requirement to have an elected mayor for Devon and Somerset as a condition of any deal. This statement has removed one significant blockage to moving our ambitions forward and we now need to agree what we want from this initiative and then find practical ways to work with the Government on delivery.
- 7. There is now no doubt that the Government is keen to engage with wider areas that can demonstrate:
 - Unity, clarity of purpose and a shared, ambitious vision built on local strengths
 - Strong partnership between business and the public sector with solid governance arrangements that provide assurance in capacity to deliver
 - Compelling ideas that can help to deliver Government objectives
 - Clarity about the offer to Government in terms of savings and is prepared to take hard decisions based on a robust analysis of risk and benefits.
- 8. The Joint Committee will provide the ideal governance framework at this stage to take forward this dialogue with Government.
- 9. The key role of the HotSW Joint Committee is to develop, agree and ensure the implementation of the Productivity Strategy. This can only be achieved by working, where appropriate, in collaboration with the individual constituent authorities and the LEP. The

Strategy will agree a common vision for increased prosperity through economic growth informed by a local evidence base and engagement with local stakeholders. It will also link to Government policy initiatives, particularly in relation to the Industrial Strategy, and will form the basis for developing our collective 'ask' of Government.

HotSW Joint Committee Proposal

10. The detail of the proposed functions of the Joint Committee and how it will operate are set out in appendix A attached – the Arrangements document. Appendix B attached sets out an Inter-Authority Agreement for consideration which details how the Joint Committee will be supported and sets out the obligations of the Council if it agrees to become a constituent member.
11. The documents detail the Administering Authority functions in support of the operation of the Committee including the provision of financial, legal, constitutional and administrative support to the Committee.
12. At this stage the Arrangements and Inter-Authority documents have been 'scaled' to fit the functions of the Joint Committee and the limited liabilities that each authority faces in signing up to be a Constituent Authority. In the event that the remit of the Joint Committee expands to take on more decision-making responsibilities and functions of the constituent authorities, the Arrangements and Inter-Authority agreement will be revisited to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and proportionate. Any expansion of the functions and responsibilities would require the approval of the Constituent Authorities.
13. The Joint Committee has a much more limited role than a Combined Authority. It does not have the statutory or legal status of a Combined Authority and cannot deliver the full range of benefits that a Combined Authority can, but it does have the potential to provide cohesive, coherent leadership and a formal governance structure. Its role will focus on collaboration, negotiation and influencing with full decision making responsibilities limited to developing and agreeing the Productivity Strategy. The principle of subsidiarity will apply to the relationship between the Joint Committee, the Constituent Authorities and local Sub-Regional Partnerships with decisions to deliver the Productivity Strategy and decisions necessary as a result of the other functions of the Joint Committee being taken at the most local and appropriate level.
14. The aim of the Joint Committee through the delivery of the Productivity Strategy will be to:
 - Improve the economic prosperity of the wider area by bringing together the public, private and education sectors;
 - Work together to realise opportunities and mitigate impacts resulting from Brexit;
 - Increase understanding of the local economy and what needs to be implemented locally to improve prosperity for all;
 - Ensure the necessary strategic framework, including infrastructure requirements, is in place across the HotSW area to enable sub-regional arrangements to fully deliver local aspirations; and improve the efficiency and productivity of the public sector. This work will be supported by a Joint Committee budget based on an agreed work programme.
15. The creation of a single strategic public sector partnership covering the HotSW area will: facilitate collaborative working; help us to remove barriers to progress; as well as provide a formal structure to engage with Government at a strategic level on major areas of policy. It also has the potential to enable the Constituent Authorities and partners to have discussions with neighbouring Councils / Combined Authorities / LEPs on South West peninsula priorities and issues as well as the ability to move swiftly towards a Combined

Authority model in the future (by potentially acting as a shadow Combined Authority) if the conditions are deemed acceptable to the Constituent Authorities.

16. Critically, the Joint Committee will also provide a formal mechanism for the Constituent Authorities to engage effectively with the LEP across common boundaries and agendas. District Council partners, in particular, might view this as an opportunity to engage more effectively with the LEP. The LEP, which will sit alongside the Joint Committee, has recently adopted new governance requirements to ensure greater transparency and accountability and wishes to further improve its democratic accountability in discussion with HotSW partners. The Joint Committee will provide a formal structure to take these discussions forward and for the Constituent Authorities to have greater influence over the activities of the LEP on our common agendas.
17. Although the Joint Committee is a cost-effective formal structure, some provision needs to be made to meet the support costs of what will be a fully constituted local authority joint committee. It is proposed that Somerset County Council (who have provided the lead for the governance workstream of the devolution project over the last two years) takes on the support role (with the option of rotating the role after 2 years of operation), to provide the financial, legal, democratic support to the Joint Committee from 22nd January 2018.
18. There is currently the remainder of the joint devolution budget raised from an initial contribution from all Authorities and the LEP in 2015. It is recommended that the remaining funds from this budget - £42,000 - are transferred to the Administering Authority and the budget is used to support the costs of the Joint Committee for the remainder of 2017/18 financial year and for some of 2018/19.
19. In addition, the Joint Committee will need a budget to undertake its work programme in order to oversee the implementation of the Productivity Strategy. The overall budget required to support the Joint Committee and enable it to undertake its work programme will be dependent, to an extent, on the level of 'in-kind' officer resources provided to the Committee by the constituent authorities. The Administering Authority will review the in-kind support which has been provided for the devolution project in consultation with the constituent authorities and bring forward revised budget figures as part of a budget and cost sharing agreement as necessary in due course to the Joint Committee for consideration and recommendation to the Constituent Authorities. The budget figures set out in this report in paragraph 2.11 are therefore provisional at this stage. The initial Joint Committee work programme is set out in section 3 below for approval.
20. Through work undertaken by the partners it is estimated that the operating cost of a Joint Committee will be £89,000 in 2018/19 (and to cover the remainder of 2017/18) excluding any in-kind support. This estimate is made up of the following:
 - £40,000 for the Administering Authority to undertake its duties. This is seen as a minimum cost and assumes that 'in-kind' officer resource remains in place at the same level; the Joint Committee meeting venues are provided by partners as 'in-kind' contribution
 - £25,000 (estimate) for work the Joint Committee would wish to commission
 - £24,000 for the Brexit Resilience and Opportunities Group Secretariat.
21. The Shadow Joint Committee recommends the budget is met by contributions from the Constituent Authorities. This would exclude the LEP and the CCGs from contributing as non-voting partners. As stated above it is estimated there will be a funding carry forward of £42,000 from the 2015 devolution budget. This would leave a shortfall of £47,000 to meet the total estimated budget requirement of the Joint Committee in 2018/19. Using the formula of contributions agreed in 2015 to support the devolution project the contribution

requested of each Constituent Authority for 2018/19 is set out below. This assumes that all authorities agree to become members of the Joint Committee and would have to be recalculated should fewer than 19 Authorities become Members.

- County Councils - £10,500
- Unitary Councils - £4,000
- District Councils and National Parks £1,400

22. Under this formula it is recommended this Council contributes £1,400 for 2018/19 as a Constituent Authority. Any expenditure against this budget would be subject to the formal approval of the Administering Authority.

23. In terms of the proposed meeting arrangements for the Joint Committee, it is recommended:

(a) That the Joint Committee should meet formally immediately after the LEP Board meetings to assist with engagement and co-operation between the bodies and allow co-ordination of the respective work programmes.

(b) That the following dates are reserved for meetings of the Joint Committee in 2018:

- Friday 26th January
- Friday 23rd March
- Friday 25th May
- Friday 20th July
- Friday 28th September
- Friday 30th November

(c) That the Joint Committee meetings should start at 10am with the venues rotated throughout the HotSW area. The assumption will be that the host authority for that meeting will provide appropriate accommodation and facilities 'in kind'.

HotSW Productivity Plan and the Joint Committee Work Programme

24. The Partnership has, since its inception, been focused on working together to tackle low productivity as this is seen as the key to future economic growth. The academic research undertaken in the HotSW Green Paper on Productivity - <http://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/how-the-council-works/devolution/productivity-plan-green-paper/> highlighted that whilst Devon and Somerset have one of the highest employment rates in the country too many of those jobs are part-time and low paid. This means that our area has one of the lowest productivity rates in the Country and this is a major barrier to future prosperity.

25. The Partnership has continued to lobby Government to work more closely with our area in order to make good on its promise to spread economic growth across the Country and we now need to build on the recent meeting of the Minister and the momentum achieved. This work is urgently needed to ensure that areas such as the Heart of the South West don't get left behind as Government look to focus investment in areas where there are strong, cross boundary strategic partnership arrangements such as the six Mayoral Combined Authorities.

25. The Productivity Strategy is being developed through an academic evidence base and engagement with stakeholders and the community. The draft plan is currently out to consultation (<http://www.torbay.gov.uk/devolution/>). The deadline for response is 30th November 2017. Members are encouraged to respond to the draft strategy.

26. In summary the Strategy proposes to deliver prosperity and productivity across the entire HotSW and to do so in an inclusive way. It proposes to build on existing strengths such as aerospace, advanced manufacturing, nuclear energy and agri-tech as well as exploiting new opportunities and releasing untapped potential.

27. The Strategy is built around three key objectives:

- Developing **leadership and knowledge** within businesses in our area;
- Strengthening the **connectivity and infrastructure** our businesses and people rely on; and
- Developing the ability of people in our area to **work and learn** in a rapidly changing economy.

	Leadership and knowledge	Connectivity and infrastructure	Working and learning
Aspiration	To substantially improve the productivity of businesses in the area.	Improve our physical and natural assets to support wellbeing and economic opportunities.	Meet the potential of every individual within the area to work and contribute to our shared prosperity.
High-level aim	Help develop innovative, ambitious, growing businesses that can compete internationally.	Create vibrant places that are attractive to skilled people and new investment, with infrastructure to support productivity growth.	Develop, attract and retain a highly skilled and adaptable workforce.
Strategic objective	<p>Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management excellence • New markets, new opportunities • Remove barriers to expansion • Attract talent and investment 	<p>Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean energy infrastructure • Connectivity and resilience • Land for business and housing needs • Natural capital to support productivity 	<p>Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for a knowledge-led economy • Pathways to success • Access to work and opportunities • Skills for our 'golden opportunities'

28. It is recommended that one of the first tasks of the Joint Committee will be to approve the Productivity Strategy early in the New Year;

29. The Partnership has been meeting as a Shadow Joint Committee since 22nd September 2017. Its focus is to ensure the Joint Committee can immediately move into action and take advantage of major funding streams, national policy debates and lobbying around the economy. The Partnership will be working with the LEP to deliver the Productivity Strategy and will be supporting a joint work programme which initially will involve:

- Developing and recommending a delivery and investment Framework, to implement the Productivity Strategy and demonstrating our capacity to deliver. This will complement the LEP's Strategic Investment Panel which oversees the LEP's investments;

- Investigating ways to complement existing work to draw out opportunities to attract infrastructure investment in line with the Productivity Strategy aims, building our track record for ambitious and compelling propositions;
 - Investigating ways to complement existing work on improving the delivery of skills in line with the Productivity Strategy aims
 - Investigating ways to complement existing work on strengthening leadership & knowledge within the area's SMEs in line with the Productivity Strategy aims;
30. Any Joint Committee expenditure on the joint work programme will be subject to approval by the Administering Authority.

Consultation, communication and engagement

31. Members, partners and the public have been kept informed of developments of the HotSW Devolution Partnership and the Productivity Strategy through press releases, newsletters, presentations, workshops and publications. This information flow will be maintained by the Joint Committee. In addition, all of the Authorities within the Partnership have taken formal decisions as required during the various stages of consideration of devolution proposals and the proposed creation of the Joint Committee.
32. A draft Productivity Strategy has been released for public consultation. To complement the on-line consultation there will be; Council-based briefings and targeted key stakeholder events through 6 sub-regional roadshows held in Plymouth, Northern Devon, Cullompton/Exeter, Torbay, Taunton/Bridgwater and Yeovil/Shepton Mallet. The consultation will end on 30th November 2017 and feedback will influence the final strategy which is due for approval in early 2018.

Equality Considerations

33. The Inter-Authority Agreement requires all Constituent Authorities to support, promote and discharge its duties under the Equality Act through the work of the Joint Committee. The Partnership is developing an Equality Impact Needs Assessment to inform the development of the Productivity Strategy. The Joint Committee will consider this assessment alongside the Productivity Strategy before adoption.

Public Health Considerations

34. There is a strong correlation between economic prosperity and health of the population. Public Health specialists will be key stakeholders within the consultation process and will be asked to advise on ways in which the Productivity Strategy could be connected to public health strategies to maximise the benefits to our communities.

Risk Management Considerations

35. The creation of a Joint Committee will place a formal governance structure around the preparation and implementation of the Productivity Strategy. The Strategy will be used as a tool to attract a greater share of Government funding around the Industrial Strategy to mitigate the risk of Devon and Somerset being left behind other areas of the country.
36. Without a Productivity Strategy and Joint Committee in place, the Council and its partners will lack credibility and be at a disadvantage in negotiating and lobbying Government on a range of policy initiatives including the growth agenda and are likely to miss out on potential funding streams.

37. The individual financial risk to the individual Constituent Authorities of establishing the Joint Committee is limited to their financial contributions to the running and operational costs of the Joint Committee. The risk is shared between all of the Constituent Authorities.

Legal considerations

38. Each of the partners' legal teams and Monitoring Officers have been involved in the development of the Arrangements and Inter-Authority documents set out as Appendices A and B. The documentation also aligns to the LEP's Assurance Framework.
39. This simple documentation sets out the functions, membership and operations of the Joint Committee and the requirements upon the constituent authorities in supporting it.

Financial considerations

40. The costs associated with the early work on the Productivity Strategy preparation largely relate to officer time which is being provided 'in kind' by the authorities and partners. Specifically the LEP has met some direct costs.
41. The establishment of the Joint Committee provides a low cost option compared to a Combined Authority model of governance. As part of the Inter-Authority Agreement the assumption is that the Constituent Authorities will continue to provide in-kind support although this will be reviewed by the Administering Authority to ensure that the levels of support are appropriate, sustainable into the future and acceptable to the authorities providing the support. The direct running costs of the Joint Committee will be limited to providing officer support for the meetings, if there is insufficient 'in-house' capacity, and the costs of the meetings themselves. At this stage direct support costs will be kept to a minimum and for 2017/18 and some of 2018/19 will be covered by the residual joint devolution budget established in 2015.
42. In addition to the direct costs of administering the Joint Committee there is also the issue of a budget to fund its Work Programme. Further details of the provisional budget requirements are set out in section 2 together with the proposed funding mechanism for contributions from individual Constituent Authorities. For South Somerset District Council the proposed funding contribution is £1,400 for 2018/19.
43. In coming to their decision about a Joint Committee and whether the potential costs provide good value for money, Members might like to consider the potential cost/impact of not working in this way and the potential loss of influence with the Government and investment to the area. Through recent funding initiatives and policy – including through the recent meeting with the Minister, it is clear that Government is looking for areas to come together and articulate their vision and priorities across footprints wider than their organisational boundary or sub-regional areas.
44. The proposal put before Members sets out a low risk, low cost option to work in a more formal way to capitalise on opportunities arising from future Government strategies, funding announcements and in preparation for Brexit.

Options/Alternatives

45. There are two options and alternatives that Members might consider:

Option 1 – Do nothing and continue with informal arrangements within the Partnership. As set out above the feedback from Government is they prefer to work ‘at scale’ and are looking more favourably at areas that have a unity of vision and purpose.

Option 2 – move to a Combined Authority. The Partnership now need to review the option of establishing a Combined Authority at some point following the indication from the Minister that there will be no requirement to have an elected mayor in order to pursue our ambitions. Establishing a Combined Authority requires a substantial lead in time to allow for the Parliamentary approval process and would inevitably require the creation of a shadow Combined Authority to test and confirm the concept. The potential benefits of moving to a Combined Authority model will have to be judged against the implications of doing so, including the cost implications. The Joint Committee has the benefit of allowing the Partnership to move relatively quickly to establish a Combined Authority if that is the wish of the partners.

Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

46. Working together will deliver better results if we are to help our businesses improve their productivity levels and deliver greater prosperity across the Heart of the South West. By collaborating across local geographies we will strengthen the area’s voice to Government and strengthen the actions the area can take to improve productivity.
47. The Productivity Strategy will replace the Local Enterprise Partnership’s Strategic Economic Plan. It will be the key strategic document for the partners to engage with Government and each other on a range of investment opportunities and powers emerging from the Industrial Strategy, Brexit and other policy opportunities.
48. The HotSW Joint Committee will provide a formal strategic partnership to complement and maximise the ability of individual authorities and sub-regional arrangements to deliver their aspirations. It will provide the formal arrangements for collaboration on productivity.
49. Through the Joint Committee the partners can test and improve their ability to work together as a potential precursor to the possible establishment of a Combined Authority at some point in the future. It will also provide a mechanism to further strengthen democratic input and influence with the LEP and align more effectively with the LEP’s new model of governance and accountability.
50. Without a Joint Committee in place, the HotSW area will continue to struggle to position itself to be able to take advantage of Government policy initiatives and new funding opportunities compared to those areas that have and are establishing formal strategic partnerships.

Background Papers

South Somerset District Council: 23 February 2017 (Minute 106 refers)

Julian Gale
Monitoring Officer
Somerset County Council
30th October 2017

APPENDIX A

HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST (HOTSW) JOINT COMMITTEE – DRAFT ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction:

1.1 Legal status: The HotSW Joint Committee is a Joint Committee of the local authorities listed in 1.5 below that comprise the HotSW area and established under Sections 101 to 103 of the Local Government Act 1972 and all other enabling legislation to undertake the functions detailed in section 2 of this Agreement.

1.2 Key purpose: The key purpose of the Joint Committee is to be the vehicle through which the HotSW partners will ensure that the desired increase in productivity across the area is achieved.

1.3 Aims and objectives: The aim is to provide a single strategic public sector partnership that covers the entire area and provides cohesive, coherent leadership and governance to ensure delivery of the Productivity Strategy for the HotSW area. The specific objectives of the Joint Committee are to:

- (a) Improve the economy and the prospects for the region by bringing together the public, private and education sectors;
- (b) Increase our understanding of the economy and what needs to be done to make it stronger;
- (c) Improve the efficiency and productivity of the public sector;
- (d) Identify and remove barriers to progress and maximise the opportunities /benefits available to the area from current and future government policy.

1.4 Commencement: The Joint Committee will be established in accordance with the resolutions of the Constituent Authorities listed below in paragraph 1.5 with effect from the Commencement Date (22nd January 2018) and shall continue in existence unless and until dissolved by resolution of a majority of the Constituent Authorities.

1.5 Membership: Each of the Constituent Authorities listed below shall appoint 1 member and 1 named substitute member to the Joint Committee on an annual basis. Each member shall have 1 vote including substitute members. For the Councils, the member appointed shall be that Council's Leader except in the case of Torridge District Council where the member appointed by the Council shall have authority to speak and vote on matters on behalf of the Council. Political balance rules do not apply to the Joint Committee membership. The substitute member shall also be a cabinet member where the Council is operating executive arrangements. For the National Park Authorities the member appointed shall have authority to speak and vote on matters on behalf of the Authority:

- Dartmoor National Park Authority
- Devon County Council
- East Devon District Council
- Exeter City Council
- Exmoor National Park Authority
- Mendip District Council
- Mid Devon District Council
- North Devon Council

Leaders

for the Heart of the South West

- Plymouth City Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Somerset County Council
- South Hams District Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Torbay Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- Teignbridge District Council
- Torridge District Council
- West Devon Borough Council
- West Somerset Council.

1.6 In addition to the Constituent Authorities the partner organisations listed below shall each be invited to appoint 1 co-opted representative and 1 named substitute co-opted representative to the Joint Committee. Co-opted members shall not have voting rights:

- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (the LEP)
- NHS Northern, Eastern and Weston Devon Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS South Devon and Torbay Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

1.7 The Joint Committee may co-opt further non-voting representatives from the private, public and/or voluntary sectors at any time.

1.8 Each appointed member / representative shall remain a member of the Joint Committee until removed or replaced by the appointing authority / organisation. Appointments to fill vacancies arising should be notified to the Joint Committee Secretary as soon as possible after the vacancy occurs.

1.9 Standing Orders / Rules of Procedure: Outside of the contents of this 'Arrangements' document, the Standing Orders and Rules of Procedure for the Joint Committee shall be those contained in the Constitution of the Administering Authority to the Joint Committee, subject, in the event of any conflict, to the provisions in the Arrangements document taking precedent.

1.10 Administering Authority: A Council shall be appointed by the Constituent Authorities as the Administering Authority for the Joint Committee and shall provide legal, democratic services, financial and communications support to the Committee. The Joint Committee's Forward Plan of business and papers for its meetings shall be published on the Administering Authority's website with links provided to the websites of the other Constituent Authorities and partner organisations.

2. Joint Committee Functions:

2.1 The only delegated function of the Joint Committee relates to the approval of the HotSW Productivity Strategy. All other matters referred to in 2.3 are 'referred' matters where the Joint Committee will make recommendations to the Constituent Authority or Authorities for decision. Additional delegated or referred functions may be proposed for the Joint Committee in the future by the Joint Committee or any of the Constituent Authorities, but shall only be agreed if approved by all of the Constituent Authorities.

2.2 The principle of subsidiarity will apply to the relationship between the Joint Committee, the Constituent Authorities and local Sub-Regional Partnerships with decisions

being made at the most local and appropriate level on all matters to do with the delivery of the Productivity Strategy and in relation to the other functions of the Joint Committee.

2.3 The Joint Committee shall:

- (a) Develop and agree the HotSW Productivity Strategy in collaboration with the LEP.
- (b) Ensure delivery of the HotSW Productivity Strategy in collaboration with the LEP and the Constituent Authorities.
- (c) Continue discussions /negotiations with the Government on the possibility of achieving devolved responsibilities, funding and related governance amendments to assist with the delivery of the Productivity Strategy. Joint Committee proposals arising from these discussions /negotiations would require the formal approval of the Constituent Authorities / partner agencies.
- (d) Continue discussions / negotiations with the Government / relevant agencies to secure delivery of the Government's strategic infrastructure commitments, e.g, strategic road and rail transport improvements
- (e) Work with the LEP to identify and deliver adjustments to the LEP's democratic accountability and to assist the organisation to comply with the revised (November 2016) LEP Assurance Framework. This includes endorsing the LEP's assurance framework on behalf of the Constituent Authorities as and when required. However, this is subject to the Framework being formally approved by the LEP's Administering Authority.
- (f) Ensure that adequate resources (including staff and funding) are allocated by the Constituent Authorities to enable the objectives in (a) to (e) above to be delivered.

3. Funding

3.1 The Constituent Authorities shall agree each year and in advance of the start of the financial year (except in the year of the establishment of the Joint Committee) a budget for the Joint Committee in accordance with a Budget and Cost Sharing Agreement to cover the administrative costs of the Joint Committee and costs incurred in carrying out its functions. All funds will be held and administered by the Administering Authority on behalf of the Constituent Authorities and spent in accordance with that Authority's financial regulations and policies.

3.2 In the Joint Committee's first year of operation, the budget will be approved by the constituent authorities on the recommendation of the Joint Committee as soon as possible after the establishment of the Joint Committee.

3.3 Joint Committee members' costs and expenses will be funded and administered by the respective Constituent Authority.

4. Review of the Joint Committee Arrangements

4.1 The Joint Committee may at any time propose amendments to the Arrangements document which shall be subject to the approval of all of the Constituent Authorities.

Leaders

for the Heart of the South West

4.2 Any Constituent Authority may propose to the Joint Committee amendments to the Arrangements. Such amendments shall only be implemented if agreed by all of the Constituent Authorities on the recommendation of the Joint Committee.

5. Members' Conduct

5.1 All members of the Joint Committee shall observe the "Seven Principles of Public Life" (the 'Nolan' principles) and will be bound by their own authority's code of conduct in their work on the Joint Committee.

5.2 Joint Committee members / representatives shall be subject to the code of conduct for elected members adopted by the Constituent Authority that nominated them to be a Joint Committee member or to the conduct requirements of the organisation that appointed them. This includes the requirement to declare relevant interests at formal meetings of the Joint Committee.

6. Requirements of Joint Committee members

6.1 Joint Committee members shall:

- (a) Act in the interests of the Joint Committee as a whole except where this would result in a breach of a statutory or other duty to their constituent authority or would be in breach of their Constituent Authority's Code of Conduct.
- (b) Be committed to, and act as a champion for, the achievement of the Joint Committee's aims.
- (c) Be an ambassador for the Joint Committee and its work.
- (d) Attend Joint Committee meetings regularly, work with others to achieve consensus on items of business and make a positive contribution to the Committee's work.
- (e) Act as an advocate for the Joint Committee in any dealings with their organisation including seeking any approvals from their Constituent Authority/partner organisation to Joint Committee recommendations.
- (f) Adhere to the requirements of the 'Arrangements' document and maintain high ethical standards.

7. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

7.1 The Joint Committee shall elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman from amongst the voting membership as the first items of business at its inaugural meeting and at each Joint Committee Annual General Meeting thereafter. The appointments shall be confirmed by a simple majority vote of Constituent Authority members. If a deadlock occurs between two or more candidates a secret ballot shall immediately be conducted to confirm the appointment. If there is still deadlock following a secret ballot then a further meeting of the Joint Committee shall be held within 14 days and a further secret ballot shall be held to resolve the appointment.

7.2 A vacancy occurring in the positions of Chairman or Vice-Chairman between Annual General Meetings shall be filled by election at the next meeting of the Joint Committee. The person elected will serve until the next Annual General Meeting.

7.3 The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall, unless he or she resigns the office or ceases to be a member of the Joint Committee and subject to 7.5 below, continue in office until a successor is appointed.

7.4 In the absence of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman at a meeting, the voting members of the Committee present shall elect a Chairman for that meeting.

7.5 The Chairman or Vice-Chairman may be removed by a vote of all of the Constituent Authority members present at a meeting of the Joint Committee.

8. Quorum

8.1 The quorum for any meeting of the Joint Committee shall be 9 Constituent Authority members. The Chairman will adjourn the meeting if there is not a quorum present. In the absence of a quorum, the meeting shall be adjourned to a date, time and venue to be agreed by the Chairman.

9. Voting

9.1 Wherever possible the elected and co-opted members of the Joint Committee shall reach decisions by consensus and shall seek to achieve unanimity.

9.2 In exceptional circumstances where a formal vote is required, the proposal will be carried by a simple majority agreement of the voting members present and voting by a show of hands. The Chairman of the Joint Committee shall not have a casting vote in the event of a tied vote.

10 Decision making Arrangements

10.1 Only the Joint Committee shall approve the Productivity Strategy.

10.2 The Joint Committee may at any time appoint working groups consisting of Joint Committee members and/or co-opted representatives / officers to consider specific matters and report back / make recommendations to the Joint Committee.

11 Formal Meeting Arrangements

11.1 The Joint Committee will hold an Inaugural Meeting within 30 days of the agreed commencement date and thereafter shall meet on a regular basis as agreed by the Joint Committee annually at its Annual General Meeting.

11.2 The Chairman or in his/her absence the Vice-Chairman, may call a special meeting of the Joint Committee following consultation with the Chief Executives' Advisory Group to consider a matter that falls within the Committee's remit but cannot be deferred to the next scheduled meeting, provided that at least ten clear working days notice in writing is given to the Joint Committee membership.

11.3 Formal meetings of the Joint Committee shall normally be held in public, in accordance with the Access to Information Rules and the Standing Orders / Rules of Procedure of the Administering Authority.

Leaders

for the Heart of the South West

11.4 Meetings of any working groups or task groups established by the Joint Committee shall, unless otherwise agreed, be held in private.

12. Who can put items on the Joint Committee's agenda?

- (a) The Joint Committee itself;
- (b) Any of the members of the Joint Committee appointed by the Constituent Authorities
- (c) A Constituent Authority by way of a formal resolution
- (d) The Chief Executives' Advisory Group
- (e) The Monitoring Officer and / or the Chief Finance Officer of the Administering Authority.

13. Reporting Arrangements

13.1 In addition to any ad hoc reports to the Constituent Authorities, the Joint Committee shall supply an annual report of its activities to the Constituent Authorities in May of each year.

13.2 The Joint Committee shall co-operate with the public scrutiny arrangements of the Constituent Authorities.

14 Record of attendance

14.1 All members present during the whole or part of a meeting are asked sign their names on the attendance sheets before the conclusion of every meeting to assist with the record of attendance.

Julian Gale
Monitoring Officer
Somerset County Council

30.10.17

APPENDIX B

HOTSW JOINT COMMITTEE DRAFT INTER – AUTHORITY AGREEMENT

1. Commencement and Duration:

1.1 This Agreement (and the obligation of the Constituent Authorities [CAs]) shall take effect on the agreed Commencement Date – Monday 22nd January 2018 - and shall continue until the Joint Committee (JC) is dissolved.

2. Formation provisions:

2.1 The CAs agree to form the JC from the agreed Commencement Date and to delegate / refer the functions specified to the JC from that date as set out in section 2.3 of the Arrangements document.

2.1 The JC shall operate in accordance with the Arrangements document and the Standing Orders and Rules of Procedure of the Administering Authority (AA).

3. Administering Authority (AA) arrangements

3.1 The AA shall be appointed by resolution of the CAs for a 24 month period (24 months is considered as appropriate to provide sufficient continuity but also to provide the option to rotate the role on a regular basis).

3.2 The AA shall provide:

- Financial, legal, constitutional and administrative support to the JC and its meetings
- An on-line presence for the JC via the AA website with links to the CAs / partner organisations websites.
- Ensure it has appropriate insurance arrangements in place to cover the AA role.

3.3 The AA may resign from the role by giving 6 months' notice to the CAs.

3.4 The AA may be removed and replaced by a majority vote of the CA members at a formal meeting of the JC.

3.5 The JC shall cease to exist in the event that no CA or organisation can be identified to undertake the AA role.

4. JC Finance

4.1 The JC's budgetary arrangements shall be detailed in a budget and cost sharing agreement (**to be drafted**) to be agreed by all of the CAs annually on the recommendation of the JC and in advance of the financial year. The only exception to this will be in the JC's first year of operation when the JC shall recommend a budget and cost sharing agreement to the CAs for approval at the first opportunity following its establishment.

4.2 The budget and cost sharing agreement shall cover:

- (a) The responsibilities of the CAs for providing funding for the JC
- (b) The anticipated level of expenditure for the JC for the year ahead

- (c) The cost sharing mechanism to be applied to the CAs
- (d) Details of how the budget will be set and agreed each year
- (e) Who is to be responsible for maintaining financial records on behalf of the JC (the 'accountable body');
- (f) What financial records are to be maintained;
- (g) What financial reports are to be made, to whom and when;
- (h) What arrangements and responsibilities are to be made for:
 - auditing accounts;
 - insurance including ensuring all partners have sufficient cover;
- (i) How any financial assets held by the JC on behalf of the CAs will be redistributed to the CAs in the event of the dissolution of the JC or in the event of a CA formally withdrawing from the CA.

5. Roles and responsibilities of the CAs

5.1 The CAs shall:

- (a) Appoint Members and named substitutes to the JC in accordance with the 'Arrangements'.
- (b) Undertake to share the costs of the JC in accordance with the budget and cost sharing agreement and pay their contribution to the JC to the AA in good time.
- (c) Make appropriate arrangements for recommendations of the JC to be considered and decisions made by the CA.
- (d) Support the work of the JC by offering services, resources or other 'in kind' support to assist with JC projects and activities.
- (e) Within the terms of the Inter-Authority Agreement, agree to share information to support the work of the JC.

6. Chief Executives' Advisory Group

6.1 The Group shall:

- (a) Ensure that the JC fulfils its functions and responsibilities and in accordance with all legal and constitutional requirements.
- (b) Plan and co-ordinate the JC's activities to ensure the achievement of its aims and objectives
- (c) Consider the performance and effectiveness of the JC on an on-going basis and make recommendations for changes for consideration by the JC and CAs as necessary.
- (d) Ensure that professional advice is available and provided as necessary to the JC to enable it to carry out its functions.
- (e) Rigorously monitor and scrutinise the JC's budget.
- (f) Consider disputes between the CAs over the application or interpretation of this Agreement together with any potential breaches of this Agreement.

7. Withdrawal from / dissolution of the JC

7.1 A CA wishing to withdraw from the JC shall give a minimum of 6 months' notice in writing to the other CA via the AA. The CAs shall co-operate with any such request.

7.2 If two or more CAs give notice of withdrawal from membership of the JC in the same Financial Year, the JC shall consider and make recommendations to the remaining CA as to the future operation of the JC and, if appropriate, recommend any necessary amendments required to the JC's functions and operating arrangements.

7.3 Where a majority of the CAs at any time agree (via formal resolutions) that the JC should be dissolved or terminated on a specified date then the JC shall cease to exist from that date.

8. Accounts, Audit and Reporting arrangements

8.1 The AA's accounts and audit arrangements will apply to JC business.

8.2 The AA will ensure appropriate reporting arrangements are in place for the JC.

9. Review of Inter-Authority Agreement

9.1 At any time one or more of the CAs may seek a review of this agreement and the operation of the JC by giving notice to the CAs via the AA.

9.2 The review shall be undertaken by the Chief Executives Advisory Group for report to the JC. Any recommendations for changes to the agreement from the JC shall only be implemented if agreed by all of the CAs.

10. Insurance, Indemnities, and Conduct of Claims

10.1 The JC as a scrutiny and policy making group rather than a commissioning body undertakes administrative functions and therefore carries relatively little risk.

10.2 Each authority's insurance cover will automatically extend to provide protection for their members and officers participating in the work of the JC and in their capacity as officers or members of that authority.

11. Information Sharing, Data Protection, Confidentiality, Publicity and Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

11.1 The CA shall share information about their organisations where that information is relevant to the aims and objectives of the JC.

11.2 Where such information is confidential or privileged, for example for reasons of commercial, customer or client confidentiality, the CA concerned shall seek to provide the information in such a form as to assist the JC whilst maintaining confidentiality, for example by the use of statistical and other non-identifiable forms of data. If confidential information is provided by a constituent authority to assist the work of the JC, then each CA will respect that confidentiality and shall not use or disclose such information without the permission of the authority that provided the information.

11.3 In respect of FOI requests, the AA will ensure that the requirements of the FOI Act 2000 are met in respect of the activities of the JC. In particular the AA will consult the officers of the CA as necessary regarding any potentially contentious enquiries and will then respond to them accordingly on behalf of the JC.

11.4 The JC and the CAs shall at all times abide by the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

11.5 All press releases and public statements to be sent out on behalf of the Joint Committee shall be the responsibility of the press office of the Administering Authority.

12. Promoting Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

12.1 All CAs will support and promote the principles of inclusiveness and equality for all through the work of the JC.

13. Extent of obligations and further assurance

13.1 Nothing in this Agreement is to require any of the CA to act in any way that is inconsistent with its obligations or duties as a local authority.

14. Variations of the Agreement

14.1 Subject to the express provisions of this Agreement, no variation of this Agreement will be valid or effective unless agreed by formal resolution of all of the CA.

15. Dispute Resolution / Breach of this Agreement

15.1 In the event of a dispute arising from the interpretation and operation of this Agreement or a breach of this Agreement by any CA or JC member, the matter shall first be considered by the Chief Executives' Advisory Group. The Group shall seek to resolve the matter by discussion and mutual agreement and report to the JC and CA as necessary.

15.2 Where this fails to achieve a resolution, then the JC may give formal consideration to further action. Such action may include:

- (a) A request to a CA to replace a JC member;
- (b) A request to a CA to withdraw from the JC;
- (c) A recommendation to the other CAs for the termination of the participation of a CA.

Julian Gale
Monitoring Officer
Somerset County Council

30.10.17

Agenda Item 8

Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19

Executive Portfolio Holder: Peter Seib, Finance and Legal Services
Director: Martin Woods, Director – Service Delivery
Lead Officer: Ian Potter, Revenues and Benefits Manager, Revenues and Benefits
Contact Details: ian.potter@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462690

Purpose of the Report

1. To agree the proposed amendments to the Council Tax Support scheme for the 2018/19 financial year.

Public Interest

2. From April 2013 the Government changed the way in which financial help is given to residents to pay their Council Tax. The national Council Tax Benefit scheme was replaced with a local Council Tax Support scheme to help with the costs of Council Tax for those with low incomes. As part of the change the Government also cut the amount of money they give councils towards the scheme by 10%. The original South Somerset scheme was set taking this into account. By January 31st each year the council is required to review and set a Council Tax Support scheme for the next financial year.
3. In setting the scheme each year the Council has to balance the needs of those who require help towards paying their Council Tax with the Council Tax payers who help to pay for the scheme. The Council also looks to see if there are any ways the scheme can be simplified to make it easier for customers and reduce the cost of administering the scheme. The administration grant provided by the Department of Communities and Local Government to help pay for the administration of the scheme reduces each year. During 2017 the Council has removed the need for residents who get Universal Credit to make a separate claim for Council Tax Support, simplifying the process for customers and reducing costs.
4. There are only minor changes being proposed for the 2018/19 scheme. These are inflationary increases in personal allowances and premiums, and to non-dependent income bands and deductions. The Council also intends to disregard Bereavement Support payments.

Recommendations

5. That Council agree:
 - (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 applied to the national Council Tax Support scheme for pensioners;
 - (d) that Bereavement Support payments are disregarded in line with their treatment in Housing Benefit;
 - (e) that the hardship scheme budget be set at £30,000 for the 2018/19 financial year;

- (f) to note the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group attached at Appendix 1 (published as a separate appendix to this report);
- (g) to note the scheme has been amended to reflect changes to the Prescribed Requirements;
- (h) that the 2018/19 Council Tax Support Scheme attached at Appendix 2 is adopted (published as a separate appendix to this report);
- (i) to note that the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme has been reflected within the overall Council Tax Base.

Background

- 6. The South Somerset Council Tax Support scheme (CTS) was introduced on 1 April 2013 and has now been running for almost four years. Councils are required to review and set their CTS scheme for each financial year by 31 January in the preceding financial year. Applications to the CTS hardship scheme are monitored, along with the Council Tax collection rate and reported to members each quarter.
- 7. We carried out an extensive consultation process prior to the introduction of CTS in April 2013 and the scheme proposals were carefully and fully considered by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. Each year we have carried out further consultation and some additional changes have been made to the scheme. It was the view of the Scrutiny and Overview Task and Finish Group that all previously adopted proposals be retained.
- 8. The SSDC Council Tax Support scheme states that certain elements of the needs assessment may be uprated each financial year but does not specify the level of that uprating.
- 9. The Scrutiny Task and Finish Group originally considered what would be the most appropriate method of uprating certain figures used in calculating CTS awards and recommended the following:
 - a) That while Housing Benefit (HB) still exists it would be appropriate for the CTS applicable amount figures (basic need allowance) to mirror those in the HB scheme
 - 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 national CTS scheme for pensioners

These methods were adopted in the original scheme and have retained.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 10. Councils have a legal responsibility to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when setting a Council Tax Support scheme. There has been a High Court ruling that there was insufficient evidence that members making the decision to implement a CTS scheme had given due regard to the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) that had been attached to the council report in order that they could discharge their statutory obligation.

11. It is important that members have due regard to the PSED when making their decision on the various scheme proposals.
12. There are no equalities issues associated with recommendation (d) which is the only change to the scheme. The current EIA is attached at Appendix 3 (published as a separate appendix to this report) for information purposes.

Council Tax Support scheme 2018/19 (Year 6)

The 15% minimum payment

13. The SSDC CTS scheme requires all working age recipients of CTS to have a minimum payment level of 15% Council Tax. This level was set for the first year of the scheme.
14. The Scrutiny and Overview Task and Finish Group reviewed the minimum payment level when considering the 2017/18 and some research was carried out to determine the possible impact of increasing it.
15. The evidence showed that those councils who had increased the minimum payment level had experienced a decline in their Council Tax collection rates and an increase in the level of Council Tax arrears. This leads to an increase in risk of bad debt and in resource demand for the recovery and enforcement of those debts. This risk is further heightened by other Welfare Reforms that are impacting on the working age group. It was therefore determined that it would be counter-productive to increase the minimum payment level for 2017/18.
16. Consideration was also given to reducing the minimum payment. Reducing the minimum payment from 15% to 12.5% would provide extra support in the range of 40p to 74p a week. There is no evidence to suggest that there are widespread affordability issues across the district and such a small increase is unlikely to make a material difference.
17. In addition, although a small increase in support for individual recipients it would increase the cost of the scheme by approximately £250k which would not be supported by the major preceptors given their financial pressures.

There is no new evidence to suggest a change to these conclusions.

Bereavement Support Payment

18. Bereavement Support Payments (BSP) can be made where a husband, wife or civil partner died on or after 6 April 2017 and they either:
 - paid National Insurance contributions for at least 25 weeks
 - died because of an accident at work or a disease caused by work

When they died the surviving partner must have been:

- under State Pension age
19. There are two rates of BSP, a standard rate and a higher rate. The payments are comprised of an initial lump sum and up to 18 monthly payments. The higher rate is paid to pregnant women and people with dependent children. The standard rate is paid to people without dependent children. For the higher rate, the initial lump sum will be £3,500 and the monthly payments £350. For the standard rate, the initial lump sum will be £2,500 and the monthly payments will be £100.

Housing Benefit rules

20. The initial lump sum is treated as capital and disregarded for a period of 12 months. The monthly payment which is made for a maximum of 18 months is treated as income and disregarded for one month. If part or all of each monthly payment is unspent after one month it is treated as capital and not disregarded.

It is proposed that the same rules be applied in the 2018/19 Council Tax Support Scheme.

Cost of CTS scheme

Effect of caseload

21. The number of recipients of CTS has fallen consistently year on year in both the working age and pensioner groups which reduces the overall cost of the scheme. Details of the caseload reduction since the introduction of CTS are shown in the following table.

Financial year	Caseload count at beginning of year	Caseload count at end of year	Reduction in caseload
2013/14	11,925	11,568	357
2014/15	11,568	11,023	545
2015/16	11,023	10,411	612
2016/17	10,411	9,997	434
2017/18	9,997	9,832 (@31/10/17)	145

22. The scale of caseload reduction is smaller so far this year with a projection that it fall by somewhere between 220 and 250 but still significant. With effect from 1 June 2017 we removed the requirement for recipients of Universal Credit to make a separate claim for Council Tax Support. It is likely that this has contributed the smaller reduction in caseload as fewer people are missing out on Council Tax Support.
23. It has also been identified that since the beginning of the financial year the average weekly award of CTS has fallen by 3.1% for employed working age cases and by 0.5% for pensioner cases. This suggests there has been a small improvement in income levels in these groups.

Overall the cost (total value of awards) of the scheme at the end of October 2017 is £90k below the anticipated overall cost of the scheme.

Effect of increases in Council Tax

24. The cost of the scheme will increase where SSDC and other preceptors put up their share of the Council Tax.

Legislation Changes – Prescribed requirements

25. At the time of writing we are awaiting details of any changes to the prescribed requirements – these are elements of the scheme that are set by central government. Confirmation of any such changes will be sent to members along with a revised version of the scheme document once announced by government.

Hardship Scheme

26. A Hardship Scheme was set up as a safety net for households who could demonstrate they could not afford to pay their Council Tax contribution following the introduction of the SSDC Council Tax Support Scheme. The level of demand in 2017/18 suggests that a Hardship Scheme budget of £30,000 for 2018/19 should be sufficient. This spend is monitored monthly and reported to members each quarter.

Council Tax Collection Rate

27. It was anticipated that the in-year Council Tax collection rate would fall as a result of the introduction of the CTS scheme in April 2013. There were also a number of changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions introduced from April 2013 which impacted on the in-year collection rate.

Financial Year	Collection rate	Change on previous year
2012/13	97.80%	
2013/14	97.40%	-0.40%
2014/15	96.88%	-0.58%
2015/16	97.24%	+0.36%
2016/17	97.73%	+0.49%

The in-year collection rate fell in 2013/14 and again in 2014/15. However, collection performance improved in 2015/16 and again in 2016/17 almost returning to pre CTS levels.

28. At the end of October 2017 the collection rate was 0.18% lower than October 2016. However, there has been a 21% increase in the number of taxpayers paying their charge over the maximum number of instalments. This makes accurate in-year collection rate comparisons, and end of year outturn predictions more difficult with higher levels of Council Tax payment expected during February and March 2018 than in the same period this year.

There is no evidence to suggest that the current Council Tax Support scheme design is adversely impacting collection rates.

Risks

29. The continued risk is that demand could rise and the current reductions we are seeing in the number of recipients and average level of award reverses with a downturn in the economy. There is also a risk that reductions in other welfare support might result in an increase in entitlement to Council Tax Support. We will take any such changes into account when considering the Council Tax Support scheme for 2019/20 and beyond. It should be noted that the Task and Finish Group have previously raised concerns about the ability to make further reductions in the level of Council Tax Support in future years as the burden is placed solely on the working age recipients while the Government continues to protect pensioners.

Financial Implications

30. If members agree the recommendations set out in this report there will be no financial implications associated with this report. An estimate of the costs of the CTS scheme along with assumptions for the number of new properties and Council Tax levels has been reflected within the Council Tax Base for 2018/19.

Council Plan Implications

31. Health and Communities - Support residents through national benefit changes including universal credit

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

32. None associated with this report

Equality and Diversity Implications

33. None associated with this report - The current EIA is attached at Appendix 3 for information purposes.

Privacy Impact Assessment

34. None associated with this report

Background Papers

35. The following background papers can be viewed on the council's website www.southsomerset.gov.uk

- Report to District Executive – January 2017 - Item 8
 - Report to District Executive – January 2016 - Item 6
 - Report to District Executive – January 2015 - Item 8
 - Report to District Executive – December 2013 - Item 10
 - Report to District Executive – January 2013 – item 8
-

Agenda Item 9

Monitoring Officer Appointment

Executive Portfolio Holder: Peter Seib, Finance and Legal Services
Chief Executive: Alex Parmley
Contact Details: alex.parmley@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462101

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to the appointment of the Council's Monitoring Officer.

Public Interest

2. There is a legal requirement on the Council to designate three "Statutory Officers". These are the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer/ Chief Finance Officer. The Monitoring Officer has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities relating to the council's constitution and the arrangements for effective governance. These duties are contained in Article 12 of the council's constitution.

Recommendations

3. That Council:
 - a. agrees that Angela Watson is designated this Council's Monitoring Officer on a permanent basis from 19 January 2018.
 - b. notes that the Monitoring Officer will appoint a Deputy who is authorised to act in the event of the absence or illness of the Monitoring Officer, and Members will be informed of that appointment once made.

Background

4. The Monitoring Officer's legal basis is found in Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as amended by Schedule 5 paragraph 24 of the Local Government Act 2000.
5. The Monitoring Officer has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities relating to the council's constitution and the arrangements for effective governance. These duties are contained in Article 12 of the council's constitution and include:
 - To report on matters he/she believes are, or are likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration.
 - To be responsible for matters relating to the conduct of councillors and officers.
 - To be responsible for the operation of the council's constitution.
6. Neither the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) nor the Chief Finance Officer / S151 Officer may fulfil the role of Monitoring Officer. Although many councils appoint their most senior legal officer as their Monitoring Officer this is not a specific requirement. Whoever is appointed must though ensure that the council receives correct and appropriate advice on the lawfulness of its decision making.

7. Through the Transformation Programme, the Council is moving to a new Management Structure to support the new and different way of delivering services. Angela Watson has been appointed to the role of Lead Specialist – Legal, within the Council's new Management Structure. This role is the Council's most senior legal role. Angela has also been undertaking the role of Monitoring Officer since November 2017 on a temporary basis by appointment of the Chief Executive. The authority to make a permanent designation to the role of Monitoring Officer rests with the Full Council.
8. Angela is a qualified Solicitor since 2005 and therefore has extensive legal experience within local government. Angela also served as Deputy Monitoring Officer to Ian Clarke. Angela is therefore considered to have the appropriate skills, experience at a senior level and ability to undertake the duties of the role.
9. It is therefore recommended that Angela Watson is appointed as Monitoring Officer on a permanent basis from 19 January 2018.

Financial Implications

10. The new Monitoring Officer arrangements will be met within the existing budget for management costs.

Council Plan Implications

11. None associated with this report

Equality and Diversity Implications

12. None associated with this report

Privacy Impact Assessment

13. None associated with this report

Background Papers

14. None associated with this report

Agenda Item 10

Report of Executive Decisions

Director: Netta Meadows, Director (Strategy & Commissioning)
Lead Officer: Angela Cox, Democratic Services Specialist
Contact Details: angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

This report is submitted for information and summarises decisions taken by the District Executive and Portfolio Holders since the last meeting of Council in November 2017. The decisions are set out in the attached Appendix.

Members are invited to ask any questions of the Portfolio Holders.

Background Papers

All Published

Ric Pallister, Leader of the Council
Angela Cox, Democratic Services Specialist
angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

Appendix

Portfolio	Subject	Decision	Taken By	Date
Environment & Economic Development	Somerset Waste Partnership Annual Report and Draft Business Plan 2018 - 2023	<p>District Executive:-</p> <p>a. Approved the Somerset Waste Partnership's Draft Business Plan 2018-23, in particular the proposed approach to the procurement of a new collection contract as set out in the report.</p> <p>b. Noted that, in line with their delegated authority and in order to implement Recycle More as requested by partners, Somerset Waste Board have agreed with Kier to bring forward the expiry date of the current collection contract from September 2021 to 27 March 2020.</p> <p>c. Approved the projected budget for 2018/19 subject to the comments in section 7 of the SWP Business plan relating to the finalisation of the budget.</p>	District Executive	07/12/17
Strategic Planning (Place Making)	Community Infrastructure Levy - Guidance and Governance	<p>District Executive noted the contents of the report and endorsed the Community Infrastructure Levy governance structure suggested and agreed to the:-</p> <p>a. production of an annual CIL report to District Executive Committee that along with an updated Regulation 123 list identifying the key projects.</p> <p>b. production of an infrastructure Business Plan that will provide further detail on the individual infrastructure projects.</p> <p>c. delegation to the Local Development Scheme Board consideration of applications from services or external bodies for infrastructure funding against the Infrastructure Business Plan.</p>	District Executive	07/12/17
Property, Climate Change & Income Regeneration	SSDC Review of Operational Office Accommodation	<p>District Executive agreed to:-</p> <p>a. note the findings and recommendations in the David Lock Associates report – SSDC Review of Operational Office Accommodation November 2017 attached in Appendix 1.</p> <p>b. the principle that there is surplus office accommodation for council operational requirements at present and this will increase further post Transformation,</p>	District Executive	07/12/17

Portfolio	Subject	Decision	Taken By	Date
		<p>and that the Council should therefore seek to rationalise operational property or seek alternative commercial or strategic use for it.</p> <p>c. task the Members Leadership & Development Project Group (Locality Working) to consider the report recommendations made in regard to Area Offices with input from Area Development Officers lead by the Locality Manager and report back to District Executive in February 2018 with findings and recommendations in respect of office/building requirements to meet the new model of delivery.</p> <p>d. task the Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property Services and Leader of Council with undertaking a full feasibility study to be funded through One Public Estate budget for the future council Head Quarters office to be located at Petters Way, and brought back to District Executive with findings and recommendations by February 2018.</p>		
Strategic Planning (Place Making)	The Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum	<p>District Executive:-</p> <p>a. agreed to the Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>b. agreed to the Council organising a referendum for local people on the Electoral Register as to whether they want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Wincanton to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.</p> <p>c. delegated responsibility to the Director for Service Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with Wincanton Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.</p>	District Executive	07/12/17
Strategy & Policy	Corporate Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report 2017/18: 2nd	District Executive noted the Corporate Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report 2017/18: 2nd Quarter report.	District Executive	07/12/17

Portfolio	Subject	Decision	Taken By	Date
	Quarter			
Environment & Economic Development	Purchase of land adjoining Boden Street Car Park, Chard	District Executive approved the purchase of the plot of land (adjoining Boden Street Car Park, Chard) at a cost of £51,000 as indicated in the report, to be funded from the useable capital receipts reserve.	District Executive	07/12/17
Area South Chairman Environment & Economic Development	Yeovil Refresh – Delivery Arrangements	District Executive:- a. noted the progress so far of the Yeovil Refresh Project. b. approved the draft Refresh document for consultation in early 2018. c. agreed the allocation of £185,000 from the Infrastructure Reserve to fund the appointment of a Programme Manager to manage the delivery phases of regeneration projects identified. This post would be time-limited and sit outside the Transformation Process. d. noted that Area South Committee would be asked to consider reallocation of a proportion of the various reserves identified in section 10 to support a programme of activities associated with the Yeovil Refresh. e. noted that commercially generated returns derived from capital receipts from development projects in Yeovil would be returned to the council's capital reserve. The reserve can be accessed to support further projects through a business case made to the District Executive Committee.	District Executive	07/12/17
Leisure, Culture & Well-being	Westlands Revised Business Plan	That the District Executive approved the updated Business Plan for Westlands, (confidential appendix – circulated under separate cover) and agreed to include the additional subsidy in years 2 and 3 of the financial forecasts, as summarised in paragraph 40, within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, noting that the underlying subsidy was projected to reduce in subsequent years.	District Executive	07/12/17
Strategy and Policy	Heart of the South West (HotSW) – Joint Committee	This report appears elsewhere in the Council Agenda	District Executive	04/01/18
Finance and Legal Services	Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19	This report appears elsewhere in the Council Agenda	District Executive	04/01/18

Portfolio	Subject	Decision	Taken By	Date
Environment & Economic Development	SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress Report	District Executive noted and commented on the report.	District Executive	04/01/18
Finance and Legal Services	Annual review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)	District Executive: a. noted the Council's use of RIPA powers; b. approved and adopted the revised Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 Policy and Procedures attached at Appendix A along with the new Using Social Media and Networking Sites in Investigations Policy (Appendix 5); c. appointed the Director of Service Delivery as Senior Responsible Officer and amendments to authorising officers were noted.	District Executive	04/01/18
Finance and Legal Services	2018/19 Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan Update	District Executive: a. Noted the current estimates and next steps in respect of the draft Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme. b. Approved in principle the changes to budget estimates in respect of pressures and savings included within the report (paras 16).	District Executive	04/01/18
Area South Chairman	Yeovil Street Markets	That District Executive:- a. agreed to remove the current income target for Yeovil's markets of £39,020 from 2018/19 as SSDC will no longer be receiving a direct income from market traders. This will be covered within the provision for unavoidable loss as detailed in the financial implications. b. agreed to retain the annual markets budget of £20,000 for 2018/19 only to allow the new market operator/partner to successfully establish. Thereafter the future of Yeovil Street Markets will be an Area South Committee issue in discussion with other stakeholders.	District Executive	04/01/18

Agenda Item 11

Audit Committee

This report summarises the items considered by the Audit Committee on 23rd November:

54. Quarter 3 Internal Audit Plan 2017/18 Progress Report (Agenda Item 6)

The Senior Auditor (SWAP) presented the report which provided Audit Committee with an update on the position of the 2016/17 Internal Audit Plan and reviewed the progress made on the 2017/18 Internal Audit Plan. She updated members that since the agenda had been published some more reports had gone out to the final stage, and referring to page 18 of the agenda she highlighted the audits that had been removed from the plan.

During a short discussion officers responded to points of detail. Members also raised concern about the current provision and arrangements for procurement, and the monitoring and reporting of risk management. They queried if it was possible for the Committee to request that risk management be demonstrated or a report added to the Forward Plan.

In response, the Section 151 Officer advised that procurement support was being provided by Taunton Deane Borough Council. He also advised that risk management was embedded across services with risk analyses included in committee reports as standard for reporting to members, and that the Director (Strategy & Commissioning) was due to review arrangements for risk management. The Section 151 Officer offered to arrange a briefing note to provide further clarity for members of the Audit Committee on the arrangements for procurement and risk management. The action was agreed by members.

The Director of Quality (SWAP) noted that currently one of the biggest risks to SSDC was the Transformation and change programme. He noted they were due to commence an audit of Transformation in the near future. They would work with Transformation Team to look at multiple aspects including the governance structure, challenge the business as usual element, and financial reporting etc. He noted resources within SWAP were ready to go and they were just waiting for engagement from the Transformation Team.

In response to comments made during the short ensuing discussion, the Director of Quality noted there had been some discussions within SWAP about benefit realisation. He commented it was important to monitor progress through Transformation to check that the anticipated benefits were being realised. It was also acknowledged that the new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) coming into force in 2018 would need to be embedded into the Transformation programme.

At the end of debate members were content to note the progress made.

RESOLVED: That the position of the 2016/17 Internal Audit Plan and the progress made on the 2017/18 Internal Audit Plan (Quarter 3) be noted.

55. Treasury Management Performance to September 2017 (Agenda Item 7)

The Section 151 Officer presented the report which detailed the treasury management activity and the performance against the Prudential Indicators for the six months ending 30 September 2017. He noted the performance of investments was on track to meet the budget. He highlighted some key elements of the report including that the authority currently had no

external borrowing, was within the prudential indicators, and the Bank of England base rate had increased earlier in the month which the market had expected. He reminded the Committee that in line with the agreed financial strategy and commercial strategy, the Council will need to obtain external loan finance in future to deliver the Council's approved capital investment plans.

During discussion, the Section 151 Officer responded to points of detail including further information about:

- increasing the return on investments
- internal investments
- how borrowing could work
- the Closing Capital Financing Requirement

At the end of discussion members were content to the note the Treasury Management Activity and the position of the individual prudential indicators.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Committed noted:

- The Treasury Management Activity for the six-month period ended 30 September 2017.
- The position of the individual prudential indicators for the six-month period ended 30 September 2017.

56. Annual Counter Fraud Action Plan Update (Agenda Item 8)

The Fraud and Data Manager introduced the Fraud and Data Officer. She then presented the report which provided an update to the Audit Committee on counter fraud work in general, and the Annual Counter Fraud Action Plan. She reminded members that roles would change as the authority progressed through Transformation, but it was possible they would both continue to have some involvement with fraud and data protection, but this had yet to be confirmed. It was noted that the Action Plan required staff resources to be prioritised in order to deliver the plan.

The Section 151 Officer explained that the data protection function was a legal requirement and the requirements would continue to be delivered in the future, but possibly not in the way it is now as the council staffing structure is changing. This would be managed through the transition to the new operating model.

During discussion members raised several comments and concerns regarding Transformation including that Audit Committee had not had a report for some time. Some members also queried if Audit Committee should be monitoring the finances, both expenditure and savings, relating to the Transformation programme.

In response, the Section 151 Officer reminded the Committee that delivery of the programme, both in terms of project costs and ongoing savings, is being monitored with quarterly reporting of progress to District Executive, and therefore there were opportunities to raise questions at those meetings and at the Scrutiny Committee. Financial reporting was also included in the normal budget reporting process, and if there were any concerns these would be highlighted in both the budget monitoring reports and if necessary the annual budget setting reports. He commented that the information was reported and publicly available, and did not support a duplication of this reporting to Audit Committee.

There being no further discussion, members were content to note the report and the updated Annual Counter Fraud Action Plan.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Counter Fraud Action Plan Update report and the updated Action Plan be noted.

57. Audit Committee Forward Plan (Agenda Item 9)

Members noted there were no reports scheduled for the December meeting, and therefore the meeting was likely to be cancelled.

The Fraud and Data Manager suggested members would be interested in a report regarding the progress made to date regarding preparation for the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) – members agreed that the report should be made to the January meeting.

The Section 151 Officer also noted a report on the Treasury Management Strategy would need to come forward for the January Committee, but this may be delayed to February if significant changes are required from the new Prudential Code and Treasury Guidance due to be published in January 2018.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Committee Forward Plan be noted including the following additions to the plan:

- Progress made to date regarding preparation for the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) – January.
 - Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19 - January.
-

Cllr Derek Yeomans
Chairman of Audit Committee

Agenda Item 12

Scrutiny Committee

This report summarises the work of the Scrutiny Committee since 16 November 2017. The committee met on 5 December 2017 and 2 January 2018 to consider:

5 December 2017

Reports to be considered by District Executive on 7 December 2017

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 7 December 2017 and made the following comments:

Somerset Waste Partnership Annual report and Draft Business Plan 2018-2023

- Page 24 – Core services contract review – members noted Viridor had many such contracts nationally and queried if there are likely to be other alternative providers.
- Page 5 – Purpose of the report refers to an agreement not being reached with the contractors, Kier, regarding the delivery plan and implementation of Recycle More. Members were concerned if similar issues may arise with alternative contractors. (although were reassured by the Officer and Portfolio Holder why this would be unlikely)
- Members noted the same report has gone, or will be going, to the other authorities within the Somerset Waste Partnership, and queried where we were in that process. i.e. first or last authority to consider the report.

Community Infrastructure Levy - Guidance and Governance

- Rec B – Scrutiny queried if there would be a timeline associated with the Infrastructure Business Plan.
- Page 29 - Members sought clarification that the table at the top of the page did not take into account the parish or town councils that may be eligible to receive 25% of CIL receipts (i.e. those with Neighbourhood Plans).
- Members sought clarification that SSDC were continuing to encourage parishes to do Neighbourhood Plans.
- Members also queried if a parish has a need for a specific project but no Neighbourhood Plan, was there scope for the parish to bid for, or receive more than 15%. (Dave Norris did clarify the situation in response to this and provided examples of the 123 list)

SSDC Review of Operational Office Accommodation

- Members supported the structured approach and more feasibility work being undertaken.
- Scrutiny queried the potential for losing car parking spaces in some of the proposals for development/relocation and what impact this would have and the cost implications.
- Members sought reassurance that that SSDC owned the freehold of all the properties concerned, and queried if there were any ground rents due on properties, and also that penalties associated with any leases would also be taken into consideration.
- Some members noted the Locality Working Group had met 3 or 4 times, but only now had the aspect of operational accommodation been added to the scope for the group.

Members felt things could have been done in a different way as concerns had been raised previously, and it now felt like the issue was being rushed.

- One member requested reassurance around the commitment to the redevelopment of Chard given the changes in Officer roles.
- Members requested that regeneration groups were consulted as part of the feasibility work.
- Committee members requested more frequent Communications to keep members informed at each stage.

The Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

- Members acknowledged much work had been done to get to this stage, and endorsed the recommendations.
- Members queried which other parishes were also going through the process, and what obligations SSDC had for costs of the process.

Corporate Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report 2017/18: 2nd Quarter

- Members commented that the summary of progress for each priority in the Council Plan was useful.
- Page 149 - Regarding priority 5, some members raised queries about the Superfast Broadband, and in particular if it was known if the SSDC area had lost out on any delivery as a result of not putting in our £640k?

Purchase of Land Adjoining Boden Street Car Park, Chard

- It was noted the site was in the Chard Holyrood Ward – and hence report should refer to the ward member being Cllr Jason Baker not Cllr Dave Bulmer.
- Members queried which budget the money would be allocated from, and how much would remain in that budget after this purchase.

Yeovil Refresh – Delivery Arrangements

- Some members commented that funding for quick-win projects to be delivered in the Old Station area of town was needed and would be welcomed.
- Page 161 – Rec C – It was queried if the Programme Manager would be a contractor or an officer employed by SSDC, and for how many years?
- Page 162 – para 9 – Scrutiny noted that Appendix A had been published as a confidential document, however the report did not indicate it was confidential which may be confusing for the public.
- Page 167 – the table – members sought clarification regarding the ownership of Foundry House.

Westlands Revised Business Plan

- Members queried what assumptions had been used in order to generate the revised Business Plan?
- It was also noted that some tenants had re-located from other SSDC premises to Westlands, and it was acknowledged that while this had improved the business at Westlands it may have had a knock on effect at other venues such as the Innovation Centre.

- Members noted that Steve Joel had been referred to by name rather than job title several times in the report, which was unusual and they did not feel it was the correct way to refer to an officer in a report.
- Scrutiny made several comments in confidential session with regard to details in the confidential appendix.

District Executive Forward Plan

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Plan had been on the Forward Plan for December but had now been moved to January.
- Update on Yeovil Crematorium Refurbishment – The Chairman noted she had been surprised that the report had been circulated direct to members by email rather than a report on the District Executive agenda. Members asked when there would be opportunity to ask questions either by them or the public.

Monitoring the SSDC Council Tax Support Scheme - Report and Findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group (November 2017)

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report which summarised the monitoring activity and work conducted since the last Council Tax Support Scheme Task and Finish report in December 2016. The report also details recommendations for the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2018/19. Members of the Scrutiny Committee were asked to endorse the report to District Executive.

The Chairman, Task and Finish members and Scrutiny Manager responded to points of detail. Some members queried if it was cost effective to be running the scheme and sought re-assurance of the monitoring of the costs of collection.

At the end of the short discussion, members unanimously agreed to endorse the report of the Task & Finish Group to District Executive.

2nd January 2018

Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 January 2018

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 4 January 2018 and made comments including:

Heart of the South West (HotSW) – Joint Committee

- Members generally endorsed the concept of progress with a single Joint Committee.
- Members asked if a formal response had been submitted by SSDC to the productivity strategy consultation and if a copy could be circulated to all members.
- Several members were concerned about some of the assumptions that were detailed in the report including:
 - Assumption that Somerset County Council have adequate resources
 - That initial contributions from member authorities for 2018/19 will be adequate (Rec F).
- Regarding the Risk matrix – members queried if the financial risk had been accurately reported in the risk profile matrix ‘after officer recommendation’.

- Para 8 on page 5, second bullet point – members sought reassurance that Economic Development within SSDC had the resources and was strong enough to take this forward.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19

- Scrutiny made no comments as the matter had been thoroughly considered during a Task and Finish Review – the final report of which is included within the appendices for this item.

SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress Report

- It was noted that several times in the past (not necessarily at Scrutiny) members had requested a chart showing people involved with Transformation, including their photos and key responsibilities, but this had still not materialised.
- Scrutiny noted that members had previously been informed that a fortnightly or monthly communication / newsletter would be sent to all members, however this seemed to no longer be happening.
- Scrutiny sought re-assurance that the right level and type of communication was going out to staff.
- The report indicated that the Transformation project is on budget and schedule, however Scrutiny noted the report did not detail the ripple effect on services and any impact on service delivery. Are all services meeting targets?
- Page 34, para 20 – Scrutiny requested that any predicted reductions in service delivery as we progress through Transformation, should be communicated to members and appropriate stakeholders, in order to help manage customer expectations.
- Page 37, Programme status report – Scrutiny noted the table at the top of the page did not define a key and so it looked like a line of ‘number ones’ – it was felt the table needed to be clearer about what it identified.
- Page 39 – under Accommodation, it mentions that the Building Contractor has indicated terminating the contract with SSDC, but the report did not indicate what was being done to address the matter.
- Page 41, Workstream status report – members noted it would be useful if under the ‘Key activities next period’ if the activities could be prioritised or some narrative provided as to the importance of an activity.
- Members queried if there were core posts remaining vacant in the programme, and if so, would it be an additional risk to the programme?
- Page 50 – Members were pleased to note that there will be an external user group. As Scrutiny are commencing a Task and Finish shortly for Customer Accessibility and online services, it was queried if there was an opportunity for some collaborative work?

Annual Review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

- Members sought assurance that this would cascade down through the new structure.
- Scrutiny queried if the new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) would have any impact on the RIPA?

2018/19 Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan Update

- Members were pleased to note from the Section 151 Officer that the government settlement announced shortly before Christmas slightly improved SSDC’s financial position.

- Members noted that the government were possibly looking to restrict Councils on borrowing for property investment, and queried the implications for SSDC should restrictions be made.
- Members expressed concern that there did not seem to be any in depth reporting of commercial property investments. Scrutiny requested separate more detailed reporting in the future to inform if investments purchased under the Commercial Strategy are performing as per the expected returns detail in the strategy.
- Business Rates Pooling (page 89) – members queried if any of the pilot schemes should go on to become national policy, would it be a positive impact for budgets in future years? Had any assumptions on pooling been made when calculating the forward budget as detailed in the report?
- Para 7, page 83 – members queried if a figure had been set yet regarding the Council Tax premium on empty properties.
- Para 16, page 86 – members queried what the £10k for strategic management events and sponsorship had been for and why it was an unavoidable pressure?
- Para 27, page 87 – it was queried how the figure of £50k had been derived for a Treasury Risk Management Reserve.

Yeovil Street Markets (Agenda item 11)

Scrutiny raised a number of questions and concerns including:

- The income for the Saturday Market is not included in the report, why? Can some indicative figures be provided?
- Will SSDC still get income from the licensing as it's not clear in the report?
- What is the view of the Yeovil Chamber of Commerce with regard to the influence and impact of the Market?
- Has discussion taken place with Yeovil Town Council, and have they been offered the opportunity to manage the market?
- Is there a charter for the Market, would this form part of the performance management part of an agreement with an operator.
- There are not enough safeguards in the proposed arrangement to ensure effective operation and minimisation of risks. Why is the arrangement proposed so loose and open ended?
- Is it wise to be looking to pursue the option when only one provider was interviewed?
- Para 16 of the report mentions that Markets and Events are key to the overall success of the town centre, how will this proposed arrangement ensure this?

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

- Members noted that an item regarding the Council Plan and Annual Action Plan was scheduled for February – members queried if there would be any consultation with members or opportunity for comments prior to the report coming forward?

Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews

Members noted the updates provided by the Scrutiny Manager on each of the Task and Finish Groups currently in progress or commencing in the near future.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2018 – This Task and Finish work was now complete. The report and recommendations are included in this Full Council agenda.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2019 – The Task and Finish group had held their second meeting and were progressing with potential options to reduce administration time for the

scheme. At the next meeting members will begin to assess options in detail considering impact.

Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy - No progress since the last update.

Car Parking Charges – Review to commence once resource allows. Members briefly discussed the subject and noted the car parking strategy was also out of date. There was a general opinion that the Car Parking Strategy in terms of planning future parking provision should be reviewed prior to a Task and Finish review of car parking charges.

Transformation – Customer Accessibility - This review will commence later in January 2018 the Scrutiny Committee have tasked this group to work with the Transformation Team to identify and deliver Best Practice to provide accessible on-line information and services for all. Scrutiny Committee invite members to volunteer to join the group. The group will compile its own project scope and terms of reference, to include meeting times. If you would like to volunteer please contact Jo Gale – Joanna.Gale@southsomerset.gov.uk Specialist Scrutiny.

In addition to the Task and Finish work Scrutiny Committee have been met the Strategy and Commissioning Director and the Performance and People Manager to discuss the current Performance Reporting Arrangements and proposals for a new framework moving forward.

Scrutiny Work Programme

Scrutiny Committee are planning their work for the forthcoming year and welcome suggestions for topics to be reviewed/explored this year. Members particularly encourage suggestions that will:

- Address a matter of local concern.
- Support the delivery of the Council Plan
- Lead to improved value for money
- Will aid the change process as a result of New Government guidance, legislation or other reason for significant change in Strategy, Service policy and delivery, or,
- Respond to an issue, proposed area of development by External Advisors, Stakeholders, Partners, Best Practice etc.
- Improve member understanding and will consequently lead to improved decision making.

Sue Steele
Chairman of Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 15

Date of Next Meeting

Members are asked to note that the next scheduled meeting of the Full Council will take place on **Thursday, 22nd February 2018** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil **commencing at 7.30 p.m.**
