

MEETING: DE.05: 11:12  
DATE 06.10.11

## South Somerset District Council

**Draft Minutes** of a meeting of the **District Executive** held on **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(9.30 a.m. – 12.50 p.m.)

**Present:**

**Members:** Ric Pallister (in the Chair)

Tony Fife  
Patrick Palmer  
Jo Roundell Greene

Sylvia Seal  
Peter Seib  
Angie Singleton

**Also Present:**

Nigel Mermagen  
David Norris  
Gina Seaton

Sue Steele  
Martin Wale  
Colin Winder

**Officers:**

Mark Williams  
Rina Singh  
Vega Sturgess  
Donna Parham  
Ian Clarke  
Steve Joel  
Martin Woods  
Helen Rutter  
Adron Duckworth  
Andy Foyne  
Alice Knight  
Colin McDonald  
Lynda Pincombe  
Emily McGuinness  
Angela Cox

Chief Executive  
Strategic Director (Place and Performance)  
Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus)  
Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)  
Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)  
Assistant Director (Health and Well-Being)  
Assistant Director (Economy)  
Assistant Director (Communities)  
Conservation Manager  
Spatial Policy Manager  
Third Sector and Partnerships Manager  
Corporate Strategic Housing Manager  
Community Health and Leisure Manager  
Scrutiny Manager  
Democratic Services Manager

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

### 54. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

### 55. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Carroll, Henry Hobhouse and Michael Lewis.

**56. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

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**57. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)**

It was agreed that members of the public present would speak at the time the Agenda item was discussed.

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**58. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)**

The Chairman reminded Members that there had been great pressure on Managers to identify 4% savings from their budgets for 2012/13 and he was particularly impressed by the Spatial Policy Manager who had identified more than the required 4%. He thanked the Spatial Policy Manager and his team for their exceptional efforts.

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**59. Update on the Ropewalk, West Coker (Agenda Item 6)**

The Assistant Director (Economy) advised that there were two issues still outstanding at the site: the transfer of the lease and the repayment of money outstanding to SSDC. He said that a letter had been received from the Industrial Buildings Preservation Trust (IBPT) indicating that they were willing to transfer the lease to SSDC and to pay the £30,000 owing. This now required confirmation by a second representative of the IBPT and he expected that confirmation to arrive shortly.

Mr Ross Aitken, Chairman of the Coker Rope and Sail Trust, advised that following their grant application, they had received £180,000 from the Architectural Heritage Fund. This would ensure the project was fully funded apart from the machinery at the site and an application would be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for assistance with this. He thanked the Council for their continuing and vital support.

The Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) confirmed that once the lease had been surrendered by the IBPT it would only take a week or two to complete the legal transfer.

Mr Angus McPhee, Chairman of West Coker Parish Council, spoke of his concern at a notice sent to the Parish Council advising the withdrawal of a planning application at the site by the District Council. He felt any grant of planning permission may raise the value of the land, particularly to the person from whom the land was compulsorily purchased from. However, the Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) confirmed that the area of land which the planning permission had been applied and withdrawn was not part of the land which had been purchased under the compulsory purchase order so there would be no effect on the value of the land.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive noted the verbal update on the current position of the Ropewalk at West Coker.

**Reason:** To update Members on the current position of the Ropewalk at West Coker.

*(Adron Duckworth, Conservation Manager – 01935 462652)  
(adron.duckworth@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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## 60. Draft National Planning Policy Framework Consultation (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman advised that the responses to the consultation had also been discussed at his Portfolio Holder briefing the previous week and Members comments together with the comments from the Scrutiny Committee would be fed into the final response, which he would circulate to all Members, prior to it being submitted on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

The Spatial Policy Manager noted that there were still some typographical errors within the consultation response which he would correct before it was submitted. He noted that the SSDC Core Strategy would be adopted within the next 12 months and it needed to tie in with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) therefore there was a need to establish transitional arrangements between the two documents.

During discussion the following points were made by Members:-

- Paragraphs 25 and 27 – the wording should be changed to ‘require’ Local Planning Authorities to co-operate – we cannot rely on ‘should’ and ‘expected’.
- Paragraph 39 must strongly reflect the need for communication between local planning authorities and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) regarding any future MOD development.
- Paragraph 40 – there was a real need to know and understand the stance of the Planning Inspectorate.
- Clarification was sought on the relationship between Neighbourhood Plans and the Local Plan and a clear definition was needed on how the two fit together.
- Concern at the cost to the District Council to assist with the production of Neighbourhood Plans, particularly in rural areas with many Parishes.
- Lack of definition of a neighbourhood and the possibility that Parishes may have to cluster together to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.
- A clear and legal view was needed on the term ‘Sustainable Development’.
- Planning applications can be delayed by statutory consultees failing to respond within the statutory time period and there should be some form of compulsion requiring them to do so.
- Paragraph 60 – strengthen this response to highlight the importance of safeguarding employment land in town centres.
- Paragraph 73 – there is great Government incentive for free schools and Academies to be established and there is concern as to who would build new schools to meet local demand if County Councils no longer had control.
- Paragraph 99 – no mention of the problems caused by developers making technical starts and then halting the development and its effect on the 5 year land supply.
- Need to keep the current Planning Policy Guidance to underpin the new NPPF, otherwise Local Authorities could face huge legal bills in its interpretation.

It was further agreed by Members that 3 priorities be highlighted in the consultation response, these being:-

1. Paragraph 60 - safeguarding employment land in town centres
2. Paragraph 73 - who would build new schools to meet local demand
3. Keep the current Planning Policy Guidance to underpin the new NPPF

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to endorse the proposed responses, subject to the above comments being incorporated into the final consultation response by SSDC.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:

1. Endorsed the proposed responses to the Government's consultation, as amended, on the draft National Planning Policy Framework as set out in the report;
2. noted the implications for the Council's emerging Core Strategy and operation of the Development Management service.

**Reason:** To inform members of the Government's published draft National Planning Policy Framework which is to replace all current main Planning Policy documents and to agree this Council's response to the Government's request for comments.

*(Andy Foyne, Spatial Policy Manager – 01935 462650)  
(andy.foyne@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

## 61. **SSDC Partnerships Review (Agenda Item 8)**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture advised that the review of SSDC partnerships had gone through a rigorous Scrutiny Task and Finish Review and had been discussed at Area Committees. She drew Members attention to the table of proposals on Agenda pages 24 to 26 and she asked that they also read the comments next to each recommendation. If the recommendations in the report were agreed, the number of partnerships on the SSDC Partnerships Register would be reduced from 37 to 15 and this could result in some financial savings to the Council.

The Third Sector and Partnerships Manager advised that there would be an annual review of SSDC partnerships in future and also, a Scrutiny Task and Finish Review would now look at Councillors appointments to outside organisations to check their relevance.

The Scrutiny Committee Chairman reported that during their discussion of the report, it was felt that an explanation of minor, substantial and key partners would have been useful. The Third Sector and Partnerships Manager agreed to include this guidance in future reports.

During discussion the following points were made by Members:-

- The recommendation was to retain the South Somerset Together (LSP) on the Partnerships Register, contrary to the recommendation of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Review.
- The Mendip and South Somerset Community Safety Partnership was currently in a new trial arrangement under the name of the Safer Somerset Partnership and this pilot would be evaluated in March 2012.

- The Area Community Safety Action Panels may continue to meet in the same form although it was recommended that they were no longer listed as an SSDC partnership.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:

1. Agreed the recommendations made in Table A suggesting the removal and retention of partnerships on the Partnerships Register;
2. Agreed that the annual review of each of the remaining partnerships be reported back to District Executive or the relevant Area Committee by April 2012, together with any further partnerships identified by officers and members which do not currently appear on the partnerships register;
3. Agreed that the following definition of a partnership at SSDC be adopted:

A partnership is a formal working arrangement involving one or more independent bodies, from any sector, who pool resources and share responsibility for agreeing and then delivering a set of planned actions and outcomes. A formal agreement is made by all partners to work together for specific outcomes.

4. Agreed that the following definition of what a partnership is not be adopted:
  - Procured contract arrangements.
  - Grants with, or without, Service Level Agreements.
  - Community planning groups, forums or similar.
  - Collaborative working where members or officers belong to, or meet together, to discuss policy, strategy or similar issues. These may be similar to partnerships but the key difference is there is no formal agreement or in some cases outcomes. SSDC may participate in an advisory capacity or to gather information to benefit developments within SSDC.
5. Agreed that clear guidance be circulated to all SSDC services as to the information which should be recorded on the Partnerships Register, including the revised template recommended by Scrutiny Committee;
6. Agreed that the Partnerships Register be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee annually in the spring, in order that recommendations can be taken into account during the budget setting process;
7. Agreed that a Scrutiny review should be undertaken regarding councillor appointments to outside bodies.

**Reason:** To inform members of the discussion from the Area Committees, following their consideration of the SSDC Partnerships Review carried out by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, and to consider the recommendations made by that Review.

*(Alice Knight, Third Sector and Partnerships Manager – 01963 435061)  
(alice.knight@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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## **62. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Financial Plan for 2012/13 to 2016/17 (Agenda Item 9)**

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) introduced her report to Members and drew their attention to

- The expectation that interest rates would not rise before December 2012.
- The possibility that more funding could come through the New Homes Bonus.
- Council Tax increases had again been frozen by the Government.
- Any large increase in Council Tax in the future could be subject to a call for a local referendum by local residents and the cost could potentially be £80,000 to £90,000.
- The 4% budget savings exercise had already identified £700,000 towards the next years target savings of £2.2m.
- There would be a Members Workshop on 15<sup>th</sup> November in the Council Chamber at Brympton Way for the Portfolio Holders to present a new Corporate Plan for discussion.
- There would be a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> December where Portfolio Holders would put forward their budget savings for the forthcoming year.

During discussion it was noted that the Strategic Asset Management Group were currently looking at all land and buildings owned by SSDC, in conjunction with Ward Members and the Area Committees, with a view to disposing of those with no strategic value.

Councillor Martin Wale confirmed that Conservative Councillors were meeting the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) to discuss their budget proposals for 2012/13 and they would propose any variances in plenty of time for consideration in the normal budget process.

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

- RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:
1. approved the current Medium Term Financial Strategy;
  2. noted the current position and timetable for the Medium Term Financial Plan;
  3. approved the use of £300,000 of general fund balances to replenish the Voluntary Redundancy Reserve.

**Reason:** To inform members of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the current position on the MTFP (Revenue Budgets for 2012/13 to 2016/17).

*(Donna Parham, Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) – 01935 462225)  
(donna.parham@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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### 63. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 10)

The following amendments to the District Executive Forward Plan were noted:

- Substitute Members on Committees – November 2012
- Report on the Heritage Service – November 2012
- Review of South Somerset Together (LSP) – February 2012
- Review of SSDC Partnerships – April 2012

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A of the agenda report, subject to the following additions:
  - Substitute Members on Committees – November 2012
  - Report on the Heritage Service – November 2012
  - Review of South Somerset Together (LSP) – Feb 2012
  - Review of SSDC Partnerships – April 2012
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown a Appendix B.

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

*(Ian Clarke, Assistant Director (Legal & Corporate Services) – 01935 462184)  
(ian.clarke@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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### 64. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

*(Ian Clarke, Assistant Director (Legal & Corporate Services) – 01935 462184)  
(ian.Clarke@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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### 65. Exclusion of Press and Public

**RESOLVED:** That the following items be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under Paragraph 1: Information relating to any individual, and Paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

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**66. Redevelopment of Council owned building at Goldcroft, Yeovil (Agenda Item 12) (Confidential)**

The Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Policy noted that the lease of the building to a social landlord was an ideal re-use of an empty town centre building.

The Corporate Strategic Housing Manager advised that the recommendations were subject to the appropriate planning permission being granted. He further proposed that a suitable break clause be written into the lease, so that SSDC may regain the building at any time if a suitable future development came forward in the area.

Members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report, as amended.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive agreed subject to the appropriate planning permission being granted:

1. the grant of a 40 year lease at a peppercorn rate, with appropriate break clauses, to the named Housing Association for the property at Goldcroft, Yeovil;
2. to transfer the property at a peppercorn lease which was less than best consideration of the current value;
3. the named Housing Association meet the Council's legal and professional costs in respect of the grant of the lease;
4. payment of a capital subsidy to the named Housing Association to assist with the conversion works required.

**Reason:** To agree to the grant of a lease for the council owned building at Goldcroft, Yeovil to the named Housing Association and the payment of a capital subsidy to enable conversion to form two units of affordable housing.

*(Colin McDonald, Corporate Strategic Housing Manager – 01935 462331)  
(colin.mcdonald@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

**67. SSDC Comprehensive (Efficiency) Review of South Somerset Together (Agenda Item 13) (Confidential)**

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to confirm Option 2 as their preference for the future of the Local Strategic Partnership. They also agreed that a short progress report should be presented to District Executive in February 2012, detailing the partners and future aims, and a full review report in November 2012.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:

1. noted that the Partnership, as currently constituted, no longer met anticipated needs and should now be replaced by the much simplified model described in the report;
2. confirmed that Option 2 be adopted for the continuing role of the District Council in South Somerset Together, with a review date of November 2012;



3. agreed that officers continue discussions with Partners to implement changes as quickly as feasible with a new model fully operational by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012, if agreed funding is forthcoming from Partners;
4. Agreed that a short progress report be presented to District Executive in February 2012.

**Reason:** To agree to the resourcing and future business model for South Somerset Together (SST) and the role that the Council should play in a sustainable, strategic partnership for the future.

*(Voting: 6 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions)*

*(Helen Rutter, Assistant Director (Communities) – 01935 462060)  
(helen.rutter@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

**68. Transfer of Community Activity Bus – Selection of Preferred Bidder (Agenda Item 14) (Confidential)**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture drew Members attention to the programme of proposed activities to be held on the bus by the proposed future operator.

Members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report.

- RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:
1. approved the selection of a suitable operator for the future management of the Community Activity Bus;
  2. accepted that by retaining the Community Activity Bus and transferring its future management to the suitable operator, the opportunity of selling the bus now was forgone;
  3. authorised the Community Health and Leisure Manager in conjunction with the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) and Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture to negotiate and finalise the legal documentation associated with the transfer.

**Reason:** To agree to the appointment of an operator to manage Community Activity Bus.

*(Lynda Pincombe, Community Health and Leisure Manager – 01935 462614)  
(lynda.pincombe@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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Chairman

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Date