

MEETING: DE.06: 11:12
DATE 03.11.11

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held on **Thursday 3rd November 2011** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(9.30 a.m. – 1.15 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Ric Pallister (in the Chair)

Tim Carroll	Jo Roundell Greene (absent between
Tony Fife	10.45am to 12.50pm)
Henry Hobhouse	Sylvia Seal
Michael Lewis	Peter Seib
Patrick Palmer (until 11.50am)	Angie Singleton

Also Present:

John Dyke	David Norris
Carol Goodall	Sue Steele
Tony Lock	Martin Wale
Nigel Mermagen	Colin Winder

Lesley Boucher, SSDC Representative on YDH Board of Governors
Sam Best, Chief Executive, SSVCA Ltd

Officers:

Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)
Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
David Julian	Economic Development Manager
Ian Potter	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Alice Knight	Third Sector and Partnerships Manager
Mike Holliday	HR Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

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

69. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2011, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

70. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Mark Williams, Chief Executive.

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

At the time the item was discussed, Councillor Mike Lewis declared a personal interest in Agenda item 12, Consultation Paper on the proposals for Business Rates Retention, as he was currently in negotiation to locate 6 businesses in new premises in Sparkford and the amount of business rates paid was a significant factor in their location.

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

Mr Angus McPhee, Chairman of West Coker Parish Council, confirmed that the lease for the Ropewalk in West Coker had now been returned by the Industrial Buildings Preservation Trust (IBPT) and a representative of the Architectural Heritage Fund would be visiting the site on 10th November to review the work being undertaken with the funding granted by them.

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

There were no announcements from the Chairman.

74. **Report from Yeovil District Hospital Board of Governors (Agenda Item 6)**

Mrs Lesley Boucher, SSDC representative on the Yeovil District Hospital Board of Governors, provided Members with an update on the current activities of the Hospital Board. She advised that:-

- She now had more time to devote to her role as a Governor of the Hospital and always provided a written account of every meeting she attended as SSDC representative to officers and the Portfolio Holder.
- There had been great improvements in the quality of the food served in the hospital, much of which was now locally sourced.
- The Hospital would shortly be actively seeking 4 non-executive Directors.
- A Hospital Monitoring Scoresheet was produced quarterly and the financial scores were always excellent.
- The Hospital would be holding an open afternoon on 24th November and all were welcome to attend.
- She would be willing to arrange a tour of the Hospital for anyone interested.
- The Hospital were always looking to recruit new Members who were representative of the communities they serve and she would supply Membership Application forms for any Councillors interested in joining.

The Chairman noted that the Hospital were working closely with the District Council on future redevelopment issues.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture thanked Mrs Boucher for attending and providing written reports of her hospital meetings. She said the Hospital was an important partner for the District Council and it was useful to receive the regular updates.

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

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the verbal update and report on the current position of the Yeovil District Hospital Board of Governors.

Reason: To provide the District Executive with an update on the current activities of the Yeovil District Hospital Board of Governors.

(Mrs Lesley Boucher, SSDC representative on the Yeovil District Hospital Board of Governors)

75. A Presentation on the activities of the South Somerset Association for Voluntary and Community Action (SSVCA) (Agenda Item 7)

Ms Sam Best, Chief Executive of the South Somerset Association for Voluntary and Community Action Ltd, provided the Committee with a presentation on the work of the organisation (slides attached).

In response to questions from Members, Ms Best confirmed that:-

- Both the Furnicare project and the Community Transport Scheme were self-financing.
- An application to the Social Action Fund, if successful, would be used to arrange events to encourage new volunteers.
- SSVCA wrote to all Parish Councils every year, promoting their projects and seeking additional funding.
- She would be happy to arrange a tour of the Furnicare project or Community Bus service for anyone interested.

During discussion Members agreed that the SSVCA should be invited to attend the next Annual Area Parish Workshops as an opportunity to highlight the work of the organisation.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked the Chief Executive of the SSVCA for attending and providing an interesting presentation on the work of the organisation.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the presentation on the current position of the South Somerset Association for Voluntary and Community Action Ltd.

Reason: To inform members of the work of the South Somerset Association for Voluntary and Community Action Ltd.

*(Sam Best, Chief Executive, SSVCA – 01935 475914)
(sambest@ssvca.org.uk)*

76. SSDC Heritage Service – Options for the Future (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture introduced the report to Members. She said it was a well written and comprehensive report which contained all the necessary detail for Members to make a decision. She paid tribute to the dedication and expertise of the staff and volunteers of the Heritage Service and said that during a recent meeting between staff and volunteers, some very positive and innovative ideas for continuing the service had been put forward. She noted the high cost of providing the service and the

current low visitor numbers and proposed Option 3 of the officers report as the preferred option for the future delivery of the service.

Three volunteers from the Heritage Service all spoke in support of the proposed Option 3, which was to explore commissioning the care and maintenance of the museum collection to a third party / trust status.

During discussion, it was noted that although Option 3 was the preferred option, if this was not possible, then Option 2, to further reduce the level of service provision, would be the fall back position.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree that Option 3 of the report be pursued as the possible future delivery of the Heritage Service for SSDC.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

1. approved Option 3 (para 5.3) of the report to explore commissioning the care and maintenance of the museum collection to a third party / trust status with a view to ceasing the District Council's involvement in the service by March 2013.
2. noted that the outcome of the review would be reported in the summer of 2012 with final recommendations.

Reason: To inform members of the options for the future delivery of the Council's Heritage Service.

*(David Julian, Economic Development Manager – 01935 462279)
(david.julian@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

77. Changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefits (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning introduced the consultation, in which the Government was proposing several changes to the services currently administered by SSDC, which would impact upon the residents of South Somerset.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager provided Members with a detailed explanation of the changes proposed in the Consultation document and their effects upon local residents. He advised that the 3 main areas of change proposed were:-

1. Reduction in the Local Housing Allowance – affecting people aged 25 to 34 years old
2. Replacing the current Council Tax Benefit scheme with a Local Support for Council Tax by April 2013.
3. The introduction of Universal Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions which posed several implications for both SSDC staff and benefit recipients.

During discussion it was noted that:-

- David Laws MP had already successfully taken up several points identified within the report with Government officials.
- The timescales for implementation were very short and SSDC would continue to lobby through MPs and the District Council Network.

- A Scrutiny Task and Finish group would be established to fully investigate the implications of the proposals to SSDC and its residents.
- Proposals to discontinue face-to-face contact with the benefit claimants would impact upon the most vulnerable in society and could increase the workload of SSDC Customer Services and the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- The SSDC Members of the SCC Health and Well-Being Board should make the Board aware of the full implications of the proposals.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the report and asked that the Revenues and Benefits Manager provide an updated presentation on the proposed changes to Council in January 2012.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the proposed changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefits as part of the Government's Welfare Reform Programme.

Reason: To inform members of the information relating to changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefits as part of the Government's Welfare Reform Programme and what SSDC are doing to mitigate the impact of the changes.

(Ian Potter, Revenues and Benefits Manager) – 01935 462270
(ian.potter@southsomerset.gov.uk)

78. 2011/12 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter ending 30th September 2011 (Agenda Item 10)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) circulated an additional table detailing the actual cash held by SSDC for Section 106 planning contributions, to be read in conjunction with what was expected to be received as detailed in Appendix B. She agreed to include this information in future reports.

It was confirmed that the photovoltaic panels for the roof of the Brympton Way offices would be installed by 12th December.

Members were content to agree the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

- approved the revised capital programme spend as detailed in paragraph 6;
- noted the progress of individual capital schemes as detailed in Appendix A;
- approved the virements between projects of £43,000 as detailed in paragraph 8;
- noted the slippage in the capital programme as detailed in paragraph 9;
- noted the total land disposals to registered social landlords and the balance of S106 deposits by developers held in a reserve as detailed in Appendix B;
- noted the current position with regard to funds held by the Wessex Home Improvement Loans as detailed in paragraph 12.

Reason: To inform members of the current financial position of the Capital Programme of the Council and to report the reasons for variations from approved budgets for the period 1st April to 30th September 2011.

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

79. 2011/12 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 30th September 2011 (Agenda Item 11)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) introduced her report to Members and drew their attention to the projected budget variance of approximately £700,000. She said that Managers had completed Budget Impact Statements for each saving they had identified within their service for 2012/13 and she had asked them if there was a possibility of the saving being made in 2011/12. If Members were in agreement with the proposals, a further £250,000 could be saved in this way.

In response to questions from Members, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that:-

- Staff were still opting for a reduction in working hours or taking up additional annual leave.
- Staff Travel allowances would also be reviewed, in consultation with the Unions.
- Treasury Management was currently performing well and could help towards offsetting the budget variance.
- A reserve account would be set up to receive the New Homes Bonus funding.

During discussion Members felt that it would be useful to review the Useable Reserves to check the relevance of continuing to hold them and it was agreed to add this to the list of resolutions.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree the recommendations of the report, with the additional recommendation to review the Useable Reserves.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

- a. noted the current 2011/12 financial position of the Council;
- b. noted the reasons for variations to the previously approved budgets as detailed in paragraphs 3.3 and that Management Board were taking steps to reduce the anticipated overspend;
- c. approved the virements requested in paragraph 4;
- d. noted the transfers made to and from reserves outlined in paragraph 7.1 and the position of the Area Reserves as detailed in Appendix C and the Corporate Reserves as detailed in Appendix D;
- e. approved the setting up of a New Homes Bonus Reserve and noted any spend from it would require the approval of District Executive;

- f. noted the virements made under delegated authority as detailed in Appendix B;
- g. noted the transfers to and from balances outlined in paragraph 7.4.
- h. agreed to undertake a review of the Useable Reserves.

Reason: To inform members of the current financial position of the revenue budgets of the Council and to report the reasons for variations from approved budgets for the period 1st April to 30th September 2011.

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

80. Consultation Paper – Local Government Resource Review – Proposals for Business Rate Retention (Agenda Item 12)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) advised that this was a substantial consultation document, the main impact being, if SSDC could grow and increase local businesses then they would benefit by receiving a proportion of the increased business rates, however, if a major business moved out of the area then this would adversely impact upon the Business Rates received by SSDC.

The Chairman noted that the risks in rural areas were significant and he said the Local Government Group were actively campaigning on the issue.

At the time the item was discussed, Councillor Mike Lewis declared a personal interest in the item, as he was currently in negotiation to locate 6 businesses to new premises in Sparkford and the amount of business rates paid was a significant factor in their location.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note that a response had been submitted to the consultation.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted a response had been submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government's Consultation on proposals for Business Rate Retention.

Reason: To provide District Executive with an overview of the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation paper on future funding for Local Authorities.

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

81. Employer's Pension Discretions Review (Agenda Item 13)

The HR Manager advised that there were a number of employer discretionary options within the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and it was prudent to review them from time to time. He noted that these options had last been reviewed in 2007 and the recommendations before the Committee were in the financial interest of the Council.

The Chairman proposed that the decisions should be made by the District Executive Committee rather than the Chief Executive, in consultation with Management Board as the decisions would affect fellow employees.

Members were in agreement to amend the proposed regulations, but that each case be reported under confidential session to the District Executive for determination.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

1. Under Regulation 18, would decide on a case by case basis whether to waive any actuarial reduction on flexible retirement following consideration of the financial interests of the council.
2. Under Regulation 30, would decide on a case by case basis whether to waive any actuarial reduction on early payment of benefits where there are sufficient compassionate grounds.

Reason: To agree two amendments to the existing Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) relating to the application of the scheme when employees leave employment under certain conditions.

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

82. Appointment of Substitute Members – Audit and Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 14)

The Chairman advised that the proposal to allow substitute members on Committees had been requested by District Councillors who were also County Councillors and as such, experienced some conflict of meeting dates between the two Authorities. He then proposed to widen the allowance of substitute members to all Committees with the exception of District Executive and the Area Committees. He noted that this proposal would raise training issues for substitutes on the Audit and Licensing Committees.

During discussion, varying views were expressed on the merits and drawbacks of the proposals and after some discussion, it was agreed that a further report be presented to the District Executive on the new wider proposed substitutes, before being put to full Council.

Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) noted that SSDC currently had a very limited substitute councillor scheme, compared to other District Councils, and he agreed to present a further report to the District Executive.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members agreed to defer the decision to appoint substitute members to Committees and asked that the Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) present a new report taking account of Members comments.

RESOLVED: That the decision to appoint substitute members to Committees be deferred until January 2012 for the Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) to present a new report taking account of Members comments.

Reason: To enable substitute members to be appointed to Council Committees where the appointed members are unable to attend.

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

83. **SSDC's Role and Support for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee 2012 (Agenda Item 15)**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture asked that Members note the Council's strategic approach to assisting community groups to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June 2012. There would be no SSDC funding for events, however, officer advice and support and equipment hire would be available.

Members were content to support the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That Members supported the proposed District-wide approach to SSDC helping communities celebrate the Diamond Jubilee.

Reason: To agree SSDC's approach to supporting communities celebrate the 2012 Diamond Jubilee.

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

84. **District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 16)**

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

- Update on the Medium Term Financial Plan - December 2011
- Appointment of Substitute Members to Council Committees – January 2012
- New SSDC Corporate Plan – February 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:
 - Update on the Medium Term Financial Plan - December 2011
 - Appointment of Substitute Members to Council Committees – January 2012
 - New SSDC Corporate Plan – February 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)

85. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 17)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 1st December 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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Chairman

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Date