

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT on Thursday 2 October 2014.**

(9.30 am - 12.00 pm)

**Present:**

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Tim Carroll  
Peter Gubbins  
Henry Hobhouse

Shane Pledger  
Sylvia Seal  
Peter Seib

**Also Present:**

Nick Colbert  
Tim Inglefield  
Tony Lock  
Nigel Mermagen

Sue Osborne  
Sue Steele  
Colin Winder  
Derek Yeomans

**Officers**

Mark Williams  
Rina Singh  
Vega Sturgess  
Ian Clarke  
Donna Parham  
Martin Woods  
David Norris  
Paul Wheatley  
David Julian  
Helen Rutter  
Angela Cox

Chief Executive  
Strategic Director (Place & Performance)  
Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)  
Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)  
Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)  
Assistant Director (Economy)  
Development Manager  
Principal Spatial Planner  
Economic Development Manager  
Assistant Director (Communities)  
Democratic Services Manager

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

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### **52. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)**

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

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### **53. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jo Roundell Greene, Angie Singleton and Nick Weeks.

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### **54. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

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#### **55. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)**

Mr Ross Aitken of the Coker Rope and Sail Trust advised that they were in the process of applying for Heritage Lottery funding to complete the restoration project and it would be appreciated if SSDC could write a letter in support of their application, mentioning the wide group of volunteers, the 125 year lease and the forward plan which was inclusive with the local and wider community.

The Chairman confirmed that he would be happy to provide the necessary supporting letter on behalf of the committee.

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#### **56. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)**

The Chairman advised that he had received a letter from Wincanton Town Council in which they apologised for the statement read out at the August meeting of the District Executive meeting by the Clerk to Wincanton Town Council regarding the Wincanton Car Parks Income Compensation Scheme. The chairman said he had responded that any apologies should be directed at the officer named in their statement.

The Chairman also advised that he would like to gauge Members opinion on options for funding the Somerset Rivers Authority, as part of the 20 year Flood Action Plan. He said that a joint Portfolio Holder Briefing for all Councillors would be held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October at 4.30pm. to discuss this and Parking Offer options in SSDC car parks over the Christmas period.

The Chairman also called for a minute silence to remember the late District Councillor and Alderman George Chinnock, who had passed away during September 2014.

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#### **57. Report from Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (Agenda Item 6)**

The Chairman advised that he would be inviting the Chief Executive of Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton to a future meeting of Full Council to discuss the service they provided to residents in the South Somerset area.

Members were pleased to note the quarterly report from the Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive noted the quarterly report from the Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

**Reason:** To receive and note the quarterly report from the Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

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#### **58. Draft Asset Management Plan (Agenda Item 7)**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning drew Members attention to Appendix 2 detailing the Council's Corporate Priorities, which he said would be revised each year.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee and Members, the Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial confirmed that:-

- Although the Engineering and Property Service was operating at capacity, the programme of works was deliverable.
- If opportunities arose for income generation during the year then full advantage would be taken to benefit local taxpayers.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to approve the draft Asset Management Plan.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive approved the draft Asset Management Plan.

**Reason:** To approve for the proposed Asset Management Plan.

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## 59. Highway Officer Report (Agenda Item 8)

The Chairman reminded Members of the current difficulty of receiving meaningful Highway Authority comments on planning applications and so it was proposed in conjunction with Sedgemoor District Council to procure highway advice through the employment of a dedicated Highway Officer. The postholder would be seconded to Somerset County Council to enable them to officially sign off highway responses to planning applications but the day to day management of the officer would be kept within SSDC Development Control.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised that:-

- SSDC would only be responsible for the fully liability of any future redundancy costs of the post holder if they had continuous unbroken service in the public sector.
- A monitoring report on the post would be presented to District Executive in 12 months time.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- It was possible that existing SCC Highway Officers could apply for the post.
- The post would allow Ward Members access to Highway advice.
- The SSDC Development Control Manager must retain control of the post, not Somerset County Council.
- If SSDC employed independent consultants to give Highway advice on planning applications, that could be deemed as independent highway advice and could be given less weight than any subsequent Highway Authority comments at a planning appeal.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman agreed that the post should be monitored for response times to major planning applications and a monitoring report would be presented to District Executive in 12 months time. Members were then content to agree the funding to appoint or procure highway advice.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive agreed to approve funding of £141,300 (£47,100 per annum) from the Infrastructure Fund to enable either a three year fixed term appointment for the procurement of highways advice or consultancy advice.

**Reason:** To supplement the current level of Highway and Transport advice provided to South Somerset District Council via the statutory highway authority, Somerset County Council.

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## 60. Loan to Somerset Waste Partnership for Waste Vehicles (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Support Services advised that the waste collection vehicles had always been kept outside the Somerset Waste Partnership agreement in case of any default issues, so the partner councils could retain the ability to continue the waste collection service, He confirmed that earlier that week, Taunton Deane BC had agreed to advance half the funding towards replacing the waste vehicles.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that the Partnership could have approached the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) but 3 of the partner councils did not wish to do this. She said that current interest rates for balances invested by SSDC were between 2.6% to 2.8% and so lending the money to the Waste Partnership at 3.5% was a better return on capital invested.

Councillor Derek Yeomans, Chairman of the Waste Partnership, said the replacement waste vehicles would be required in 18 months time and the old vehicles would be sold as they had a resale value. The District Councils in the Partnership had a statutory duty to collect household waste and he was pleased that Taunton Deane BC had agreed part of the funding.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman confirmed that the report would be presented to Full Council with revised figures following the agreement of Taunton Deane BC to advance half the funding. Members were content to endorse the recommendations for approval by Full Council.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive agreed to:-

- a. Recommend that Full Council approve the loan of up to £7m to Somerset Waste Partnership;
- b. Note that the capital expenditure would be added to the Capital Programme, and that the principal payments received would be capital receipts;
- c. Note the additional interest in the region of up to £937,500 that the loan provided, over the length of the loan;
- d. Note that savings of up to £133,930 be added to the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**Reason:** To seek approval for South Somerset District Council to loan

**61. Policy on Audio/Visual Recording and Photography at Council Meetings (Agenda Item 10)**

The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Democratic Services advised that following the introduction of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, members of the public were allowed to record council meetings. It was therefore sensible to have a policy to ensure minimum impact during a council meeting. Also to protect SSDC Councillors and staff from being quoted out of context, it was proposed to audio record SSDC meetings, starting with District Executive Committee and extending it to other Committee meetings at a later date.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Democratic Services confirmed that a member of the public had the right not to be recorded.

At the conclusion of the debate, members were content to endorse the recommendations for approval by Full Council.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive agreed to:-

1. adopt the policy on audio/visual recording and photography at Council meetings attached at Appendix 1;
2. the trial audio recording of District Executive meetings;
3. if the trial is successful, then it be extended to all Council meetings where practicable.

**Reason:** To provide a policy to guide the press and public who wish to record any SSDC Council meeting. Also to approve the trial recording of District Executive meetings with a view to extending this to all Council meetings in the future.

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**62. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan (Agenda Item 11)**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Support Services advised that the report was the start of the budget process for the next five years. The Plan contained some assumptions, including no increase in Council Tax or car parking charges. Also, the recommendation to passport a specific figure to support Town and Parish Council precepts was in proportion to the Revenue Support Grant.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) for her explanation at Scrutiny Committee of the reserve for Non-Domestic Rate volatility.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that Town and Parish Clerks would be invited to discuss their precepts for 2015/16 with finance officers

during the following few weeks. There was a possibility that Town Council precepts could be capped in the next financial year.

At the conclusion of the debate, members were content to approve the recommendations of the report.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive agreed to:-

1. Approve the current Medium Term Financial Strategy;
2. Approve that £351,410 in Council Tax Reduction Grant is passported to support Town and Parish Councils' Precepts;
3. Approve that a specific reserve of £500,000 is set up for Non Domestic Rate volatility;
4. Note the current position and timetable for the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**Reason:** To advise members of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the current position on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (Revenue Budgets for 2015/16 to 2019/20).

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### **63. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12)**

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

- Lopen Community Governance review – result of first consultation – Nov 2014
- Scrutiny Report on Broadband - November 2014
- Wyndham Park Community Facilities - moved to December 2014
- Somerset Waste Partnership – Draft Business Plan – Feb 2015

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A with the following amendments;

- Lopen Community Governance review – result of first consultation – November 2014
- Scrutiny Report on Broadband - November 2014
- Wyndham Park Community Facilities - moved to December 2014
- Somerset Waste Partnership – Draft Business Plan – Feb 2015

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

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### **64. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)**

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

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### **65. Exclusion of Press and Public (Agenda Item 14)**

**RESOLVED:** that the following item be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under 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. Investing in Infrastructure - Progressing SSDC projects (Confidential) (Agenda Item 15)**

The Chairman advised that the projects presented had undergone a rigorous scoping and scoring process to ensure they were deliverable in partnership with external agencies.

The Assistant Director (Economy) provided Members with a brief overview of each of the projects presented and following a short debate, Members were content to agree the amended recommendations of the report.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive agreed the amended recommendations of the report.

**Reason:** To agree to progress ten separate projects which have been short-listed for inclusion in the Investing in Infrastructure Programme.

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Chairman

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Date