

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 17 December 2015** in the Council Chamber, SSDC Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(7.30 pm - 9.10 pm)

Present:

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

Clare Aparicio Paul	Henry Hobhouse	David Recardo
Jason Baker	Tim Inglefield	Jo Roundell Greene
Cathy Bakewell	Val Keitch	Dean Ruddle
Marcus Barrett	Andy Kendall	Sylvia Seal
Mike Beech	Mike Lewis	Gina Seaton
Amanda Broom	Tony Lock	Peter Seib
Dave Bulmer	Paul Maxwell	Garry Shortland
John Clark	Graham Middleton	Angie Singleton
Nick Colbert	David Norris	Alan Smith
Adam Dance	Sue Osborne	Rob Stickland
Sarah Dyke-Bracher	Tiffany Osborne	Andrew Turpin
John Field	Stephen Page	Martin Wale
Nigel Gage	Ric Pallister	Nick Weeks
Carol Goodall	Shane Pledger	Colin Winder
Anna Groskop	Crispin Raikes	Derek Yeomans
Peter Gubbins	Wes Read	

Officers:

Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Vega Sturgess	Interim Chief Executive
Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Nigel Marston	Licensing Manager
Kirsty Larkins	Housing and Welfare Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

72. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neil Bloomfield, Gye Dibben, Kaysar Hussein, Jenny Kenton, Sarah Lindsay, Mike Lock, Sam McAllister, Graham Oakes, Sue Steele, Linda Vijeh and William Wallace.

73. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)

The minutes of the Council meetings held on the 13th and 22nd October 2015, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meetings and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 13th and 22nd October 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meetings.

74. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillors Peter Gubbins, Andy Kendall, Tony Lock, David Recardo, Rob Stickland and Alan Smith declared a personal interest in Agenda item 9: Delegated Licensing Arrangements with Yeovil and Wincanton Town Councils, as members of Yeovil Town Council.

75. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

Mr Bud Budzynski wished all Councillors a Happy Christmas.

76. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Tony Capozzoli, Vice-Chairman of Council, thanked the Councillors and officers who had attended the Council Christmas dinner the previous week. He also thanked all officers of the Council for their work throughout the year and wished them all a Happy Christmas.

77. Chairman's Engagements (Agenda Item 6)

The list of Chairman's Engagements was noted.

78. Adoption of the SSDC Statement of Community Involvement (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning (Place Making) advised that the Statement of Community Involvement had been subject to extensive public consultation and had been presented at a Portfolio Briefing as well as the Scrutiny and District Executive Committees.

In response to questions from Members, the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning (Place Making) and the Leader of Council advised that:

- Although no change to the Council's approach to consulting the public on planning applications was proposed, the Portfolio Holder said she was happy to discuss this further with the Member outside the meeting.
- SSDC would fund the cost of any referendum required as part of a Neighbourhood Plan.
- Although not specifically mentioned in the document, SSDC would also consult Internal Drainage Board's directly where it was felt necessary
- The mapping of Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDs) was a vital piece of work and they were the responsibility of Somerset County Council as the lead flood authority.

At the conclusion of the debate, the majority of Members were content to confirm the adoption of the South Somerset District Council Statement of Community Involvement.

RESOLVED: That Council:

1. adopted the South Somerset District Council Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix A).
2. agreed to delegate responsibility to the Assistant Director for Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning (Place Making) to make any final minor text amendments to enable the adopted South Somerset District Council Statement of Community Involvement to be published.

Reason: To formally adopt the South Somerset District Council Statement of Community Involvement which sets out how and when the public, businesses, and other organisations will be consulted on the preparation of statutory planning documents, such as the Local Plan.

(Voting: 47 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions)

79. Adoption of the Statement of Principles (Gambling) 2016 - 2019 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Licensing introduced the report and invited questions from Members.

There were no questions and the recommendations were proposed and seconded and unanimously agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: That Council:

1. agreed the body to fulfil the Responsible Authority role to advise the Licensing Authority on Protecting Children from Harm is changed to Somerset Local Safeguarding Children Board;
2. agreed the revised draft Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 and the suggested amendments;
3. authorised the Licensing Manager to publish the amended Statement of Principles and any notices required in accordance with the provision of the Gambling Act 2005;
4. delegated the power to make any minor amendments to the Statement of Principles to the Licensing Manager in consultation with the Assistant Director – Environment.

Reason: The Gambling Act 2005 - (the Act) places a duty on the Licensing Authority to produce a Statement of Principles. Licensing Authorities are required to review the policy document every three years and to consult on this document.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

80. Delegated Licensing Arrangements with Yeovil and Wincanton Town Councils (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Licensing introduced the report and advised that the proposal had been subject to a Scrutiny Task and Finish review as well as presented to District Executive.

There were no questions and the recommendations were proposed and seconded and confirmed by the majority of Members present.

RESOLVED: That Council agreed to give 6 months' notice to both Yeovil and Wincanton Town Councils, in accordance with the Delegation Agreement, to terminate all delegated Licensing function. Upon the expiry of the 6 month period, the relevant Licensing functions will be carried out by the Licensing Team of SSDC.

Reason: To confirm the findings of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group established to investigate various aspects of South Somerset District Council's Licensing Service.

(Voting: 47 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention)

81. Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2015/16 - Mid year review (Agenda Item 10)

The Chairman of the Audit Committee introduced the report and invited the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) to clarify the increase in balances on page 156 of the Agenda.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) advised that balances had increased by £2.7m as New Homes Bonus money had been put aside and there had been a slight increase in capital receipts. In response to questions from Members she confirmed that some residents and businesses paid their Council Tax and Business Rates early and the figure in the report relating to the Hinton St George loan should be £190,000 not £1.9m.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were pleased to unanimously confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That Council:

1. approved the attached Treasury Management Policy (Appendix A)
2. approved the revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2015/16 (Appendix B).

Reason: To approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement, mid-year Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2015/16.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

82. Adoption of a Revised Private Sector Housing Strategy (Agenda Item 11)

The Leader of Council, as Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Policy introduced the report to Members. He advised that whilst there was some excellent private rented sector housing, there was also some which were substandard and which often linked to poor health issues for tenants. He said the need for private sector housing would increase and so the strategy document was important to help to maintain housing standards.

In response to questions from Members, the Portfolio Holder confirmed:-

- He would clarify the number of long term empty properties which it was not practical to bring back into use.
- Page 9 of the Policy document – the final bullet point relating to homelessness across Somerset would be separated to two bullet points for clarification.
- Persimmon Homes were already experiencing a skills shortage in the building trade and he had referred them to Yeovil College for assistance.
- The Landlords Forum meetings were well attended, however, he would be happy to discuss including more private sector landlords at the borders of the district.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members unanimously confirmed the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2015-19 as a future strategy of the Council.

RESOLVED: That the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2015-19 at Appendix 1 concerning private sector housing matters be adopted as a future strategy of the Council.

Reason: The Private Sector Housing Strategy sets out the council's future direction to meet its statutory responsibilities to deal with empty properties, disrepair, homelessness, overcrowding and other related housing matters.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

83. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 12)

The Leader of Council introduced the item and advised that the new SSDC Council Plan would be delayed until March 2016 when the journey of exploration with Sedgemoor DC would be resolved. He also mentioned the impact which New Homes Bonus would have on the authority.

There were no questions and the report of Executive Decisions was noted.

84. Audit Committee (Agenda Item 13)

Councillor Derek Yeomans, Chairman of the Audit Committee, introduced the report and advised that the target for the Council's Council Tax collection rate had been increased by 1% as 4 additional staff were now engaged on this within the Revenues section.

There were no questions and the report of the Audit Committee was noted.

85. Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 14)

Councillor Dave Bulmer, Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report and thanked the officers and Members who had participated in the Scrutiny Task and Finish reviews during the year.

The report of the Scrutiny Committee was noted.

86. Motions (Agenda Item 15)

The following Motion was submitted by Councillor Nick Colbert:-

Local Homes for Local People

Proposal - That Council agreed to adopt as soon as practically possible a system of scoring that reflects locality, family, school and work commitments to enhance the quality of life of South Somerset residents by keeping their family and friends network together, reducing the burden on social services and reducing carbon emissions by removing the need for unnecessary travel to and from visiting family, friends and work. If this cannot be achieved through the Somerset Homefinder system then South Somerset should adopt its own system for the benefit of our residents or adopt the “doughnut” system of allocation via s106 agreements as used in Barton St David or a proportion, say 50% of affordable housing in market towns should be held aside for local families using the doughnut principle.

Councillor Nick Colbert advised that his motion was a moral point which had occurred on four occasions within his Ward. He mentioned the stress which it caused to families and the burden it placed upon Social Services. Although plenty of affordable homes had been built in Wincanton, fewer than 10% had been made available to local families. He asked that the current policy be reassessed and adapted to make recognition of local connections to keep families together and he said he would welcome an all-party committee to push the proposal forward.

Councillor Sylvia Seal introduced Kirsty Larkins, Housing and Welfare Manager, who had been invited to explain the effect of the proposed Motion on the current Homefinder policy.

The Housing and Welfare Manager outlined the current Homefinder Policy and the banding system of priority for housing and the allocations which had occurred within Wincanton. She said that all the partners in the Homefinder Somerset scheme would have to agree to the change in policy, or otherwise, SSDC would need a separate policy and then housing applicants would need to register with each of the 2 schemes. This could also lead to nomination issues with the Councils registered housing providers. She noted that there could be some improvement in the marketing of vacant properties to local residents.

During discussion varying views were expressed. Some Members felt that the Motion should be supported and the policy should be amended to allow families to remain locally for support by extended family members, whilst other Members cautioned the unintended consequences of agreeing to the Motion as it was proposed. Several

Members suggested that the Homefinder Policy be reviewed by a Scrutiny Task and Finish group as they had assisted in formulating the original policy and this could be more acceptable to the other Somerset Council partners in the Homefinder scheme.

At the conclusion of the debate, Councillor Colbert said the current scheme was not working for local people and the necessary negotiations should be made with Homefinder Somerset. He asked that his Motion be proposed as it was.

The Motion was then put to the vote and was declared lost by 21 votes in favour, 26 against and 2 abstentions.

RESOLVED: That Council did not support the Motion to adopt as soon as practically possible a system of scoring for housing allocation that reflects locality, family, school and work commitments.

Reason: The Motion was not supported as the majority of Councillors were concerned at the consequences of agreeing to it and had proposed that the situation be resolved through a Scrutiny Task and Finish review of the Homefinder Policy.

(Voting: 21 in favour of the original Motion, 26 against, 2 abstentions)

87. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 16)

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

88. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 17)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Full Council would take place on **Thursday 21st January 2016** in the Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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Chairman

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Date