

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 25 February 2016** in the Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT.

(7.30 pm - 9.05 pm)

Present:

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

Clare Aparicio Paul	Henry Hobhouse	Crispin Raikes
Jason Baker	Kaysar Hussain	Wes Read
Cathy Bakewell	Val Keitch	David Recardo
Marcus Barrett	Andy Kendall	Jo Roundell Greene
Mike Beech	Jenny Kenton	Dean Ruddle
Neil Bloomfield	Mike Lewis	Sylvia Seal
Amanda Broom	Sarah Lindsay	Gina Seaton
Dave Bulmer	Mike Lock (to 8.15pm)	Peter Seib
John Clark	Tony Lock	Angie Singleton
Nick Colbert	Sam McAllister	Alan Smith
Adam Dance	Graham Middleton	Sue Steele
Gye Dibben	David Norris	Rob Stickland
Sarah Dyke-Bracher	Graham Oakes	Andrew Turpin
John Field	Sue Osborne	Linda Vijeh
Nigel Gage	Tiffany Osborne	William Wallace
Carol Goodall	Stephen Page	Nick Weeks
Anna Groskop	Ric Pallister	Colin Winder
Peter Gubbins (to 8.15pm)	Shane Pledger	Derek Yeomans

Officers

Rina Singh	Interim Chief Executive
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Allison Griffin	Corporate Director, Sedgemoor DC
Alison Turner	Group Manager, Finance, Sedgemoor DC
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

103. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Inglefield, Paul Maxwell, Garry Shortland and Martin Wale.

104. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 21st January 2016, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21st January 2016 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

105. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Anna Groskop declared a personal interest in all the agenda items as a member of Somerset County Council.

106. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

Mr J Lewes, a volunteer at the Home Energy Centres in Ilminster and Chard, noted that information on the SSDC website indicated that the Council would be improving 300 homes in South Somerset with energy efficiency measures and he asked if this included homes in the private sector or would it be a smaller number?

Councillor Henry Hobhouse responded that SSDC worked with the Home Energy Team at the Centre of Sustainable Energy (CSE) in Bristol to provide advice and grants to householders to improve the energy efficiency of their homes in Somerset. He said that he would clarify the figure of 300 homes assisted as listed on the SSDC website.

Mr B Budzynski spoke regarding the current roadworks at the hospital roundabout in Yeovil. He noted that it had taken 35 minutes to travel a normal 5 minute journey that day due to the traffic queues and he asked if anything could be done to speed up the completion of the works by evening and weekend working?

Councillor Ric Pallister said he had met with the Highway Portfolio Holder at Somerset County Council before the works had begun and they were aware of the situation, however, he acknowledged that the traffic queues may be worse than they anticipated. He said that he would speak to the Highway Portfolio Holder regarding this and asked his fellow Councillors who were also members of the County Council to bring this matter to their attention.

107. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that the meeting would be audio recorded by Radio Ninesprings and would be available to listen to on their website at the conclusion of the meeting.

The Chairman also welcomed Councillor Mike Lewis as the new Leader of the Conservative Group.

108. Heart of the South West Formal Devolution Bid (Agenda Item 6)

The Leader of Council introduced the report and drew Members attention to the Devolution workshop held earlier that week which had explained the background and process and the difficulties of obtaining all partners agreement at each stage of the devolution process. He noted that not all Members may be in favour of an elected Mayor for the area but that would be a future decision. He confirmed that the report and

recommendations did not commit the council to any more than remaining in the discussions with the partner organisations and Government ministers.

In response to a question, the Leader of Council confirmed that at the beginning of the process, the Government had stated that the devolved powers and budgets would be made on existing LEP boundaries, however, more recently they had stated that they would consider bids made on economic or travel to work geographical areas. The partners had looked at extending the boundary to include Bath & North East Somerset (BANES) Council and it was possible that local MP's could favour a bid with Bristol as the process moved forward.

Both the Leader of the Conservative Group and the spokesperson for the Independent Members confirmed their support for SSDC to continue to be a part of the Heart of the South West Devolution bid and at the conclusion of the debate, the majority of Members were content to agree the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- i. noted the final prospectus set out in Appendix A and the work done to date on the Heart of the South West (HotSW) proposals.
- ii. agreed to be part of the devolution bid.
- iii. approved the submission of the final draft Heart of the South West Devolution Prospectus (Appendix A) to Government, subject to any minor changes made to the final draft prior to submission which are agreed by the Strategic Director in consultation with the Leader of Council.
- iv. authorised the Leader of Council to negotiate/participate on behalf of the Council but with a requirement to bring back to Council members regular reports on progress. This would be on the clear understanding that any final decision on whether or not to join any Combined Authority would be a matter for Full Council to determine should this eventually be proposed.

Reason: To note the prospectus for the HotSW proposals and to agree to be part of the devolution bid.

(Voting: 55 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention)

109. Revenue Budget 2016/17 - Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that the Government's Revenue Support Grant had drastically reduced and was set to be removed completely by 2020. The overall budget had reduced by 28% in real time cash savings compared to the 2008/09 budget, and he drew Members attention to the proposed 1.95% increase in Council Tax and the 1.25% for the Somerset Rivers Authority. He also noted the adverse effects posed by successful Business Rate appeals for which the Council had an NNDR volatility reserve.

In response to questions, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) and Leader of Council advised that:

- the proposed one-off spending of £269,000 in the Housing budget would be used to resolve issues relating to the P4A project as Somerset County Council reduced its funding.
- The allocation of funding for Home Farm, Somerton was for the future purchase and disposal of the property.
- The Somerset Rivers Authority was a partnership and SSSC would try to negotiate for additional drainage works to areas upstream of the Inland Drainage Boards and Environment Agency areas, particularly areas of the Yeo, Cam, Isle and Brue rivers.

It was also noted that a report was due to be presented to the Executive on the use of an automatic number plate recognition system in SSSC owned car parks to control enforcement. At the conclusion of the debate, the majority of Members were content to confirm the proposed Revenue Budget for 2016/17, the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme as presented.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- a. approved the overall Revenue Budget for 2016/17 of £17,291,300 and the Revenue Account Summary as shown at Appendix A and note future year projections outlined in paragraph 43;
- b. approved the detailed budgets for the District Executive and four Area Committees as shown at Appendix B;
- c. approved the increase of 1.95% (£2.88 per annum) in the Council Tax for 2016/17 for South Somerset District Council, which will result in a Band D charge of £150.63;
- d. approved a further increase of 1.25% (£1.85 per annum) to cover the precept for the Somerset Rivers Authority, producing an overall increase of 3.2% (£4.73 per annum) in the Council Tax for 2016/17 for South Somerset District Council, which will result in an overall Band D charge of £152.48;
- e. approved the additional expenditure for budget pressure bids as shown in Appendix C;
- f. approved the savings proposals in Appendix D in conjunction with the Equalities Impact Schedule at Appendix F;
- g. approved the once-off items of expenditure as shown in Appendix E;
- h. noted the current position and future estimation of reserves and balances as shown in paragraphs 68-71;
- i. approved the revised Capital Programme as shown in Appendix H;
- j. approved of the new schemes to be included in the Capital

Programme as shown in Appendix I;

- k. noted the scoring of new capital schemes outlined in Appendix K;
- l. noted the proposed funding of the Capital Programme as shown in paragraph 82;
- m. noted the detailed Capital Investment appraisal forms for new schemes, as shown at Appendix J;
- n. approved the setting aside of £2.5 million from capital reserves for transformation costs to be delegated to District Executive
- o. approved in principle the use of new capital receipts to fund revenue costs pending a detailed report to District Executive.

Reason:

To approve the proposed 2016/17 Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan (Revenue Budgets for 2016/17 to 2020/21) and the Capital Programme.

(Voting: 48 in favour, 0 against, 8 abstentions)

110. Council Tax Setting 2016/17 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services proposed the recommendations and they were seconded by Councillor Henry Hobhouse.

There was no debate and Members unanimously confirmed the Council Tax setting for 2016/17.

RESOLVED: That Full Council approved:

- a. the formal council tax resolutions referred to in paragraphs 4 to 13
- b. the individual tax setting as follows:
 - (i) that the **Somerset County Council; Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset (PCC for Avon and Somerset); and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority** has stated the amounts shown in paragraphs 7 to 10 respectively of this report in precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended), for each of the categories of dwelling;
 - (ii) that the **total amount** of council tax for each band of property in the South Somerset area for 2016/17 be as given in the table below:

A -	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
829.09	994.90	1,160.74	1,326.54	1,492.36	1,823.98	2,155.64	2,487.26	2,984.72

NB – The above figures exclude all town/parish precepts and assume that the figures provided by Somerset County Council & Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue are approved at their full Council meetings on 17 February & 19 February 2016 respectively. If any changes are required they will be reported to the meeting. PCC for Avon and Somerset approved their figures on 8 February 2016.

(iii) that, having calculated the totals of each precepting authority's amounts (including town and parish precepts), the Council (in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Act 1992) (as amended) hereby sets the amounts shown at TOTAL in the table shown at Appendix A as the council taxes for the financial year 2016/17 for each category of dwelling.

c. the total Band D Council Tax will be as follows:

	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	Increase %
South Somerset District Council	147.75	152.48	3.20
Somerset County Council	1,027.30	1,060.84	3.26
Somerset County Council (Adult Social Care)	0.00	20.80	
PCC for Avon and Somerset	174.78	178.26	1.99
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority	78.42	79.98	1.99
	1,428.25	1,492.36	4.49
Town and Parish Council (average)	73.34	77.60	5.81
	1,501.59	1,569.96	4.55

Reason: To approve the final council tax resolutions for 2016/17.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

111. Joint Working Report - South Somerset District Council and Sedgemoor District Council (Agenda Item 9)

The Leader of Council welcomed the Corporate Director and Group Manager, Finance, from Sedgemoor District Council who had attended the Joint Leaders Advisory Group meetings of officers and councillors from both Authorities. He explained the reasons why the recommendation was not to create a joint authority at the current time and the proposal to move forward with the strategic alliance and share knowledge. He thanked the Scrutiny Task and Finish group members who had been very helpful in scrutinising the process.

Councillor Mike Beech, Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, who had attended some of the joint meetings expressed his support to retain the Joint Leaders Advisory Group, which he felt had more work to do.

Councillor Dave Bulmer, spokesperson for the Independent Members, said the Joint Leaders Advisory Group meetings had all been very positive and there was a need to continue them to look in more detail at the proposals agreed so far.

There was no debate and the majority of Members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That Full Council agreed:

1. not to create a Joint Authority at this time.
2. to request that the Working Group investigates a Strategic Alliance between the two authorities and bring forward proposals for the scope of such an alliance to Full Council in May 2016.
3. to retain the Joint Leaders Advisory Group to drive and monitor progress on the creation and implementation of a Strategic Alliance.
4. to review the proposals again against the emerging regional situation in December 2016.
5. that initial priorities for inclusion in any strategic alliance are:
 - A Joint Income Generation Board to generate ideas and seek potential joint initiatives.
 - To continue monitoring of opportunities across the two authorities so that, where possible, vacant posts are filled in either council without the need for external recruitment.
 - A review of potential opportunities for alternative means of service delivery that would be unaffected by the scope of transformation.

Reason: To agree the future working arrangements between South Somerset District Council and Sedgemoor District Council.

(Voting: 51 in favour, 0 against, 3 abstentions)

112. Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2016/17 (Agenda Item 10)

Councillor Derek Yeomans, as Chairman of the Audit Committee, stated that they had scrutinised the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy and he invited any questions upon it.

There was no debate and Members unanimously confirmed the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2016/17.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2016/17 as attached at Appendix 1 to the Agenda report.

Reason: To approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2016/17.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

113. Review of Code of Conduct for Councillors Complaints Process (Agenda Item 11)

The Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) advised the recommendations of the Standards Committee were to introduce more flexibility to the current complaints process to reach local solutions to issues and reinforce the point that SSDC did not have control of the procedures of Town and Parish Councils. Proposals made at the Standards Committee meeting had been incorporated into the final document before Members.

Councillor Mike Lewis said that the Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) in his role as Monitoring Officer, together with the two independent representatives of the Standards Committee, should be supported in their work to provide advice and assist Parish Councils to come to local amicable solutions to issues within their parishes.

The Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) thanked Councillor Lewis for his support and confirmed that he would continue to offer advice to Town and Parish Councils within the district.

There being no other debate, Members confirmed that the revised arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code of Conduct for Councillors be formally adopted by Council.

RESOLVED: That, pursuant to the recommendation from its Standards Committee, the Council agreed to adopt the revised arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct for Councillors complaints to replace those currently in force.

Reason: To adopt the proposed revised complaints guidance/procedure notes for dealing with complaints about district, town and parish councillors within South Somerset.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

114. Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers - Statement for Financial Year 2016 - 2017 (Agenda Item 12)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services stated that all Councils were obliged to publicise their chief officer's salaries and any other benefits received each year as a requirement of the Localism Act 2011. He noted that the statement confirmed that SSDC did not currently employ a Chief Executive Officer.

In response to a question, the Leader of Council confirmed that he would be presenting a report to Council in March on the future role of Chief Executive within the authority.

There was no further debate and Members were pleased to approve the proposed Statutory Pay Policy Statement for the year 2016-17 for publication.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the proposed Statutory Pay Policy Statement for the year 2016-17 for publication.

Reason: To agree the Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers as required under Section 38 (1) of Localism Act 2011. This requires local authorities to prepare, approve and publish an annual statutory pay policy statement by 31st March for each financial year.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

115. Draft Meetings Calendar for 2016/17 (Agenda Item 13)

It was noted that due to the announcement of the EU Referendum date, the following meetings in June would be rescheduled:-

- Licensing Committee moved from 14th to 7th June
- Area North Committee moved from 22nd to 29th June
- Audit Committee moved from 23rd to 30th June

RESOLVED: That Council approved the meetings timetable for 2016/17 (as amended) subject to any further amendments made by the Annual Council meeting in May 2016.

Reason: To agree the SSDC 2016/17 meetings timetable for publication.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

116. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 14)

The report of Executive Decisions was noted.

117. Audit Committee (Agenda Item 15)

Councillor Derek Yeomans, Chairman of the Audit Committee, advised that the Committee had recently received a presentation on the Council's Risk Register and were now fully conversant with it.

The report of the Audit Committee was noted.

118. Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 16)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said that a Task and Finish group had looked at the shared accommodation arrangements within Brympton Way and had made some

proposals relating to relocating the Members Room to the ground floor and noted the difficulties in parking on certain busy days. She thanked both the Scrutiny Managers for their support to the Committee and its Task and Finish group work.

Councillor Henry Hobhouse, as Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change, advised that a small room on the ground floor had been identified as a new Members Room and an arrangement with Wickes DIY store nearby should help with parking in future.

The report of the Scrutiny Committee was noted.

119. Motions (Agenda Item 17)

Motion 1

The following Motion was submitted by Councillor Tony Capozzoli:-

That Council consider the reintroduction of prayers before meetings of Full Council. Members may wish to consider inviting a local faith leader, or, invite a Councillor to lead a short prayer prior to the start of a Council meeting.

Councillor Tony Capozzoli advised that in the past, an SSDC Councillor who had also been a Lay-Preacher, had always said a few words of encouragement prior to Council meetings. He said the words did not have to be of a religious nature but could be a thought for the day.

During discussion, varying views were expressed. Some Members were in favour of introducing prayers whilst other did not feel comfortable with a religious content. The Leader of Council proposed that the Motion be amended to agree to the introduction of words of encouragement (non-religious) before meetings of Full Council. Councillor Capozzoli accepted this amendment and on being put to the vote, the majority of Members were in favour of the introduction of words of encouragement of a non-religious nature, before meetings of Full Council.

RESOLVED: That Council agreed to the introduction of words of encouragement (non-religious) before meetings of Full Council.

(Voting: 22 in favour, 21 against, 11 abstentions)

Motion 2

The following Motion was submitted by Councillor Amanda Broom:-

For SSDC to establish, understand and report to the residents of Chard, the future plan for sporting facilities and sporting development within the town. To set out the strategy of delivering this plan by identifying gap analyses of the current, and future states, including the ownership/accountability of key stakeholders.

Thus being in line, and reflecting the commitments made in the SSDC Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013 - 2018 (Page 19, Paragraph 2).

Councillor Amanda Broom advised that the people of Chard felt there was a lack of support for sport in Chard. She mentioned several hockey, football, rugby, cricket,

tennis, boxing and running clubs who either had to play on pitches outside the town or had outgrown their current facilities and were struggling to find new pitches or had disbanded because of a lack of pitches available.

Councillor Sylvia Seal, as Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, supported the motion and referred to the Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation assessments which were on-going across the district. She offered to meet with Councillor Broom to discuss the dissemination of information to residents within the town and noted that the Community Health and Leisure Team would be happy to assist with any advice on fundraising etc.

The Leader of Council said work had started to secure land for playing pitches for Chard, but, unfortunately, the negotiations had stalled when the landowner passed away. He confirmed that he had two other options for sites which he was progressing.

Councillor Amanda Broom thanked the Portfolio Holder and Leader of Council for their support. She confirmed that she was working towards getting all the clubs together to move forward.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were unanimously in favour of supporting the Motion to establish and report the future plan for sporting facilities and sporting development within Chard.

RESOLVED: That Council agreed to establish, understand and report to the residents of Chard, the future plan for sporting facilities and sporting development within the town. To set out the strategy of delivering this plan by identifying gap analyses of the current, and future states, including the ownership/accountability of key stakeholders.

Thus being in line, and reflecting the commitments made in the SSDC Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013 - 2018 (Page 19, Paragraph 2).

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

120. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 18)

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

121. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 19)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Full Council would take place on **Thursday, 17th March 2016** in the Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 7.30 p.m.

.....
Chairman

.....
Date