

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 22 October 2015** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(7.30 pm - 8.37 pm)

Present:

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

Clare Aparicio Paul	Tim Inglefield	David Recardo
Jason Baker	Val Keitch	Jo Roundell Greene
Cathy Bakewell	Andy Kendall	Dean Ruddle
Marcus Barrett	Mike Lewis	Sylvia Seal
Mike Beech	Sarah Lindsay	Gina Seaton
Neil Bloomfield	Mike Lock	Peter Seib
Dave Bulmer	Tony Lock	Garry Shortland
John Clark	Paul Maxwell	Angie Singleton
Adam Dance	Graham Middleton	Sue Steele
Gye Dibben	Graham Oakes	Rob Stickland
Sarah Dyke-Bracher	Sue Osborne	Linda Vijeh
John Field	Tiffany Osborne	Nick Weeks
Nigel Gage	Ric Pallister	Colin Winder
Peter Gubbins	Shane Pledger	Derek Yeomans
Henry Hobhouse	Crispin Raikes	
Kaysar Hussain	Wes Read	

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)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Paul Wheatley	Principal Spatial Planner
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

60. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Amanda Broom, Nick Colbert, Carol Goodall, Anna Groskop, Jenny Kenton, Sam McAllister, David Norris, Stephen Page, Alan Smith, Andrew Turpin, Martin Wale and William Wallace.

61. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

62. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 3)

Ms Vivien Cornelius complimented the Council on the recording of their Council meeting the previous week and broadcasting it on the community radio station Radio Ninesprings.

Mr Bud Budzynski asked if any thought had been given to the possibility that fixed wing aircraft may not fly onto the Westland airfield in the future and the airfield could be used as a new access road to the Westland Leisure Complex.

Councillor Ric Pallister responded saying there was specific safeguarding criteria for civil, standard and military aircraft at the airfield, but, whilst there was research and test flying of helicopters the whole of the airfield would be required for safety purposes.

Mr David Clements spoke in support of Agenda item 5: Loan to Hinton St George Rural Community Services Ltd. He said that the shop currently had a variable rate mortgage which could become an issue for them in the future which was the reason for the request to the District Council. He confirmed that the loan would be secured against the property which was a higher value than the loan.

63. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 4)

The Chairman asked Members to stand for a moment of reflection for staff member, Janette McDougall, who had died in a car accident the previous week. He said that Janette had worked for SSDC for 10 years and the Council's thoughts were with her family at this time.

The Chairman also advised that at the current time, there was no urgent business to progress in November, so the next Full Council meeting will be Thursday 17th December 2015 at 7.30pm.

64. Loan to Hinton St. George and Locality Rural Community Services Ltd (Agenda Item 5)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that the proposal was for a simple loan secured against the property which was in good order. He said it was a good example of the Council's Enable, Partner Deliver approach to helping local communities and he proposed the recommendation to Council

The proposal was seconded, and there being no debate, it was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That Council approved a loan of £190,000 to Hinton St George and Locality Rural Community Services Ltd (HRCS), to be repaid over 20 years, from the available capital balances and under the terms of SSDC's loans policy (with the exception that the loan is for £190,000 over 20 years).

Reason: To agree a loan to Hinton St George shop and Post Office to replace their current mortgage.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

65. South Somerset District Council - Future Management Options (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Tim Inglefield, as leader of the Conservative Group, introduced the report and advised that the group leaders and Directors had spent some time with Councils which had already joined together and they concluded that there were significant benefits going forward. He noted the simple recommendations to progress to business plans with a decision to join up or go alone scheduled for February 2016.

Councillor Jo Roundell Greene, reminded Council that two Councillor Workshop meetings had been held recently and 1 to 1 information sessions offered. She drew Members attention to the answers to the questions raised at the workshop sessions which were listed in the Agenda report.

The Leader of Council reported that he had attended a District Councils Network meeting the previous week where some discussion had taken place on joint Chief Executive Officers and Council mergers. But he cautioned that the Government's Autumn Statement due on 25th November could be financially bad news for local government.

Councillor Dave Bulmer, spokesperson for the independent Councillors, advised that if Members agreed the recommendations, then the Directors would start to compile the headline business case to work with Sedgemoor DC. He assured Members that they would be kept informed during the process.

During discussion, some Members expressed their concern that the headline business cases could not be completed by February 2016 and questioned whether more time was required. The Leader of Council confirmed that if the business cases were not ready in time, then the date of presentation would be moved. Other comments included:-

- As the Council's budget for the forthcoming year is agreed at the February Council meeting, it would be an advantage to also agree the future management of the Council at that meeting so the budgets tie together.
- The Terms of Reference for the business cases should not all be financially led.
- As well as looking at Councils who have successfully joined together, we should also look at examples where such arrangements have not worked out.
- Are we confident that we have looked at all partnership possibilities?
- There are risks if we keep as a single council but there are risks and opportunities in working in partnership.

It was proposed and seconded that recommendation 2 be amended and the two headline business cases be presented to Council in March 2016, however, on being put to the vote, this proposal was lost (voting: 6 in favour, 39 against, 1 abstention).

The original recommendations were then proposed and seconded and were unanimously agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: That Council agreed to:

1. Note the work carried out by the Working Group and their analysis of the options available to this council and requested that:
 - (a) A headline business case is produced for joint working

with Sedgemoor District Council and

(b) A similar headline business case is produced for remaining as an independent council.

2. Request that the Working Group brings back the two headline business cases ('a' and 'b' above) in February 2016 so that Council can make a decision on which option to pursue.
3. Approved the allocation of up to £10,000 from Unallocated General Fund Balances for external advice and independent review.

Reason: To update councillors on the current work to explore joint working with another council and whether such an arrangement would be beneficial to bring efficiency savings, boost resilience and increase influence in Somerset, in the South West and nationally

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

66. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 7)

The Leader of Council introduced the item and invited questions from Members.

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

67. Audit Committee (Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Derek Yeomans, Chairman of the Audit Committee, advised that he had attended a training event arranged by the South West Audit Partnership the previous day where it had been made clear that local government should expect spending cuts in the Government's Autumn Statement and the importance that all Councillors understand their Council's Statement of Accounts.

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

68. Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 9)

Councillor Sue Steele, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report and invited questions from Members.

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

69. Motions (Agenda Item 10)

Highway planning advice

This motion was withdrawn by Councillor Henry Hobhouse

Heritage Strategy as part of the Local Plan

Proposal - That Council request that the funding and the necessary resources are made available now to bring the Heritage Strategy document forward and issue a draft policy document for consultation by mid- November for return by the 4th January with the final document presented to District Executive on the 4th February 2016.

Councillor Colin Winder advised that the National Planning Policy Framework had been issued in March 2012 and had been effective immediately with a recommendation that a Heritage Strategy should be completed shortly thereafter. He said this was now 3 ½ years ago and no Heritage Strategy was in place which was causing some conflict in the determination of planning applications for a lack of a definitive strategy. He said that he knew a draft strategy had already been drawn up and he asked that it be circulated for consultation and presented to District Executive on the 4th February 2016.

Councillor Angie Singleton responded as Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, saying that she had offered to discuss the position of the Heritage Strategy at the Local Plan Project Board meeting the following Monday, but she did not feel it was a good use of public money to prioritise it over, say, the Flood Risk Strategy at the current time.

During a short discussion, varying views were expressed. The motion was then put to the vote and was declared lost by 21 votes in favour, 26 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: That Council did not support the Motion to bring the Heritage Strategy document forward and issue a draft policy document for consultation by mid- November for return by the 4th January with the final document presented to District Executive on the 4th February 2016.

(Voting: 21 in favour of the Motion, 26 against, 1 abstention)

70. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 11)

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

71. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of Full Council would take place on **Thursday 17th December 2015** in the Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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Chairman

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Date