

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Brympton Way, YEOVIL, Somerset BA20 2HT** on **Thursday 5 January 2017**.

(9.30 am - 12.37 pm)

**Present:**

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Clare Aparicio Paul	Sylvia Seal
Carol Goodall	Peter Seib
Peter Gubbins	Angie Singleton
Jo Roundell Greene	Nick Weeks

**Also Present:**

Mike Beech	Tony Lock
Tim Inglefield	Sue Steele
Val Keitch	Colin Winder
Mike Lewis	Derek Yeomans

**Officers:**

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Ian Clarke	Director (Support Services)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Steve Joel	Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being)
Colin McDonald	Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Ian Potter	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Paul Wheatley	Principal Policy Planner
Jo Manley	Policy Planner
Alasdair Bell	Environmental Health Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

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

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### 104. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016, 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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### 105. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Henry Hobhouse and Rina Singh, Deputy Chief Executive.

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

There were no declarations of interest made.

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

There were no questions from members of the public present.

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

The Chairman paid tribute to the Scrutiny Manager, Principal Spatial Planner and the Equalities Officer who were all due to shortly leave the Council to take up new posts elsewhere. He was joined by the Scrutiny Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition Group and the Deputy Leader in thanking them all for their support, skills and work during their time at SSDC.

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

Members noted the report provided by Councillor David Recardo as the SSDC representative on the Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and requested that in the future, the full minutes of the meetings be published on the website and a one page precis of the meeting as it related to SSDC, be printed in the Agenda papers.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive noted the report.

**Reason:** To note the reports from Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

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**110. Direct Hostel Provision, Move On Accommodation and Support (Agenda Item 7)**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture advised that the report requested funding towards the provision of a direct access hostel and related services for the very vulnerable. She said homelessness had escalated nationally and the service was needed.

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-Being) reminded Members that as a consequence of SCC cuts to the Pathway for Adults (P4A) service they had agreed to support the service for one year in April 2016. The arrangements had been successfully delivered, and, as the Government had deferred their decision on future funding until April 2019, it was proposed to support the service for the next two years.

Mr Nick Watkins from the Pathway for Adults Hub (P4A) said the last year had been very productive. There had been a spike in the number of young homeless people who they had helped with employment and training opportunities and self-esteem workshops. He said the two year funding would provide security of employment for the staff and he invited Members to view the hostel in Newton Road.

Ms Rachel Dyer from Yeovil for Families (Y4F) said they had started providing floating support for individuals at risk of homelessness in June 2016. She said link works met with individuals once a week and they linked with drug and alcohol agencies for support. Volunteer mentors also helped to build self-esteem.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager for attending the Scrutiny Committee and explaining the report to them. She said they had sought assurance that multi-agency solutions to addressing homelessness were being sought where appropriate and that the scheme was effectively measured in terms of outcomes achieved particularly in the longer term.

During discussion the following points were made:

- Need to communicate to the public the service which the hostel provides for homeless people.
- The public could be better directed to donate money to organisations providing support, food and shelter to the homeless rather than giving money to various people begging in the street.
- It was better to give food and drinks to people on the street (who may or may not be actually homeless).
- Local Councils could designate Public Space Protection Orders to control aggressive professional begging.
- Need to do more to raise public awareness that homelessness is increasing.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked the officers from Pathway for Adults and Yeovil for Families for attending to provide information on their service. Members were pleased to confirm the recommendations of the report.

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive:

1. approved funding of £160,000 per annum is added to the Medium Term Financial Plan in 2017/18 for two years as an unavoidable budget pressure to fund Stonham, to provide services to assist single adults who are in need of accommodation, to prevent homelessness;
2. noted that there is a risk of £80,000 per annum associated with the structure of eligible/ineligible costs in relation to Housing Benefit that will be added as a Risk to Balances;
3. approved in principle £35,000 funding in 2017/18 for Yeovil4Family, to provide a floating support service for vulnerable individuals at risk of homelessness to be funded from a carry forward from 2016/17 (which will be subject to District Executive approval in June 2017);
4. noted the outcomes of the funding from SSDC in 2016/17 as well as further outcomes achieved as a result of funding allocated from Somerset Positive Lives partnership.

**Reason:** To confirm funding for 2017/18, towards the cost of provision of the direct access hostel and related services for very vulnerable clients who would otherwise be homeless.

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## 111. Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services thanked the Scrutiny Task and Finish group for their work in reviewing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. He said that because of the public sector equality duty, there was a full Equality Analysis of each proposal. He outlined the four proposed changes, three of which were not supported and he noted that the Hardship Scheme had been kept at £30,000 for the year.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager advised that they had considered whether there was a case for changing the 15% minimum payment, however, other Councils which had increased this had found an increase in arrears. He did not wish to add to the pressure of collection and so it was proposed the 15% minimum payment remained the same.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee confirmed that they supported the recommendations and specifically made reference to supporting the recommendation that the current 15% minimum payment be retained whilst the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit was assessed.

The Scrutiny Manager said that a future concern was that funding would decrease as Universal Credit was introduced.

The Chairman confirmed that the impact of Universal Credit would be significant and he had briefed David Warburton MP so that he could lobby the Government on this issue. At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to propose the recommendations of the report to Council for confirmation.

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive agreed to recommend to Council:

- a. that personal allowances and premiums are uprated in line with those for Housing Benefit;
- b. that non-dependent deductions are uprated in line with the annual percentage increase in Council Tax;
- c. that the non-dependent income bands are increased by the same percentage as those in the Prescribed Requirements relating to pensioners;
- d. that proposal 2 be approved;
- e. that proposals 1, 3 and 4 be rejected;
- f. that the hardship scheme budget be set at £30,000 for the 2017/18 financial year;
- g. to consider the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix 1 in

approving (d);

- h. to consider the public consultation responses in the Equalities Impact Assessment and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group report in approving (d) and (e);
- i. to consider the interaction of Universal Credit and Tax Credits with the CTS scheme in approving (d);
- j. to note the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group attached at Appendix 3;
- k. to note the scheme has been amended to reflect changes to the Prescribed Requirements;
- l. that the 2017/18 Council Tax Support Scheme (circulated under separate cover as Appendix A) is adopted;
- m. to note that the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme has been reflected within the overall Council Tax Base.

**Reason:** To recommend the proposed amendments to the Council Tax Support scheme for the 2017/18 financial year to Full Council for approval.

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## **112. SSDC Council Tax Support Policy 2017/18 - Appendix 1 (Agenda Item 8a)**

This SSDC Council Tax Support Policy 2017/18 was published on the SSDC website and circulated to Councillors by e-mail on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2016.

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## **113. Strategic Commercial Land and Property Project (Agenda Item 9)**

The Chairman introduced the report and said that the Council needed to evaluate its own property register with a commercial aspect. He drew Members attention to the project scope listed at point 13 in the report and noted that recommendation 1 be amended to 'fund up to £102,000 of the project from general fund balances'.

The Chief Executive reminded Members of the current uncertain financial future of Councils and the need to be independent of reliance on Government grants. He said the development of a strategy and the resourcing of the Council's ambitions into the future would provide financial stability. The Council needed to act commercially and take business decisions in a timely manner but also maintain risk and accountability with public money. External advice together with an in-house team could achieve this first stage of producing a Commercial Land and Property Strategy by July 2017.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said that they supported the principles of becoming more commercially minded to support the Council's ambition to generate income streams but noted the importance of accountability and transparency when dealing with public funds.

During discussion, Members were generally supportive of the project and noted that although large, higher earning projects were preferred, lots of smaller projects with a smaller return added up.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to confirm the amended recommendations of the report.

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive:

1. approved the proposed project to develop a Commercial Land and Property Strategy and fund up to £102,000 of the project from general fund balances.
2. noted that a report outlining the way forward and the Strategic Commercial Land and Property Project findings would be reported to District Executive (and later inform the revised Asset Land and Property Management Strategy 2014-2017) in July 2017.

**Reason:** To agree to develop a Commercial Land and Property Strategy for SSDC.

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#### **114. Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance (Agenda Item 10)**

The Chairman expressed his concern that Yarlinton Housing Group may not allow some of their properties to be adapted in the future and also they would no longer undertake minor adaptations at their own expense.

The Environmental Health Manager advised that the main changes to the policy were aimed at accelerating the discharge of patients from hospital. Means testing would cease as it was more expensive to leave a patient in hospital who could potentially be discharged with assistance. Ramps and stair lifts would be loaned and there was a fund of up to £1,000 for smaller items.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee confirmed that they supported the new policy approach and suggested that robust monitoring would be needed to ensure that resources were allocated where they were most needed.

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

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

1. adopt the Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance in Appendix 1 concerning the provision of financial assistance for private sector housing and associated matters, including disabled facilities grants as the future policy of the Council;
2. confirm that the allocation and method of funding for the various elements agreed with the Joint Commissioning Board of the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group outlined in sections 2.1.1

to 2.1.6 is agreed subject to available funding.

**Reason:** To agree to adopt the Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance.

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#### **115. Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme Update 2017/18 (Agenda Item 11)**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the report and advised that although the Local Government finance settlement had been confirmed, the assumption was that the maximum council tax uplift would be made each year. He also referred to the clarification which was being sought on the pension costs, the change in New Homes Bonus, the funding for the Somerset Rivers Authority within council tax and the deferment of the capital bids until the Council Plan had been refreshed.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) advised that the final contract details on the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Scheme could not be agreed with the contractor and so this anticipated income was not included within the budget. Also, due to the changes the Government was proposing to New Homes Bonus, the budget reliance on it would be reduced.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) for providing an informative presentation on budget and finance skills for Scrutiny members

Following a brief discussion, Members were content to confirm the current position of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Capital Programme.

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive:

- a. noted the current position and timetable for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme;
- b. approved in principle the savings and additional income outlined in Appendix A;
- c. approved in principle the additional budget pressures outlined in Appendix B;
- d. noted the impact and position of general fund balances as outlined in paragraphs 29 and 30;
- e. approved the internal borrowing policy document and the setting up of an internal borrowing reserve of £1m as detailed in Appendix C;
- f. noted that all capital bids are being deferred pending an update to the Annual Action Plan within the approved Council Plan;
- g. noted the current status of funding for Disabled Facilities Grants and that a guarantee has been sought from SCC to enable grant applications to continue to be assessed and approved.

**Reason:** To confirm the current position of the Medium Term Financial Plan (Revenue Budgets for 2017/18 to 2021/22) and the Capital Programme.

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**116. South Somerset Economic Development Monitoring Report (December 2016) (Agenda Item 12)**

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning (Place Making) thanked the Spatial Policy Team for their work in compiling the report. She drew Members attention to the next steps listed in the report and said that more integrated workshops were required to include Members in the decision making process.

The Principal Spatial Planner introduced the report and said they had looked at what development had been built out, the amount of land under construction, and, forthcoming development yet to start. He said they had reviewed the 14 main settlements across the district and the overall headlines of information between 2006 and 2016. He drew Members attention to the land and floor space information on page 142 and said that although there was some shift towards service sector working there was still a lot of traditional employment work and aerospace industry work in the district.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee confirmed that they were in favour of the proposed integrated workshops to engage with Members.

In response to questions from Members, the Principal Spatial Planner advised:

- There was a disconnect between land and floor space as businesses preferred to expand on their existing site rather than move elsewhere.
- Delivering new employment premises was difficult as there was no great financial return and 95% of businesses in the SSDC area employed less than 5 people.
- The total number of jobs in South Somerset, as detailed in the table on page 152, showed that the area had recovered from the recession.
- There was a need to forge links with businesses to understand what they wanted as just allocating land for employment would not attract jobs.
- There was a need to link employment with infrastructure connectivity – particularly in Wincanton where an early review of the Local Plan should address this.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Business parks are growing in non-strategic locations
- The mapping of land use to place is very useful although it shows we have not made the best use of Ilminster or the A358.
- SSDC should look positively at land off the A303 and invest in infrastructure to get people to work quickly.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members thanked the Policy Planner for her work in compiling the information and were content to agree the recommendations of the report.

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

- a. note the Economic Development Monitoring Report (Appendix A);  
and



- b. delegate responsibility to the Assistant Director for Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning to make any final minor text amendments which may be necessary to enable the Economic Development Monitoring Report to be published.

**Reason:** To confirm the Employment Economic Development Monitoring Report and inform Members as to the implications for plan-making and decision-taking.

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## 117. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted the following amendments to the Executive Forward Plan:-

- Charging for Mobile Home Sites – moved to May 2017
- Proposed redevelopment of Yeovil Crematorium – moved to March 2017
- SSDC Data Protection Policy – moved to March 2017
- \*New\* Loan to Somerset Waste Partnership for new Waste Vehicles – February 2017
- Final Recommendation of the Community Governance Review of Brympton Parish Council – February 2017
- \*New\* Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers - Statement for Financial Year 2016 – 2017 – February 2017

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

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following amendments;
  - Charging for Mobile Home Sites – moved to May 2017
  - Proposed redevelopment of Yeovil Crematorium – moved to March 2017
  - SSDC Data Protection Policy – moved to March 2017
  - \*New\* Loan to Somerset Waste Partnership for new Waste Vehicles – February 2017
  - Final Recommendation of the Community Governance Review of Brympton Parish Council – February 2017
  - \*New\* Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers - Statement for Financial Year 2016 – 2017 – February 2017
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

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

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## 118. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

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**119. Exclusion of Press and Public (Agenda Item 15)**

**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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**120. Disposal of the former Stables at Churchfield, Wincanton (Confidential) (Agenda Item 16)**

Councillor Nick Weeks proposed that the decision to dispose of the former Stables at Churchfield, Wincanton be deferred for one year.

The Chief Executive confirmed that there would shortly be a review of all SSDC-owned operational property.

Following a brief discussion, Members were content to agree to defer the disposal of the former Stables at Churchfield, Wincanton.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive agreed to defer the decision to dispose of the former stable building, courtyard and garden at Churchfield, Wincanton for up to 12 months.

**Reason:** To allow for a review of all SSDC operational property.

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Chairman

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Date