
South Somerset District Council

Thursday 3rd December 2020

6.30 pm

A virtual meeting using Zoom meeting software

All members of Council are requested to attend this meeting.

Any members of the public wishing to address the virtual meeting at Public Question Time need to email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk by 9.00am on Wednesday 2nd December 2020

The meeting will be viewable online by selecting the meeting at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA

For further information on the items to be discussed, please contact
democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk

This Agenda was issued on Wednesday 25 November 2020.

Alex Parmley, *Chief Executive Officer*

This information is also available on our website
www.southsomerset.gov.uk and via the Mod.Gov app

South Somerset District Council Membership

Chairman: Paul Maxwell
Vice-chairman: Jenny Kenton

Jason Baker	Henry Hobhouse	Wes Read
Robin Bastable	Ben Hodgson	David Recardo
Mike Best	Charlie Hull	Paul Rowsell
Neil Bloomfield	Kaysar Hussain	Dean Ruddell
Dave Bulmer	Val Keitch	Gina Seaton
Hayward Burt	Andy Kendall	Peter Seib
Tony Capozzoli	Tim Kerley	Garry Shortland
Martin Carnell	Mike Lewis	Alan Smith
Malcolm Cavill	Mike Lock	Jeny Snell
John Clark	Pauline Lock	Andy Soughton
Nicola Clark	Tony Lock	Mike Stanton
Louise Clarke	Kevin Messenger	Rob Stickland
Nick Colbert	Graham Oakes	Lucy Trimmell
Adam Dance	Tricia O'Brien	Gerard Tucker
Sarah Dyke	Sue Osborne	Linda Vijeh
Karl Gill	Tiffany Osborne	Martin Wale
David Gubbins	Robin Pailthorpe	William Wallace
Peter Gubbins	Oliver Patrick	Colin Winder
Brian Hamilton	Clare Paul	
Mike Hewitson	Crispin Raikes	

Information for the Public

The meetings of the full Council, comprising all 60 members of South Somerset District Council, are held at least 6 times a year. The full Council approves the Council's budget and the major policies which comprise the Council's policy framework. Other decisions which the full Council has to take include appointing the Leader of the Council, members of the District Executive, other Council Committees and approving the Council's Constitution (which details how the Council works including the scheme allocating decisions and Council functions to committees and officers).

Members of the Public are able to:-

- attend meetings of the Council and its committees such as Area Committees, District Executive, except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Area Committees, District Executive and Council meetings;
- see reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council and Executive;
- find out, from the Executive Forward Plan, what major decisions are to be decided by the District Executive.

Meetings of the Council are scheduled to be held monthly at 7.30 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month (unless advised otherwise). However during the coronavirus pandemic these meetings will be held remotely via Zoom video-conferencing. For more details on the regulations regarding remote/virtual meetings please see the Local Authorities and Police and Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

The agenda, minutes and the timetable for council meetings are published on the Council's website – <http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

Agendas and minutes can also be viewed via the mod.gov app (free) available for iPads and Android devices. Search for 'mod.gov' in the app store for your device and select 'South Somerset' from the list of publishers and then select the committees of interest. A wi-fi signal will be required for a very short time to download an agenda but once downloaded, documents will be viewable offline.

Public participation at meetings (held via Zoom)

Public question time

We recognise that these are challenging times but we still value the public's contribution to our virtual meetings. If you would like to participate and contribute in the meeting, please join on-line through Zoom at: <https://zoom.us/join> You will need an internet connection to do this.

If you would like to view the meeting without participating, please see:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA

The period allowed for participation in Public Question Time shall not exceed 15 minutes except with the consent of the Chairman and members of the Committee. Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.

If you would like to address the meeting at Public Question Time, please email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk by 9.00am on Wednesday 2nd December 2020. When you have registered, an officer will provide the details to join the meeting. The Chairman will invite you to speak at the appropriate time during the virtual meeting.

Virtual meeting etiquette:

- Consider joining the meeting early to ensure your technology is working correctly.
- Please note that we will mute all public attendees to minimise background noise. If you have registered to speak during the virtual meeting, the Chairman will un-mute your microphone at the appropriate time.
- Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.
- When speaking, keep your points clear and concise.
- Please speak clearly – the Councillors are interested in your comments.

South Somerset District Council

Thursday 3 December 2020

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (as amended 26 February 2015), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting.

Members are reminded that they need to declare the fact that they are also a member of a County, Town or Parish Council as a Personal Interest. Where you are also a member of Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council within South Somerset you must declare a prejudicial interest in any business on the agenda where there is a financial benefit or gain or advantage to Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council which would be at the cost or to the financial disadvantage of South Somerset District Council.

3. Public Question Time

4. Chairman's Announcements

Items for Discussion

5. Stronger Somerset Business Case (Pages 5 - 10)

6. Motions

There were no Motions submitted by Members.

7. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Page 11)

8. Date of Next Meeting (Page 12)

Stronger Somerset Final Proposal

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Val Keitch, Leader of the Council
Strategic Director:	Alex Parmley, Chief Executive
Lead Officer:	Jan Gamon, Stronger Somerset Programme
Contact Details:	Jan.Gamon@southsomerset.gov.uk

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Members will be aware that all councils in Somerset have recognised the need to change in the way local government works in the county if services are to be sustainable and the challenges the county and our communities face are to be met. Members will also be aware that the government has signalled that it is intending to see change within Somerset local government and to that end has invited all councils in Somerset to submit proposals for change.
- 1.2 The Leader of Somerset County Council has stated that he wishes to pursue the option of a single Unitary Council for Somerset replacing the five existing councils. The position has now advanced to one where Somerset County Council has approved a Business Case for the creation of a single Unitary Council for Somerset and this has been submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 1.2 Members will also be aware that the District Councils have previously approved and submitted an Outline Business Case for the reform of local government including the creation of two new unitary Councils for Somerset to replace the five councils, as well as significant change focussed on sustainable services, a stronger economy and improved quality of life. The Outline Business Case was submitted to Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State, MHCLG by 9th November.
- 1.3 The District Councils have been invited to submit their final proposal by 9th December. This Report presents the Stronger Somerset proposal for District Executive to consider ahead of it being presented to full Council for consideration.

2. Public Interest

This report outlines the case for change in Somerset; a case for reform and reorganisation to deliver better outcomes for the people, places and businesses in Somerset. This is detailed in the Stronger Somerset proposal at <https://www.strongersomerset.co.uk/case-for-change> and summarised in the Executive Summary. It has been prepared for the purposes of submission to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in December 2020.



3. Recommendations

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement for the Stronger Somerset proposal for the reform of local government including the creation of two unitary Councils within Somerset. and recommend its approval to full Council, at the meeting on 3rd December 2020 for submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Full Council is also asked to:

2. Note that the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the other Somerset District Leaders and Chief Executives, have been given delegated authority by District Executive to make minor amendments to the Proposal as necessary and / or appropriate, ahead of its submission to the Secretary of State.
3. Support the continuing consultation and engagement with key partners, neighbouring authorities, business, staff, unions and local stakeholders, above and beyond any programme of consultation that may be required by the Government in due course.
4. Agree to this Council, with the other Somerset councils, advancing the delivery of aspects of the proposals for reform ahead of the Secretary of State's approval where so doing will support the Stronger Somerset Proposal and lead to early delivery of efficiencies, community outcomes and greater collaboration and integration.
5. Pay due regard to the Equalities Impact Assessment, attached as Appendix B, in considering the proposal for a Stronger Somerset
6. Note that, in the best interests of the communities and residents of South Somerset, the Council will continue to work with colleagues across all tiers of local government and public service in Somerset including ensuring our residents, communities and businesses are supported through the pandemic.

4. The Stronger Somerset Business Case

4.1 Introduction and Background

The debate about the best form of local government in Somerset has been ongoing for a number of years. The district councils' aim has not been to simply cut costs, the intention has been to find a way, through the better use of our resources, to sustain vital services now and for the future whilst also dealing with some of the big challenges Somerset and its communities face. Based on a collective view of the financial challenges that we face, the growing demand pressures for services likely to stem from a growing and aging population, and the opportunities inherent in a relatively low level of collaboration and sharing in the past, the councils concluded that change needs to happen to ensure that we do the best we can for the communities of Somerset and for local government to be financially sustainable.

All five councils in Somerset have concluded that 'no change' is not an option and set about determining what changes were needed and how to bring them about. Together the five councils of Somerset commissioned a joint options study to help inform the path forward. Further work was conducted by an internal consultancy team to help conclude this work before the final report was accepted. Despite the conclusion of this work being that the best route forward was for deeper collaboration between and integration of the five councils in Somerset, Somerset County Council decided to end the collaborative work to develop a Business Case for the creation of a single unitary Council for Somerset. This Business Case was approved by Somerset County Council in July 2020, and was submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The four district councils committed to continue to work together and agreed in February-March 2020 to develop a business case for a collaborative and integrated system of local government in Somerset.

On 9th October 2020, all local authorities were formally invited by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to submit their proposals for 'a single tier of local government' in Somerset. The intention to move to a single tier of local government is clear and change of some form is coming. Whilst the District Councils recognise that change is needed, analysis suggests that a single unitary Council will not deliver the change needed, to ensure better outcomes for residents, tackle the challenges our communities face or ensure the sustainability of services. The One Somerset business case does not include the vision or any proposals for reform that is needed if we are to drive improvements in the economy and quality of life in Somerset and assure our services for the future. As a result, this Council agreed in June 2020 that it did not support the One Somerset business case for a single council for Somerset.

The District Councils have worked together to develop a model for the reform of local government fit for the 21st Century in terms of the way it works and the challenges it needs to meet. This includes the creation of two new unitary Councils in Somerset. The proposals set out a significant change in the way that local government would work, to create a much more modern, efficient and collaborative approach to service provision and driving improvements in Somerset, focussed on the needs of residents, communities and businesses. It proposes a solution which is affordable, achievable and sustainable.

The Stronger Somerset proposal adheres to the HM Treasury Better Business Case criteria and pays due regard to the MHCLG criteria for Local Government Reform. The proposal clearly demonstrates how our proposal:

- Improves outcomes and services
 - Stronger Somerset sets out plans for growing the economy, driving up income levels, tackling climate change and helping our towns and places thrive, whilst also proposing how key services such as Childrens Care and Adults & Health will improve.
- Provides stronger and more accountable leadership
 - Stronger Somerset sets out a plan for two new councils working together on shared issues across Somerset but focussed on the distinctive needs



South Somerset District Council

of the West and East of the County, close to, accountable to and strongly integrated with their local communities.

- Delivers value for money and efficiency
 - Stronger Somerset sets out robust plans for ensuring better value for money and efficiency with substantial short-term and long-term financial benefits that can be invested in communities and protecting & improving services.
- Is sustainable in the immediate and long-term
 - Stronger Somerset sets out a sustainable path for service delivery including getting a hold of demand in key services by investing in prevention and early intervention that both lowers cost in the long-term and delivers better outcomes for service users.
- Recovers the costs of change and delivers cost savings
 - Stronger Somerset sets out how the cost of change will be paid back in less than three years and how tens of millions of pounds more financial benefit will be generated above that of a single unitary council.
- Has broad stakeholder support
 - Stronger Somerset sets out how communities and key stakeholders have been engaged in the design of the proposals and consulted on their preferences for the future. The results show a clear preference for an East/West two unitary solution when considered against a singular, county-wide option.
 - An opinion poll was undertaken to gauge public support for the Stronger Somerset proposal. Respondents were asked to indicate their preference towards: No Change (23%), Closer Collaboration (27%), Stronger Somerset (29%) and One Somerset (just 15%). Those that answered 'No Change' were asked to indicate their preference between the Stronger Somerset proposal and One Somerset. 58% preferred the Stronger Somerset proposal and only 20% One Somerset.

4.2 Next Steps

The draft proposal has been developed by the Somerset District Councils and is at <https://www.strongersomerset.co.uk/case-for-change> as Appendix A to this report. Subject to the approval of this council, the proposal for a "Stronger Somerset" will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government by 9th December. The proposal is being considered by all four District Councils on 3rd December.

5. Recommendations

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement for the Stronger Somerset proposal for the reform of local government including the creation of two unitary Councils within Somerset. and recommend its approval to full Council, at the meeting on 3rd December 2020 for submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Full Council is also asked to:



South Somerset District Council

2. Note that the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the other Somerset District Leaders and Chief Executives, have been given delegated authority by District Executive to make minor amendments to the Proposal as necessary and / or appropriate, ahead of its submission to the Secretary of State.
3. Support the continuing consultation and engagement with key partners, neighbouring authorities, business, staff, unions and local stakeholders, above and beyond any programme of consultation that may be required by the Government in due course.
4. Agree to this Council, with the other Somerset councils, advancing the delivery of aspects of the proposals for reform ahead of the Secretary of State's approval where so doing will support the Stronger Somerset Proposal and lead to early delivery of efficiencies, community outcomes and greater collaboration and integration.
5. Pay due regard to the Equalities Impact Assessment, attached as Appendix B, in considering the proposal for a Stronger Somerset
6. Note that, in the best interests of the communities and residents of South Somerset, the Council will continue to work with colleagues across all tiers of local government and public service in Somerset including ensuring our residents, communities and businesses are supported through the pandemic.

6. Financial Implications

The financial implications of this report are identified within the proposal.

7. Legal implications

There will be legal implications for all the District Authorities and the County Council, whatever the Government's final decision is in relation to county of Somerset. The Local Government and Involvement in Health Act 2007, which sets out how a new Authority is created will determine the legal path. This will need to be considered once the Government's decision is known.

8. Council Plan Implications

There is expected to be both direct and indirect impacts on all corporate priorities which, if the Stronger Somerset proposal is successful, are more likely to be met.

9. Climate Change Implications

The climate change implications of this report are identified within the proposal.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications



South Somerset District Council

A full Equalities Impact Assessment is appended to the Stronger Somerset proposal and shows that any likely impacts will be positive. We expect to review once we receive a decision from the Secretary of State.

11. Privacy Impact Assessment

There are no data privacy implications arising from this report.

12. Background Papers

- A. Stronger Somerset final proposal at:
<https://www.strongersomerset.co.uk/case-for-change>
- B. Stronger Somerset Equalities Impact Assessment – also at:
<https://www.strongersomerset.co.uk/case-for-change>



Questions under Procedure Rule 10

The following question has been submitted by Councillor Martin Wale under Procedure Rule 10:

Whilst I'm sure all members were delighted to learn that SSDC now has a six year supply of housing to satisfy the needs of the Local Plan could an explanation be given for the following questions:-

1. When was the new supply of housing found to be at its current level?
2. During the recent Members Planning Workshops, and as late as mid October, members were being informed that the calculation was between 4.2 and 4.5 years of supply. Can the Council explain how the new 6 year became available in less than two months?
3. If the 6 year supply is now correct how many applications have been allowed, mainly on the lack of 5 year housing supply, which could have been refused as not being acceptable under the Current Local Plan.
4. Would the fact that we did not have a 5 year housing supply have weakened our bid for a 'Stronger Somerset'?



Date of Next Meeting

Members are asked to note that the next scheduled meeting of the Full Council will take place on **Thursday, 21st January 2021** as a virtual meeting using Zoom meeting software **commencing at 6.30 p.m.**
