

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 21 January 2021** as a Virtual Meeting using Zoom meeting software.

(6.30 pm - 7.35 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Paul Maxwell (Chairman)
Councillor Jenny Kenton (Vice-Chairman)

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

Officers:

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| Alex Parmley | Chief Executive |
| Netta Meadows | Director (Service Delivery) |
| Clare Pestell | Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation) |
| Martin Woods | Director (Place) |
| Richard Ward | Monitoring Officer |
| Kirsty Larkins | Director (Strategy and Commissioning) |
| Jo Nacey | Section 151 Officer |
| Michelle Mainwaring | Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning) |
| Becky Sanders | Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning) |
| Jo Morris | Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning) |
| Jo Boucher | Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning) |
| Jo Gale | Specialist - Economic Development |
| Helen Morris | Specialist Team Manager |

210. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Martin Carnell, Malcolm Cavill (dispensation granted) Sue Osborne, Robin Pailthorpe, Clare Paul, Garry Shortland, Alan Smith and Colin Winder.

211. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 3rd December 2020, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman.

212. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

213. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public.

214. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman wished all Members, Officers and residents a Happy New Year.

The Chairman thanked the Specialist – Democratic Services who was currently redeployed to project manage a vaccination centre for all her help and support particularly during the pandemic when Council meetings were being held remotely. He also extended his thanks to her colleagues in Democratic Service for all their support.

The Chairman invited the Chief Executive to give an update on the Council's response to the pandemic. The Chief Executive reminded members that the Council had committed to do all that it could to support its communities and businesses through this crisis. He said that staff throughout the authority had consistently risen to this challenge in the phases of the pandemic and had carried out whatever was needed to be done regardless of their normal role and rank in the organisation and in many cases despite their commitments outside of work. The Council had also sought to maintain business as usual as far as possible and apart from the services that have had to close, the Council had largely achieved this and staff had delivered the Council's response to the pandemic on top of continuing to deliver the other services and priorities of the Council. However, the Council was now at a point where it could not continue to maintain business as usual over the next few months and some areas of work may have to stop or be delayed. He advised that supporting the vaccination programme had become a priority for the organisation and at the current time approximately 140 staff were committed to supporting the vaccination programme and the rapid testing site undertaking various roles such as project management, traffic marshalling, meeting and greeting and administration. He referred to the NHS being under extreme pressure and that any help the Council could give was valued and feedback from the NHS locally had been very positive about the support and contribution the Council was making. It was envisaged that the Council's commitment at the current scale would be for up to 2-3 months to enable the vaccine programme to get fully up and running and for other support to be mobilised.

The Chief Executive also reported that the Council was continuing to support businesses and were committed to getting support grants out as soon as possible to support their survival and to help recovery of the South Somerset economy. The Council also continued to carry out a vast amount of work to support the vulnerable with its partners by working to ensure that all those that were homeless in the first pandemic remained housed, working with those facing hardship who need to isolate through isolation payments and increasing support to those many people facing hardship in particular young families and young adults. Work was also being undertaken around test and trace, enforcement and supporting containment of the virus as well as recovery.

In conclusion, the Chief Executive praised staff for their total commitment, flexibility and work in supporting residents, communities and businesses during the pandemic.

The Chairman also paid tribute to SSDC staff for their exceptional hard work, resilience and flexibility.

215. Chairman's Engagements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman noted that there had been no Chairman's engagements due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. He said that he was liaising with other Chairmen from authorities across the South West throughout the pandemic.

216. Presentation on the National Census 2021 (Agenda Item 7)

The Census Engagement Manager for Somerset provided members with an overview of the National Census 2021, which was due to take place on 21 March 2021. She informed members of the following:

- The census was a compulsory survey of the population of England and Wales and took place once a decade.
- The census was an opportunity to gather a detailed snapshot of the population of Somerset and its characteristics.
- The data collected was used to plan investment and service delivery across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- The census would give more information on long term trends as well as reflecting today's society and particularly how households have changed since the last census.
- The role of the Census Engagement Manager was to maximise completion rates by promoting the importance of the census as widely as possible and the need to complete it.
- Special focus would be given to engaging with under-represented and hard to reach groups.
- 2021 was a unique census as it was the first time that it would be run predominately on line but a paper copy would be available for those who require one.
- Households would receive a postcard towards the end of February alerting them that the census was taking place followed by a letter with a unique code to enable them to complete the census online.
- The information collected remained anonymous for 100 years.
- The benefits of an online census included an increased response rate, better quality data and therefore faster outputs.

- The statistical data would be released within a year of the census.
- Local community engagement staff would be on hand throughout the census process with resources, advice and practical support that would enable everyone to join in.

In response to questions from Members, the Census Engagement Manager advised:-

- A census field team was in the process of being recruited in anticipation that it would be possible to call on residents and staff would be trained with regard to social distancing as prescribed under safeguarding regulations. However, the Office for National Statistics were reviewing the current changing situation on a day to day basis.
- Work was being undertaken to actively liaise with officers from local authorities, various organisations and community groups who dealt with specific areas of the population to raise awareness of the census and its importance.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked the Census Engagement Manager for attending and providing an informative presentation and answering Members questions.

NOTED.

217. Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the report and thanked the Scrutiny Committee and in particular members of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and supporting officers for their work on developing the new scheme. The proposed new income/banded scheme would significantly reduce the costs of administration and mitigate the effects of the Universal Credit Scheme and also introduced more support to those households on the lowest of incomes.

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group and the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the officers for all their hard work in supporting the work of the Group.

In response to a question, it was clarified that the costs would be shared between the Council and all the Precepting Authorities.

At the conclusion of the debate a named vote was taken and Members unanimously voted in favour of the recommendation.

RESOLVED: That Council approved the introduction of a new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2021 to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income families which will give stability for applicants and to reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit.

Reason: To consider the implementation of an income banded Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1 April 2021. Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.

(Voting: Unanimous)

218. Monitoring Officer Appointment (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the report. He explained that the current interim agreement in relation to the Monitoring Officer would cease at the end of March 2021. Three candidates were interviewed on the 11 December, which involved a comprehensive interview process and included an interview with the Appointments Committee. A recommendation was made by the Appointments Committee to appoint Jill Byron as the permanent Monitoring Officer for South Somerset District Council.

He moved the recommendations as per the report. Councillor Val Keith then seconded the proposal. There were no further comments and after a named vote, the recommendation was approved with 50 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- a) Noted that the current arrangement with Eastleigh Council will cease at the end of March 2021, and the current Monitoring Officer, Richard Ward, will no longer be acting in this role on behalf of South Somerset District Council.
- b) endorsed the decision of the Appointments Committee to appoint Jill Byron as the new permanent Monitoring Officer from 1 February 2021.

Reason: To consider approval for the appointment of one of the Council's Statutory Roles, the Monitoring Officer.

(Voting: 50 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention)

219. Membership of Committees - Appointment of a new Vice-Chairman of Area West Committee and notification of vacancy on the Audit Committee (Agenda Item 10)

The Leader of the Council explained that Councillor Robin Pailthorpe had confirmed his intention to stand down as Vice Chairman of Area West Committee and as a member of the Audit Committee. She confirmed that Councillor Brian Hamilton would replace Councillor Robin Pailthorpe as Vice Chairman of Area West Committee and Councillor Tim Kerley would be appointed to the Audit Committee for the remainder of the Council year.

RESOLVED: That Council, in accordance with Section 16 (1) Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the duty therein to give effect to the wishes of the political group to which seats on any committee are allocated, confirmed that:-

- a. Councillor Brian Hamilton be appointed as Vice Chairman of Area West Committee to replace Councillor Robin Pailthorpe for the remainder of the Council year.
- b. Councillor Tim Kerley be appointed to the Audit Committee to replace Councillor Robin Pailthorpe for the remainder of the Council year.

Reason: To confirm a new Vice Chairman for the Area West Committee and a new councillor on the Audit Committee.

220. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 11)

The report of Executive Decisions was NOTED.

221. Audit Committee (Agenda Item 12)

The Vice-Chairman of Audit Committee informed Councillors that the Audit Committee had signed off the Statement of Accounts at the last meeting in December 2020 and gave thanks to the finance team on the Chairman's behalf. He advised that the Audit Committee members would be continuing to help shape the internal Audit Plan for 2021 in between meetings. He also referred to the noting of the External Audit Opinion and again thanked the officers for their hard work.

The report of the Audit Committee was NOTED.

222. Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 13)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised members that he and the Vice-Chairmen would be attending Area Committees in the near future to give a short presentation on the role of the Scrutiny Committee.

The report of the Scrutiny Committee was NOTED.

223. Motions (Agenda Item 14)

There were no motions submitted by Members.

224. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 15)

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

225. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 16)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Full Council would be held on **Thursday 25th February 2021** as a virtual meeting using Zoom meeting software **commencing at 6.30pm.**

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Chairman

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Date