

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of an informal meeting of the **District Executive** held as a **Virtual Meeting using Zoom meeting software on Thursday 13 May 2021.**

(9.30 am - 10.30 am)

Present:

Councillor Val Keitch (Chairman)

Jason Baker
Mike Best
John Clark
Adam Dance
Sarah Dyke

Peter Gubbins
Henry Hobhouse
Tony Lock
Peter Seib



Also Present:

Martin Carnell
Brian Hamilton
Andy Kendall
Clare Paul

Mike Stanton
Linda Vijeh
Colin Winder

Officers:

Alex Parmley
Clare Pestell
Jan Gamon
Nicola Hix
Kirsty Larkins
Jill Byron
Karen Watling
Vicki Dawson
James Divall
Stephanie Gold
Brendan Downes
Cath Temple
Angela Cox
Becky Sanders

Chief Executive
Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation)
Director (Place and Recovery)
Director (Strategy and Support Services)
Director (Service Delivery)
Monitoring Officer
Interim Section 151 Officer
Lead Specialist (Environmental Health)
Income Opportunity Development Manager
Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)
Lead Specialist - People, Performance & Change
Specialist (Performance)
Specialist (Democratic Services)
Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

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

1. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

3. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 3)

There were no questions from members of the public.

4. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 4)

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and reminded that that it was a consultative meeting and the decisions would be taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, Portfolio Holder, Ward Member and Committee member, to ensure that the Council could continue to hold on-line meetings. This decision would be reviewed in July 2021 and meetings may then return to the Council Chamber.

The Chairman also advised that she and the Chief Executive had met the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant the previous day. She said the Lord Lieutenant had been very impressed with the work done in South Somerset in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and she was pleased that SSDC staff had been recognised for their work.

5. Approval of Somerset Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy (Agenda Item 5)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment said she was pleased to be recommending the report for adoption by SSDC. All the Somerset Councils had declared a Climate Emergency and were working towards carbon neutrality by 2030. She said the Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure in the county needed to upscale to allow the electrification of transport to meet both climate and air quality goals and the strategy document set out the approach for Somerset authorities to help deliver an EV charging network for Somerset to allow residents and visitors to move to using electric vehicles. SSDC had already installed 3 chargers at strategic locations in Wincanton, Ilchester and Ilminster and the Deletti project would deliver a further 25 in SSDC car parks by the end of the year. An electric car club was also being investigated and the results would be presented to Members shortly. Many of the actions in the strategy were under way and involved all local authorities in Somerset and there were 24 detailed recommendations in the strategy. One of the key recommendations was a submission to OLEV for on-street residential charging points. She concluded that the collaborative approach would ensure the implementation of the recommendations and the strategy would be monitored and reviewed. She proposed the recommendations be confirmed by the Chief Executive on behalf of SSDC and they were seconded by the Chairman.

During discussion, Members expressed their support for the strategy and its commitment to support electric vehicles. Their comments included:

- Pleased to see the provision of EV charging points in supermarket car parks.
- EV charging points on council owned property should be clearly signposted from nearby main roads.
- There were advances in contactless charging where vehicles parked over a charging plate rather than attach a cable to the vehicle.
- A recent radio program had stated that 700 EV charging points needed to be installed each week to meet the 2030 carbon reduction. This equated to two each week in South Somerset.
- Ward members should be consulted on the installation of EV charging points in SSDC car parks within their Ward for suitability.
- Reliance on one source of energy was a concern for a future monopoly on electricity use and cost.
- Rural communities may suffer from a lack of EV charging points.
- EV charging points must be positioned so that local communities can receive an economic benefit from visitors using them.
- Partnerships should be formed with farmers who had 3-phase electricity so they could help their local communities.
- Local generation of electricity was the way forward.
- The strategy mentioned the different EV chargers available and those appropriate for the different needs of rapid and slow charging of EV vehicles.

In response to questions, the Lead Specialist for Environment and the Income and Opportunities Manager advised that

- They were in discussion with energy companies in the move away from gas power to electricity to ensure supply of power.
- Nationally, renewable energy was increasing and they were investigating the use of solar power to supply the EV points.
- There were a number of options for the installation of EV points in rural areas.
- There were planning policies in place for the installation of domestic charging points in new developments.
- Part of the procurement process with Deletti was a longer term partnership to add in links with Town & Parish Councils, community halls and business units in the future.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to recommend the approval of the Somerset Electric Vehicle Strategy by the Chief Executive.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive recommend that the Chief Executive confirm approval of the Somerset Electric Vehicle Strategy and the commitments contained therein.

Reason: To approve the county wide Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy on behalf of SSDC as part of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy.

6. Corporate Performance Report 2020-21: 4th Quarter and End of Year Achievements Report (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman said she was very pleased with the performance report overall and although there were some areas of concern, it was not surprising during the Covid-19 pandemic. She noted the environment projects were all on target and although the length of stay in temporary accommodation was a concern, there had been little control during the past year. Volunteering and the provision of health walks had also been curtailed by the pandemic, as had delivery of affordable housing. She concluded that as the country re-opened in June, she hoped the performance figures would improve in all areas.

The Specialist – Performance advised the Scrutiny Committee had commented on the changing of some targets and the review of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). They had also highlighted the time spent by families in temporary accommodation, for which she had added an explanatory paragraph to her report. The renewal of green waste bin subscriptions had impacted upon call waiting time but this was being addressed. Enforcement issues would be included in the KPI review and the number of affordable homes in new developments were also being reviewed.

The Director for Service Delivery confirmed that a full response would be provided to the Scrutiny Committees comments on call waiting times and green waste renewal. The national planning statistics did not fully reflect the current planning service and they would be reviewed to provide a more accurate situation, including enforcement issues, in the future.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- PCS9 relating to the speed of processing council tax benefit claims was hampered by the time the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) took to turnaround a claim. A new process had been introduced but it was too early for any positive impact to be included in the report.
- SSDC staff had extensively volunteered in the Covid vaccination programme which did not appear in the report.
- The Scrutiny Committee had still not been provided with the equalities impact assessment and risk assessment relating to the proposed poll of residents on the unitary council status.
- The Planning Re-Imagined workshops were being re-convened for June to discuss issues in the service.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the content of the report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the current position of the Council's agreed key performance indicators covering the period from January to March 2021 (Q4) and also the End of Year Achievements report.

Reason: To note the Council's performance indicators from January to March 2021 and the End of Year Achievements report.

7. **SSDC Trading Company: Elleston Services Ltd (Agenda Item 7)**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that the recommendation was to suspend Elleston Services Ltd for two reasons. Partly because staff had been diverted to assist with Covid issues and partly because the business market was in flux so planning the business was difficult at the present time. He noted that the original loan to the company was still within SSDC Treasury and the loan was still required for when the business would be re-started. A new Director would also need to be appointed to the company as the current Director became SSDC Chief Executive, to avoid any conflicts of interest and ensure good governance. It was not yet clear when the company would be relaunched. He proposed that the recommendations be agreed and they were seconded by the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services.

The Director for Commercial Services and Income Generation clarified that Elleston Services Ltd was an arms-length company and ownership would pass to any new unitary authority created in the future. At the current time, the intention was to suspend the business for 12 months, then review the market and create a robust business plan for the future market.

At the conclusion of the debate, a named vote was taken and the recommendations were unanimously agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: That District Executive recommend that the Chief Executive agree to:-

- a. approve the suspension of the SSDC Trading Company; Elleston Services Ltd;
- b. note the repayment of the working capital loan from SSDC of £85,000 from the SSDC Trading Company Elleston Services Ltd to South Somerset District Council;
- c. note the ring-fencing of these funds in principle for the future relaunch of Elleston Services Ltd subject to Elleston Services

Ltd providing a robust Business Plan to the Council supporting the need for further investment into the business.

Reason: To agree to suspend the Council's wholly owned trading company, Elleston Services Ltd, for up to 12 months' subject to a market review.

8. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 8)

The Chairman congratulated Martock and Queen Camel for their successful referendum result the previous week.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive recommend that the Chief Executive approve the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following amendments:

- Planning Reimagined – moved to July 2021
- Update on Future Chard Strategy – moved to Sept 2021
- Briefing on the Secretary of State's decision on the future of Local Government in Somerset – August 2021
- Review and amendment of Council Plan Priority Project 1: Lead the recovery and revitalisation of our economy and communities to be stronger, more resilient and more vibrant than before Covid-19 – July 2021

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

9. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 9)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the informal District Executive would take place on Thursday 3rd June 2021 as a virtual meeting using Zoom meeting software commencing at 9.30 a.m.

.....
Chairman

.....
Date