

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of an informal meeting of the **District Executive** held as a **Virtual Meeting using Zoom meeting software on Thursday 12 May 2022.**

(9.30 - 10.57 am)

Present:

Councillor Val Keitch (Chairman)

Jason Baker
Mike Best
John Clark
Adam Dance

Sarah Dyke
Tony Lock
Peter Seib



Also Present:

Andy Kendall
Sue Osborne
Rob Stickland

Gerard Tucker
Martin Wale

Officers:

Jane Portman
Nicola Hix
Kirsty Larkins
Jill Byron
Karen Watling
Paul Huntington
Lynda Pincombe
Peter Paddon
Joe Walsh
David Crisfield
Sharon Jones
Kate English
Angela Cox
Michelle Mainwaring

Chief Executive
Director (Support Services & Strategy)
Director (Service Delivery)
Monitoring Officer
Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
Specialist (Compliance & Enforcement)
Specialist - Strategic Planning
Acting Director (Place and Recovery)
Specialist (Economic Development)
Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Customer Focussed Team Manager
Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Specialist (Democratic Services)
Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

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

179. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 7th April 2022 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

180. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Gubbins, Henry Hobhouse and Jan Gamon, Director of Place & Recovery.

181. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made by Members on agenda items however, it was noted that following the County Council election, some Members would have to update their Register of Interest declarations.

182. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public.

183. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman noted that the funeral of Cllr Alan Smith (Brympton Ward) had taken place the previous week. She said he had been a great servant to the Council and Yeovil Town Council for many years.

184. Extension to existing Dog Control Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) (Agenda Item 6)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment said she was happy to propose the recommendation be accepted.

The Director for Service Delivery advised the report asked for the time extension of two orders which were already in place at Yeovil Country Park and across the district.

The Specialist for Compliance and Enforcement advised the second extension to the district-wide public space protection order regarding dog fouling would allow authorised officers the power to request that dogs be placed on leads if worrying livestock or causing distress to the public. He said there was a persistently high level of complaints regarding dog fouling across the district and without the public space protection order, officers would not be able to take formal enforcement action.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said that only one comment was raised regarding the safety of Wardens and the report had been endorsed by them.

At the conclusion of the debate, the recommendations were proposed and seconded and unanimously agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: That District Executive recommend that the Chief Executive agrees to the time extension of two existing Public Space Protection Orders; one for dog fouling and dogs on leads across the district and one for dog exclusion at the fenced area at Yeovil Country Park in Yeovil as set out in Annex 1 and Annex 2 of the Agenda report.

Reason: To propose the approval of a time extension to two existing Public Space Protection Orders; one for dog fouling and dogs on leads across the district and one for dog exclusion at the fenced area at Yeovil Country Park.

185. Covid Recovery & Renewal Strategy annual progress report (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman introduced the report and proposed the recommendations.

The Acting Director for Place and Recovery said many officers and teams had helped to provide the detail of the report and Appendix 1. He noted the good progress made in the first year of the strategy and the request to delegate authority to approve spending within the approved recovery budget.

During discussion, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development noted:-

- All the relevant Portfolio Holders would be consulted on the approved spending.
- During the next year it was hoped to progress inward investment to the area and the extension of Broadband to allow parish councils to meet in venues with good Broadband to allow streaming of meetings and remote access by councilors.

In response to questions raised at the Scrutiny Committee the Acting Director for Place and Recovery said that further work was required to progress the Social Mobility Fund and the Yeovil Innovation Centre support and this would be reported in the next progress report. The Social Mobility funding would be spent on a social mobility study of young people to guide where it should be spent. Assistance would be provided to business to help them innovate and prosper through the Yeovil Innovation Centre.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members unanimously confirmed the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive recommends that the Chief Executive:

- a. notes the good progress made within the first year of delivery (Appendix 1).

- b. delegates authority to the Director/Acting Director of Place and Recovery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, to approve spend within the approved recovery budget.

Reason: To note the Year 1 progress report regarding delivery of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy and agree an authorisation process of spend within the approved recovery budget.

186. Leisure Facility Capital and Decarbonisation Programmes - Consideration of additional funding (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment introduced the report to request additional funding to reduce carbon emissions at three leisure facilities across the district in line with the Council's Corporate objectives. She said it had been a complex project to deliver and she thanked the officers involved. She noted the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) provided Government grants to the public sector to enable heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures which would significantly reduce carbon emissions at the venues. There would also be mechanical and electrical improvements installed as well.

Both the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services and Health and Well-Being spoke in support of the project saying that there was an ensuring public need and benefit in completing the works and they would help towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

The Specialist for Procurement said it had been a complex project and in response to questions she and the Assistant Director for Service Delivery advised:-

- The proposed work at the Wincanton Leisure Centre would involve some civil works in order to lay a base for the air-source heat pump and the work would need to be completed by the end of June 2022 when the grant expired. An extension of time had been requested but the works had to be funded from capital rather than relying on the PSDS grant. The heat pumps were to be located outside classrooms which students would be taking exams.
- Officers had written to the Secretary of State to ask for a time extension for the grant in the exceptional circumstances.
- There would be a financial impact to Freedom Leisure in some lost revenue but they would return revenue to SSDC from year 3 of the contract.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that she had sought and obtained the agreement of the other Section 151 Officers of the other Somerset Councils as required by the Finance and Assets Protocol.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said they had studied the report thoroughly and the questions raised at their meeting were answered by officers. He said they felt that SSDC were being generous with Freedom Leisure by paying for the decarbonisation works, and had questioned that the new Leisure Centre in Chard would also require some decarbonisation works in the future.

At the conclusion of the debate, the recommendations were proposed and seconded and unanimously agreed by Members.

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

- a. agree an increase to the capital budget for the two projects of £1,646,468, using its delegated authority under part 3 of the Constitution (section 4.1) – as set out in paragraph 36 of this report. This would bring the combined total for both projects from £6,295,000 to £7,941,468 as shown in Table 2.
- b. agree a virement of £1,015,495 from the approved Corporate Capital Contingency budget (currently standing at £4m) into these two project budgets. District Executive can vire any budget amount over £100k from one individual budget to another as long as there is no overall impact on the total budget agreed by Council (Financial Procedure Rule 2.3 (h)).
- c. note that £630,973 of the increase proposed is eligible to be funded from Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant the Council has already received and has not included in its capital-funding budget.
- d. agree to delay the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) works at Wincanton Sports Centre and accept the consequential funding implications as explained in paragraph 38.
- e. note that the Chief Finance Officer will seek agreement to approve these proposals with the other S151 Officers within the Somerset councils as required under the Finance and Assets Protocol.

Reason: To request an increase in the capital budget in order to complete delivery of two capital projects to ensure the Council's built leisure estate is fit for purpose for the next 14 years. Both projects will significantly reduce carbon emissions at Goldenstones, Wincanton Sports Centre and Westlands Sport and Fitness Centre in line with Corporate Objectives.

187. Achievements of the South Somerset Families Project (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing said the support for struggling families was a priority project of the council and helped to address child poverty and low rates of social mobility. He said that a lot of work and progress had happened in the project and the demand for the service would grow as the cost of living increased. He noted the approval of the revenue funding.

The Director of Service Delivery said the project was need more than ever before as the cost of living rose. The programme had achieved some positive outcomes for families and single people. She apologised for the oversight in omitting the revenue funding from the Council budget in February 2022.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said they had noted the good work carried out within the programme but had questioned the number of agencies involved in the programme and also the omission of the funding from the budget setting in February 2022. They had also sought clarity that the project was district wide – particularly in some rural areas where fuel poverty was an issue. He said that he was pleased that the Director of Service Delivery had attended their meeting and answered their questions.

The Director for Service Delivery confirmed that the Chief Finance Officer had sought and obtained agreement for the funding from the other Section 151 Officers of the other Somerset Councils as required by the Finance and Assets Protocol.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing asked that officers from the project attend the next update to provide a short presentation of their work. At the conclusion of the debate, the recommendations were proposed and seconded and unanimously agreed by Members.

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

- a. note the achievements of the South Somerset Families Project across the district.
- b. increase the revenue budget by £382,000 to fund the South Somerset Families Project for this financial year (2022/23) – using its delegation under section 4 of the Constitution– as set out in paragraph 20 of this report.
- c. use £382,000 of General Fund Reserve to fund this expenditure – using its delegation under section 4 of the Constitution – as set out in paragraphs 20 of this report.
- d. note that, depending on whether the Council’s overall outturn position for 2021/22 is in a surplus position, the funding for this budget increase could be met by carrying forward

unbudgeted/unspent grant income received in 2021/22 and budgeted transfers into reserves. The outturn position for the last financial year is currently being analysed as part of the annual closure process.

- e. note that the Chief Finance Officer will seek urgent approval from the other S151 Officers across the Somerset councils for these proposals as required under the Finance & Assets Protocol. – see paragraphs 23 of this report

Reason: To highlight the achievements of the South Somerset Families' Project, and to request continuation of the grant funding.

188. Equalities Progress Report (Agenda Item 10)

The Chairman said she agreed that the Somerset's Councils Anti-Racism Statement should be proposed to Full Council for adoption.

The Specialist – Communities reported that most of the decision making reports to Members now included an equality impact assessment and the on-line training module in equality and diversity had gained almost 100% completion by staff. Member training take-up of the training module was low. The Armed Forces Bill, which was due to be made law later in the year would require a duty on Councils to have due regard for armed forces and this would apply to the Council's housing function. SCC, MDC and SWaT had all adopted or were about to adopt the Somerset's Councils Anti-Racism Statement.

During discussion, Members were supportive of the proposal to adopt the anti-racism statement. It was also noted that Members should be encouraged to undertake the on-line equality and diversity training course.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said the report was well explained and there had been no questions or other observations from members during their meeting.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the report and agree that the Somerset's Councils Anti-Racism statement be proposed to Full Council for adoption.

RESOLVED: That District Executive:

- a. noted the progress that was being made in respect of the Council meeting its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- b. proposed the adoption of the Somerset's Councils Anti-Racism Statement by Full Council.

Reason: To note the progress of the joint public sector Equality Objectives and South Somerset equality initiatives and to consider the adoption of an anti-racism statement

189. Quarterly Corporate Performance Report (Agenda Item 11)

The Chairman introduced the report and said she had a long discussion with the Specialist for Strategic Planning and was very happy with the report.

The Specialist for Strategic Planning said the majority of performance indicators were on or above target which was a positive indication for the year.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Specialist for Strategic Housing and the Director for Service Delivery advised:-

- officers had been asked for clarification on the claim the SSDC had switched to a 100% renewable energy tariff.
- There had been 17 households in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation in quarter 4 – 14 single people and 3 families.
- SSDC were working in partnership with SCC and the other Somerset Councils and voluntary agencies to provide support for sponsors and refugees from the Ukraine. SSDC were assisting with DBS security checks and the Somerset Independence Partnership were carrying out accommodation checks on behalf of all the District Councils in Somerset.

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

RESOLVED: The District Executive noted and commented on the Corporate Performance Report 2021-22: 4th Quarter report.

Reason: To note the current position of the Council's agreed key performance indicators for the period from January to March 2022 (Q4).

190. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12)

It was noted that the Executive Forward Plan was up to date.

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

1. approve the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A.

2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

191. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 9th June 2022 as a virtual informal meeting using Zoom meeting software commencing at 9.30 a.m.

192. Exclusion of Press and Public (Agenda Item 14)

The Chairman asked Members to agree that the press and public be excluded from the following item and this was agreed without dissent.

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).

193. Briefing on Local Government Reorganisation (Confidential) (Agenda Item 15)

The Chief Executive provided members with a brief verbal update on the progress of Local Government Reorganisation in Somerset and answered their questions on points of clarification.

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Chairman

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Date