

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held in the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil on Thursday 1 December 2022.**

(9.30 am - 11.30 am)

Present:

Councillor Val Keitch (Chairman)

Mike Best
Nicola Clark
Sarah Dyke

Tony Lock
Peter Seib
Jason Baker (on-line) (non-voting)



Also Present:

Ray Buckler
Hayward Burt
Andy Kendall

Gerard Tucker
Martin Wale

Officers:

Jane Portman
Jan Gamon
Kirsty Larkins
Jill Byron
Paul Matravers
Karen Watling
Peter Paddon
Kate Arscott
James Griffin
Martin Hone
Jo Morris
Becky Sanders

Chief Executive
Director (Place, Recovery, Arts & Entertainment)
Director (Service Delivery)
District Solicitor & Monitoring Officer
Lead Specialist (Finance)
Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
Acting Director (Place and Recovery)
Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Regeneration and Capital Accountant
Senior Project Accountant
Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

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

83. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 3rd November 2022 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

84. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Clark, Peter Gubbins and Adam Dance.

It was noted that Councillor Jason Baker had joined the meeting remotely (non-voting).

85. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Peter Seib noted that those County Council members had interests which overlapped with the new Somerset Council. This included Councillors Mike Best, Nicola Clark, Sarah Dyke, Val Keitch Tony Lock and Peter Seib.

At the time the item was discussed, Councillor Sarah Dyke declared a personal interest in Agenda item 7: 22/23 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30th September 2022 and Revised Estimates for 2022/23, as a trustee of the Wincanton Sports Ground which was mentioned in the report.

86. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

The Committee were addressed by a resident of Yeovil who referred to the closure of the Pathways Project on 31 March 2023. He was pleased to note that the Council were exploring options for smaller units to house homeless people and he asked what progress had been made to find alternative premises and what contingencies were in place if sufficient premises were not identified prior to the closure of Pathways?

The Director for Service Delivery advised that one suitable property had been identified of a smaller scale and one to one work with the current residents of Pathways to assist them to move on to longer term accommodation was underway with some success. If suitable accommodation was not found prior to the closure of Pathways then temporary accommodation would be sought to help towards fulfilling the Council's homeless duty. She promised a fuller written response.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised that they had received a presentation from a member of the public during public question time at their meeting earlier that week regarding the Millers Garage car park in Crewkerne. He confirmed that copies of the presentation had been shared with the Leader of Council and the Monitoring Officer.

87. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that there were some changes to meeting dates which had been notified to Members.

88. Corporate Performance Report 2022-23: 2nd Quarter (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman, as Portfolio Holder for Strategy said she was pleased to see that call waiting times to the Council had decreased.

The Specialist for Strategic Planning said the overall report was positive despite significant pressure from the cost of living crisis and the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) work.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Specialist for Strategic Planning advised:-

- Checking the health of trees was a KPI specific to the environment and a new data recording system had been procured to allow the capture of the information digitally.
- PL2 and PL3 – the Council had a 5 year target set by Homes England to provide 177 new homes each year and the majority of the completions were expected in the last quarter of the year.
- PL1 – number of planning permissions granted continued to be affected by the phosphates situation.
- Fly tipping was the only KPI recorded in the report relating to work carried out by the Lufton site but other data was collected on tonnage of waste disposed and site inspections which could be provided.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that all senior staff were involved in the LGR work and it was therefore good to receive a positive report in spite of the increased workload. She thanked staff for their exceptional performance during this period and noted that call waiting times had now reduced even further to 1.5 minutes.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the Corporate Performance Report 2022-23: 2nd Quarter and the improved Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the Corporate Performance Report 2022-23: 2nd Quarter
- b. note the improved Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Reason: To note the current position of the Council's agreed key performance indicators and covers the period from July to September 2022 (Q2).

89. 2022/23 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30th September 2022 and Revised Estimates for 2022/23 (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that the report involved some budget re-profiling and adjustments to the delivery of some capital

projects. It also included some new Section 106 funded projects to be added, some projects which were substantially complete to be removed and some projects were to be cancelled. He noted that to protect finances of the new Somerset Council, some revenue expenditure in the capital programme would be removed. He proposed that the recommendations be agreed for proposal to Full Council

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services, the Chairman and the Director for Service Delivery advised:-

- The five additional projects identified to be funded by Section 106 contributions were listed in table 8 of the report.
- A written answer would be provided on the sites which the Section 106 funding was sourced from.
- Reprofiling involved moving the time at which money was spent. This was due to pressure on staff who were involved in the LGR programme and projects falling behind schedule.
- Section 106 funding was for capital projects only.
- Boden Mill site in Chard - building 11 was within the curtilage of a listed building.
- A final report of the grants received towards decarbonisation of council buildings would be circulated to Members when completed.
- The review of the capital programmes across the County would be reported to the SCC Full Council meeting in January 2023.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman proposed a named vote be taken and it was unanimously agreed to propose the report to Full Council.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the expenditure on the capital programme as at the end of quarter two given in Table One.
- b. note the amount remaining the Corporate Capital Contingency Budget, given in Table Four.
- c. recommend to Full Council the Revised Estimates for the 2022/23 capital budget of £28.801m which incorporates:
 - The slippage in the Capital Programme given in Table Two.
 - The addition of five S106 funded projects totalling £0.095m as set out in paragraphs 48.
 - A decrease to the Disabled Facilities Grants budget of

£0.136m as explained in paragraph 41.

- The proposed pausing and removal of budgets for uncommitted projects listed in Appendix B totalling £1.840m.
- The removal of remaining unspent budget amounts for completed projects totalling £0.050m listed in Appendix B.
- The establishment of an earmarked reserve, of £0.413m, to be funded by usable capital receipts already received to fund the capital required for building a car park at Millers Garage if the approach agreed by District Executive at its meeting in October 2022 does not materialise.
- The inclusion of a new budget programme to be called “Capital works budget for investment property”. This will replace the separate budgets identified in the capital programme for individual commercial properties and does not require any new budget additions - just an amalgamation of current approved budgets into one programme line within slippage being taken into account in the overall reprofiling proposals.
- Approves the splitting out and the renaming of the historic budget for the ‘Westlands building improvements’ budget of £0.552m with £0.452m moving to the ‘Westlands Events Hall Boiler Replacement and Improvements’ and £0.100m moving to the ‘Westlands Sports Hall Roof Repairs’.
- Approves the virement of £0.424m from Decarbonisation of Operational Buildings - Phase 2 to Westlands Events Hall Boiler Replacement and Improvements Budget.
- Approves the refinancing of the 2022/23 revised capital programme as set out in Table Nine.

Reason: To provide District Executive with the current spending against the Council’s approved Capital Budget and the forecast position at year end (“outturn”), to explain estimated variations against budget, and to propose Revised Estimates to Full Council for the remainder of this financial year.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

90. 2022/23 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30 September 2022 and Revised Estimates for 2022/23 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the report and advised it was linked to the previous Capital Budget report which would also be proposed to Council for approval. He noted the significant change in interest rates since the Council had set its budget in February and the budget pressures listed in Table One within the report, followed by the proposed funding measures in Table Two. He commended that only £66,950 was being requested from reserves to address the in year budget pressure and he proposed that the recommendations be agreed and recommended to Full Council.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that the figures were estimated and there could be further movement by year-end. Given the significant change in budgets they required approval by Full Council.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised:-

- The loan was taken out to protect the revenue position of the future Somerset Council rather than use the commercial investments risk reserve. The revenue cost of the loan was less than the benefit of having the revenue tied within a project.
- The underspend on the Recycle More project represented a great financial saving to all partners as well as the environmental benefits.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised that the majority of questions raised at their meeting had been answered by the Portfolio Holder. He said they had noted the significant savings relating to staffing.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment advised that discussions were taking place on extending the recycling to include soft plastics in the future.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman proposed that a named vote be taken and Members unanimously agreed recommendations (a) to (d) and proposed that Full Council agree recommendations (e) and (f) of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the cost pressures being forecast against the approved 2022/23 revenue budget as set out in Table One.
- b. note the measures being proposed by Senior Leadership Team to fund these cost pressures to bring the budget to a balanced position as set out in Table Two.
- c. note the forecast year-end reserves position shown in Appendix A.

- d. the virement of £140k from salaries Commercial Property Staffing Underspend to Commercial Property – Contract Agreed with Somerset County Council in May 2022 for support on managing the facilities management of SSDC occupied buildings.
- e. recommend to Full Council the Revised Estimates for 2022/23 which assume that the funding proposals (as set out in Table Two of this report) and the proposals set out in the Capital Budget Monitoring Report (also on this Executive Committee’s agenda) are approved. The Revised Estimates are given in Table Three and analysed between service areas in Table Four of the agenda report.
- f. recommend to Full Council the use of £66,950 from the Medium-Term Financial Plan Reserve to address in-year budget pressures.

Reason: To provide District Executive with the current forecast of spending and income against the Council’s approved Revenue Budget for the financial year (“outturn”), to explain estimated variations against budget, and to propose Revised Estimates to Full Council for the 2022/23 revenue budget including proposals to balance the budget.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

91. Investment Asset Update Report (Agenda Item 9)

It was noted that the item had been withdrawn from the Agenda and would be re-presented in January 2023.

92. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 10)

The following additions and amendments to the Forward Plan were noted:

- Investment Asset Update Report – January 2023
- Yeovil Refresh Scope Change Request – January 2023
- Rename Octagon Theatre report to Somerset Flagship Cultural Venue
- Update on Section 106 funding – District Executive in January 2023

The Director for Service Delivery confirmed that an annual statement was published on the Council’s website on Community Infrastructure Levy and the link would be shared with Members.

The Portfolio Holder for Protecting Core Services requested that a Section 106 funding report be presented urgently to Members. The Chief Executive assured Members that the report was in draft form and the quality of information available to Members would be significantly improved in the new year.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following amendment;
 - Investment Asset Update Report – January 2023
 - Yeovil Refresh Scope Change Request – January 2023
 - Rename Octagon Theatre report to Somerset Flagship Cultural Venue
 - Update on Section 106 funding – moved from Council to District Executive in January 2023
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

93. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 05 January 2023 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

94. Exclusion of Press and Public (Agenda Item 12)

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).

95. Briefing on Local Government Reorganisation (Confidential) (Agenda Item 13)

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.

The report was NOTED

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Chairman

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Date