

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held in the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil on Thursday 2 March 2023.**

(9.30 am - 10.42 am)

Present:

Councillor Val Keitch (Chairman)

Jason Baker
Mike Best
John Clark
Nicola Clark
Adam Dance

Sarah Dyke (on-line) (non-voting)
Peter Gubbins
Tony Lock
Peter Seib



Also Present:

Sue Osborne

Gina Seaton

Officers:

Jane Portman
Jan Gamon
Nicola Hix
Kirsty Larkins
Jill Byron
Robert Orrett
Kate Arscott
Angela Cox
Becky Sanders

Chief Executive
Director (Place, Recovery, Arts & Entertainment)
Director (Strategy, Support & Environmental Services)
Director (Service Delivery)
District Solicitor & Monitoring Officer
Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager
Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Specialist (Democratic Services)
Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

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

122. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 02 February 2023 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

123. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

There were no apologies for absence. It was noted that Councillor Sarah Dyke joined the meeting remotely on-line (non-voting) from 10.05am.

124. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

125. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public.

126. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman reminded Members of the service of remembrance for the 5 Somerset Councils on Sunday 12 March at 3.00pm at Wells Cathedral which was open to all Members and staff. She also reminded them of the SSDC Celebrates event on Thursday 23 March, from 3.00pm at Westlands, Yeovil.

127. Corporate Performance Report 2022-23: 3rd Quarter (Agenda Item 6)

The Specialist for Strategic Planning said that reflecting the cost of living increase had been their main focus and the Quarter 3 results had been impacted by the Christmas holiday break. 20% of all SSDC staff were involved in Local Government Review work which had also impacted on some work areas. As requested by Members, two new performance indicators: LGR 22 and 23 were now included to record street cleaning inspections and the tonnage of waste collected. Of the measures reported, 27 were ahead of or on target which was very positive.

In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, the Director for Service Delivery advised that the legal documents were close to being completed with Entrade which would enable phosphate credits to be purchased by developers. Depending upon the development location, this would allow the building of between 600 to 1,000 homes. This was the first release of phosphate credits and more were planned.

The Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee noted that other questions raised by them at their meeting had been answered by officers.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- It was unfortunate that the Quarter 4 achievements would be reported after SSDC had ended and its achievements could not be celebrated.
- The council had achieved great success in its investment portfolio which provided a good income stream for which officers were thanked.
- Pleased to see the time taken to process Council Tax support claims had reduced.
- Surprised by the scale of help needed for vulnerable residents with over 20,000 clients having been assisted by SSDC funded organisations including CASS, Spark, South Somerset Families Programme, and 12

Food banks across the district due to the Cost-of-Living Crisis and financial hardship households are experiencing.

- The uptake of Broadband vouchers remained high.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the Corporate Performance Report 2022-23: 3rd Quarter and the improved Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the Corporate Performance Report 2022-23: 3rd Quarter;
- b. note the amended Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Reason: To note the current position of the Council's agreed key performance indicators and covers the period from October to December 2022 (Q3).

128. Sale of commercial development land at Lufton, Yeovil (Lufton 2000 joint venture) (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development advised that Abbey Manor Developments Ltd had made an offer to buy the Council's interest in the Lufton 2000 Joint Venture in March 2022 and due to movements in the property market they had made a new offer which the Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager had advised was still a good offer.

The Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager had advised that commercial development land value was a volatile area and time had passed from the first offer to purchase the land. Increased borrowing rates and a poorer economic outlook had impacted however, he felt the reduced offer price was supportable and was marginally better than what could be achieved on an open market.

In response to questions from Members, the Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager and the Director for Support Services advised:-

- There was no significant difference in the land value and it was a fair price in the current market.
- There were management costs involved in retaining the land and if sold, there would be no further financial exposure to SSDC.
- The income from the sale would be recorded in the Quarter 4 revenue budgets report.

The Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager for attending their meeting and answering their

questions. She said the strength of the Council's investment portfolio was in their officer's sound investment advice.

It was then proposed and seconded that the recommendations be proposed to Full Council for agreement and this was unanimously agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: That District Executive recommend that Full Council agree to:-

- a. note the contents of the report.
- b. approve the proposal to sell the Council's share in the Joint Venture in the asset named Lufton 2000 on the terms outlined in the confidential appendix to this report.
- c. authorise the Chief Financial Officer to seek the approval of the Somerset County Council to the sale under the S24 direction.
- d. if proposal is approved, to delegate the power to the Solicitor and Monitoring Officer approval of detail of the sale.

Reason: To update the recommendation for the sale of the Council's 50% share in the Lufton 2000 Joint Venture (JV) to its joint venture partner Abbey Manor Developments Limited (AMDL).

129. 2022/23 Quarter 3 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 31st December 2022 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that the report detailed the level of spend on capital projects which had significantly reduced due to delays in projects. A number of schemes had been paused and were now budgeted in future years as the number of staff involved in the Local Government Review programme increased. He proposed that the recommendations be agreed.

The Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee confirmed that they were content to note the report and support the recommendations.

There was no debate and Members unanimously confirmed the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the expenditure on the capital programme as at 31st December 2022 as given in table five.
- b. note the amount remaining the Corporate Capital Contingency

Budget, as detailed in table four.

- c. approve the revised estimate for the 2022/23 capital budget of £21.258m as detailed in table one.

Reason: To note the current spend against the Council's approved capital budget and the forecast position at year end ("outturn") together with an explanation of estimated variations against budget.

130. 2022/23 Quarter 3 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 31 December 2022 (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the report and advised that the revenue budget had been re-profiled during the year to protect the budget for the new Unitary Council. He noted that an underspend of £417,00 was predicted, in part due to the half-yearly profit dividend from the battery storage investment. Table 1 in the report estimated the variances of expenditure and income and provided a forecast outturn for 2022/23.

He proposed that the recommendations be agreed

The Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised that most of the budget reprofiling had occurred in previous quarterly monitoring reports and the Committee had been content to note the recommendations of the report.

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

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the variances being forecast against the 2022/23 revenue budget as set out in Table One.
- b. note the forecast year-end reserves position shown in Appendix A.

Reason: To note the current projection of the forecast spending and income ("outturn") against the Council's approved Revenue Budget for the financial year, and to explain projected variations against budget.

131. Urgent Decision of the Chief Executive relating to the provision of Hostel Accommodation (Agenda Item 10)

The Chief Executive advised that the report was for noting only and she had taken an urgent decision to vire £219,829 from the Housing & Homelessness

Reserve to the revenue housing budget to fund a 10-bed space hostel with support for single homeless people and rough sleepers for 2023/24.

In response to questions from Members, the Director for Service Delivery advised that:

- the cost of housing people in B&B accommodation would be less than providing the hostel but the residents would not have 24/7 support to help them re-habilitate and find suitable long-term accommodation.
- the housing team worked with individuals at Pathways Yeovil and 16 clients had been found alternative long-term accommodation.
- further hostel accommodation was being sought.
- the current Pathways Yeovil accommodation was part-funded by housing benefit received by the residents and a 10 bed hostel would receive less housing benefit funding than the 30 bed hostel.
- the Pathways Yeovil site was owned by Bournemouth Churches and they would look to redevelop the site as part of the Yeovil Refresh with hopefully a grant from Homes England.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing thanked the Director and the Housing team for their consciousness in finding the accommodation which could be staffed 24/7 to support the residents.

During discussion, several members voiced their support for the new hostel.

The Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee confirmed they had supported the decision and felt that making the investment now would save money later.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive to protect the interest of the Council.

RESOLVED: That subject to the consent of Somerset County Council under the section 24 Direction issued by the Secretary of State on 10 May 2022, the Chief Executive has agreed to vire £219,829 from the Housing & Homelessness Reserve (X8380) to the revenue housing budget to fund a 10-bed space hostel with support for single homeless people and rough sleepers for 2023/24.

Reason: The provision of hostel accommodation and associated support forms a key part of SSDC's responsibilities in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, supporting vulnerable people in our community and delivering our requirements under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

132. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that Presentation on the Kickstart Scheme would be removed from Forward Plan as the officer was not well.

It was also noted that officers from across the 5 Councils would be providing a joint response to the consultations listed in the report.

The Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee noted that she had the pleasure of Chairing the final Scrutiny Committee meeting and she felt that their scrutiny of the executive reports had been conducted very well.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following amendment;
 - Presentation on the Kickstart Scheme – removed from Forward Plan
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

133. 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).

134. 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