

SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL – EFFICIENCY PLAN

1. This Efficiency Plan sets out SSDC's proposals that are required to be submitted to Central Government to receive the offer of a fixed four-year settlement that includes the current financial year. In effect this would fix the following grants and provide some certainty in funding:-

	Revenue Support Grant (RSG) £'m	Rural Services Delivery Grant £'m
2016/17	1.675	165.3
2017/18	0.803	133.4
2018/19	0.269	102.6
2019/20	-0.330	133.4

2. In addition, tariffs and top-ups in 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 will not be altered for reasons related to the relative needs of local authorities, but in the final year may be subject to the implementation of 100% business rates retention. Any increase in tariff reduces the amount of business rates an authority can retain in a particular year.
3. It has been made clear that all four years must be accepted and that under no circumstances will any authority be better off by not accepting the offer. This is a difficult decision for SSDC Members to make as the offer includes a “negative” RSG in year four.

Savings

4. This Efficiency Plan takes into account the Council Plan, the five-year Medium Term Financial Strategy, and the Asset Management Plan. The current shortfall over the time period of the offer is £2.8 million. This shortfall assumes that the approved Transformation Programme will deliver £2 million savings over the next two years. The key delivery of savings will be made through:-

Transformation Board – members approved a report in March 2016 which outlined £2 million efficiency savings with a reduction of approximately 63 staff around 17% of the current workforce;

Income Generation Board - actively increasing our income, earning income through new sources, and marketing existing services – target set for £800k over 4 years;

Strategic Alliance with Sedgemoor District Council – reviewing ways of joint working and joint initiatives for savings and efficiency – currently there are 9 projects in scope;

Management Board – procurement, assets and other savings.

5. Although the savings target is challenging plans are clearly underway to find the savings required. An advantage of accepting the offer is that at least government grant is fixed to enable SSDC to plan and deliver those savings more effectively over the next three

years. Unexpected reductions usually mean the use of balances and reserves to avoid making snap decisions on cuts to budgets as even provisional announcements are not made until the middle of December. In the past it has not been unusual to have to amend the District Executive report to full Council after Executive members have approved it in February.

Delivery of the Council Plan

6. However, this Efficiency Plan requires an outline of more than savings and how key aspects of the Council Plan will be delivered. The Council Plan contains the following priorities:-

High Quality Effective Services

In order to protect front line services we will:

- Transform customer services through technology.
- Actively manage assets and resources to ensure the best financial or community return.
- Seek business opportunities for the council.
- Work with partners to achieve economies, resilience and influence

Economy

To promote a strong economy with thriving urban and rural businesses we will:

- Work with businesses and use our assets to grow our economy.
- Advise and support initiatives that ensure worker skills meet the employers' needs.
- Lobby for and support infra-structure improvements to enable growth.
- Capitalise on our high quality culture, leisure and tourism opportunities to bring people to South Somerset.

Environment

To keep South Somerset clean, green and attractive we will:

- Increase recycling.
- Maintain Country Parks and open spaces to promote good mental and physical health.
- Keep streets and neighbour-hoods clean and attractive.
- Continue to address the impact of flooding.
- Promote a high quality built environment in line with Local Plan.
- Support communities to develop local, parish and neighbourhood plans.

Homes

To work with partners to enable the provision of housing that meets the future and existing needs of residents and employers we will:

- Minimise homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Work with the private rented sector to improve the standard and availability of rented accommodation.

- Tackle fuel poverty.
- Enable people to live independently for as long as they are able.

Health and Communities

To build healthy, self-reliant, active communities we will:

- Support communities so that they can identify their needs and develop local solutions.
 - Target support to areas of need.
 - Help people to live well by enabling quality cultural, leisure, play, sport & healthy lifestyle facilities & activities.
 - Work with partners to tackle health issues such as diabetes and hypertension.
 - Help keep our communities safe
7. Annual action plans are approved as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan to ensure that delivery of the Council Plan is affordable and achievable. Agreeing to a four year settlement will enable the Council to have some certainty over funding and delivery of the Council Plan. In previous years funding has not been confirmed until mid-February and the Medium Term Financial Plan has required updating between District Executive and Full Council as a result. This has led to uncertainty and does not aid sound decision making. It has also led to a higher use of General Fund Balances at times as a result.
 8. Certainty over funding will also aid the public consultation process and ensure that the Council Plan can be delivered to our community.

Delivery of the Asset Management Plan

9. Annual action plans are approved as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan to ensure that delivery of the Asset Management Plan is affordable and achievable. Agreeing to a four year settlement will enable the Council to have some certainty over funding and delivery of its Asset management Plan.

Devolution

10. SSDC is a partner in the Heart of the South West devolution bid. The bid is expected to be put forward in the autumn of 2016. Work is currently underway on finalising the financial costs and contributions from authorities to fund the bid. Agreeing to a four year settlement will enable the Council to have some certainty over its own funding to be able to commit to the final bid should it wish to.
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