

South Somerset District Council

District Executive Meeting: 4 December 2014

Update on Agenda Item 7

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)

1. The report at Agenda item 7 recommends:
 - i. That progress to date in the development of the Somerset Rivers Authority proposition is endorsed, together with the way forward as set out in the report, and that a further report follows in due course;
 - ii. To endorse the ongoing work by the Leader of the Council and the Flood Action Plan Leaders Implementation Group to progress the creation of the shadow Somerset Rivers Authority, as proposed in this report.
2. Since publication of the Executive agenda, fast moving discussions have been ongoing between the Government (Defra and DCLG), Somerset local authorities and partners about the creation of the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). In particular these discussions have centred on provision of interim funding to enable the new body to operate in 2015/16. These discussions have now reached a stage where an agreement on interim funding and establishment of the SRA is potentially imminent.
3. The attached briefing note explains that the Government (Defra and DCLG) have agreed to provide interim funding of £1.9m towards the £2.7m requested and to conduct a joint review with local partners of the long term funding of the SRA and report back to ministers in July 2015. Conditions placed on local partners are that Somerset County Council and local partners contribute the remaining £800,000 within the £2.7m and that the SRA is established by 31 January 2015.
4. Somerset County Council has pledged £600,000, with the balance of £200,000 being sought from local partners.
5. The longer-term funding arrangements for the proposed SRA remain unresolved and, as detailed in the main report, will be subject to discussion and agreement between Government and all Somerset local authorities and partners. Members should note that within a draft Memorandum of Understanding, it states that there will be an assessment of the options for consideration by Ministers in July 2015.
6. Members will be aware that the Leader of the Council has sought the views of wider members at a Portfolio Holder briefing on 13 October 2014 and the matter was also discussed at a meeting of Scrutiny Committee on 02 December 2014.
7. Taking account of recent fast-moving events, the following recommendations are now proposed, to replace those in the original report:
8. The Executive is **recommended**:

- i. To endorse progress to date in the development of the SRA, and note that a further report will follow in due course;
- ii. To nominate a member of the Executive to sit on the proposed new Somerset Rivers Authority from 31 January 2015
- iii. To note that the Chief Executive and Leader will be requested to make an urgent decision to contribute up to £45,000 (likely to be £43,500) towards the interim funding required by the Somerset Rivers Authority, as identified in paragraph 3. This funding will come from the Flooding Reserve set up by District Executive in February 2014.
- iv. The Executive is asked to note that longer term funding and operation on the Somerset Rivers Authority (beyond any interim funding period) is subject to further development and agreement between local partners and Government, and a further report will follow in due course.

Financial Implications

Of the interim funding shortfall of £800,000 the following contributions are expected to be received:

Somerset County Council	£600,000
South Somerset District Council	£43,750
Sedgemoor District Council	£43,750
Taunton Deane Borough Council	£43,750
Mendip District Council	£43,750
West Somerset Council	£5,000
Internal Drainage Boards	£20,000

Members are being requested to set aside up to £45,000 from the Flooding Reserve of £100,000 set up in February 2014 at District Executive. While it is only expected that £43,500 is required, this will allow a small contingency if required quickly. The final amount will be reported back to District Executive at a future date. This decision will leave £28,640 in the Flooding Reserve for future use.

Vega Sturgess

2 December 2014