

**Meeting of Somerset County Council held in the Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Taunton on Wednesday 16 May 2018 at 10am.**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Question Time**

**Member questions submitted in advance of the meeting:**

**Elected Member Questions**

**1. Shared council services**

From Cllr Simon Coles

1. Please can the Leader of the Council inform the Council of the "cross boundary" work going on between Devon & Somerset? and whether BANES, North Somerset or Bristol City Council are being included in any discussions?
2. Could he please explain how much work he has done on the integration of Local Council services across the southwest peninsular?

*Response from Cllr David Fothergill, Leader of the Council*

Thank you Simon for the question. There has been a significant amount of work with our partners in Devon – not least our shared Trading Standards teams and Torbay Unitary the latest to join the operation, our signing up to a South West Regional Adoption Agency, our devolution work with 19 partners our work with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, Libraries West, and many other “cross-boundary” initiatives. I am more than happy to meet with you to run through other work you might be interested in exploring. You also ask about partnerships with other neighbours, again, yes we have significant work on-going. For instance in North Somerset with our Registration Services, our work with the Peninsula Authorities as part of the rail task force and early discussions about a Peninsula sub-national Transport Board...and there is more. Again, perhaps a meeting might be helpful.

I hope all this leads to an answer to your final point. With the amount of multi-partnering I have described, you can see we are integrating wherever we can, not just with local authorities, but also with our health partners.

**2. Unitary proposal**

From Cllr Liz Leyshon

Can Council be assured that all conversations on any possible Unitary solution to the local governance of Somerset be cross party as well as cross authority? Does the Council have any indication on whether there are Government funds to assist the process of reorganisation should the conversations within authorities and with the residents of Somerset be of a positive nature?

*Response from Cllr David Fothergill, Leader of the Council*

My thanks to Liz for this question. It is very early days, so at the moment the answer to the second part of your question is we must wait and see what the options are at the end of

the process – or even if any options come forward. This is after all the beginning of a conversation about what might be possible. The first part of your question is fair and I am very keen that as many diverse voices as possible should be heard. In my decision paper, published last week, it included a list of council members who would be invited to join a working group. This list included Opposition and Scrutiny leads and I hope that will be welcomed by all parties.

### **3. Council finances**

From Cllr Liz Leyshon

This Authority has been fortunate to have benefited for 31 years from Kevin Nacey's advice and knowledge, he has done his utmost to achieve the best for our communities. Somerset has been privileged to have such a nationally recognised senior officer leading the way, Liberal Democrats past and present would like to thank him and wish him well for the future.

With the significance of the Section 151 Officer leaving how will this Council reassure residents of its financial stability now and in the future?

*Response from Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources*

Thank you Liz for your kind words about Kevin who has been a stalwart for this council over many years. I'm grateful that the Chairman acknowledged this at the beginning of the meeting, as well as Richard Williams who is also leaving.

You ask about Kevin, and I know that all my Cabinet and all my group have benefited from his skills and experience. I hope that all council members in this authority would join me in thanking Kevin for his contribution to Somerset County Council and wish him all the very best in his new role.

As to your points about the future, as the Chief Executive has made clear in his report to Council, there is a clear plan for the future first through an interim solution ahead of a permanent appointment to the 151 role.

### **4. Asset list**

From Cllr Tessa Munt

Could a list detailing the assets purchased by Somerset County Council since May 2009 be published?

*Response from Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources*

I'm pleased to confirm that we do already publish our property holdings, including those we have purchased which is updated twice yearly. That list does date back to 2009.

Following the Full Council meeting you asked me for the link to the SCC web page where details of the assets held are listed. I did a quick search on Somerset County Councils Assets and this is the page it took me directly to, which I hope gives you access to the information that you were looking for: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/organisation/council-buildings/>

### **5. Library Service consultation**

From Cllr Liz Leyshon

Can Council be assured that the small team of officers working on the Somerset Library Service consultation have adequate time and resources to work on the increasingly bespoke arrangements for many of our County Libraries. And, once the consultation is complete, can we be assured that as part of the recommendations the professional staff, with their experience, knowledge and skills, will be deployed in such a way that the Library service continues to be efficient as well as comprehensive?

*Response from Cllr David Hall, Cabinet member for Economic Development*

Thank you Liz for your query about officer capacity to deliver the Libraries Consultation and redesign programme. It is, as you have rightly identified a very busy time for our Library service managers and staff, but please be assured that the libraries consultation process is also being supported by colleagues from across the wider organisation.

Also, a parallel strand of work is currently underway within the Libraries service focused on a wider workforce review to ensure staff working in our libraries are equipped with the knowledge and skills to deliver an exciting and dynamic experience for library customers.

Once decisions have been taken in relation to the physical network of library buildings we will be implementing a new operational structure that also reflects the changing ways in which people are using libraries.

## **6. Pot Hole fund**

From Cllr Simon Coles

Can we have an update please on the current overspend position for the "pot hole" fund and what measures is he taking to ensure that pot holes are dealt with in a timely manner? The roads of Somerset are deteriorating faster than our contractors are able to deal with them.

The roads of Somerset are looking more and more like a "patchwork quilt" in the longer term this will inevitably lead to a much higher cost of repair, Is there a plan in place and if so will he share it with us today?

*Response from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport*

Thank you Simon. I have no idea why you think there is an overspend on the "pot hole fund". We were given a specific grant from Government to fix potholes, particularly after periods of bad weather, such as the snow we suffered in March.

The County Council's approach is to avoid potholes forming in the first place, so we have a comprehensive strategy of planned maintenance, including resurfacing, surface dressing and reconstruction where necessary. However, where potholes do form, reactive maintenance is carried out to ensure the highway remains safe for the travelling public. Over 18,000 carriageway potholes have been repaired from 1st April 2017 to 30 March 2018.

I also take issue with you about your claim that roads are deteriorating as you have described. You will no doubt be surprised, but pleased, to hear that the Government regards Somerset's roads, in the highest category in terms of standards. The County Council has maintained the Department for Transport's Band 3 score this year. This

secures the highest capital funding allocation available from the DfT, this is based on a number of criteria relating to the management, and maintenance of our highways.

I am sure you would wish to join me in congratulating our staff and our contractor for hitting this high level of performance to the benefit of Somerset's residents, communities and businesses.

## **7. SIS scheme**

From Cllr Simon Coles

We are being told that the "SiS" scheme is now being spread over three years is this correct? If this is correct and the scheme has been revised to £500,000 per annum in each of the next three years instead of £1.5million in the next financial year.

Can he please tell us on what basis will schemes progress? I am sure that all County Councillors with a scheme in the round would like to confirm to their residents the likely timing of these much needed improvements.

*Response from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport*

Firstly I would like to thank Simon for his question. I recognise how important small improvement schemes are to Councillors and the communities they represent.

On the 2nd May Cabinet allocated £1.5m towards the Small Improvement Schemes, allowing our officers to continue to deliver schemes which are already in the programme and, commence the feasibility and design of those which have been recently submitted.

We will continue to have a rolling programme of schemes which is based upon an indicative annual budget of £1.5m. This programme has run on a similar basis for a number of years and there are no plans to change it at this stage.

Schemes will be commissioned in tranches as it is simply not feasible to progress them all at once. Councillors will be notified in due course which tranche their schemes are in and the overall programme at the earliest opportunity. The first tranche of schemes will include those schemes that score highest on safety grounds.

In light of the demands on the Programme set out above and the timeframe over which schemes will be developed, it is not expected that there will be a further window for submission of new SIS schemes for around three years.

## **8. Children's Services**

From Cllr Jane Lock

Are Children's Services on track for the necessary reduction in the use of locums social workers? What percentage of the workforce are currently locums broken down by District areas? What is the target for 2018/2019?

*Response from Cllr Frances Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Children and Families*

Children's Social Care is on track for the necessary reduction in the use of locum social workers. As of April 2018, there were 53 full-time equivalent locums in post, with a permanent workforce of 237 contracted staff. This is a reduction of 30 locums since April 2017 across all of Children's Social Care.

The second part of your question requests locums broken down by District area. These are as follows (March 2018 figures):

	<b>Role</b>	<b>SCC Contracted</b>	<b>Locum</b>	<b>% of Workforce that are locums</b>
<b>Mendip</b>	Qualified Social Worker (Inc ASYE)	20.55	4.86	19.13%
	Consultant Social Worker	3.61	0.00	0.00%
	Team Manager	5.00	0.00	0.00%
	Operations Manager	1.00	0.00	0.00%
	Deputy Operations Manager	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	All Social Work Qualified Roles	30.16	4.86	13.88%

	<b>Role</b>	<b>SCC Contracted</b>	<b>Locum</b>	<b>% of Workforce that are locums</b>
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	Qualified Social Worker (Inc ASYE)	24.23	9.07	27.24%
	Consultant Social Worker	2.61	0.00	0.00%
	Team Manager	3.61	2.91	44.63%
	Operations Manager	1.00	0.00	0.00%
	Deputy Operations Manager	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	All Social Work Qualified Roles	31.45	11.98	27.58%

	<b>Role</b>	<b>SCC Contracted</b>	<b>Locum</b>	<b>% of Workforce that are locums</b>
<b>South Somerset</b>	Qualified Social Worker (Inc ASYE)	31.73	6.09	16.10%
	Consultant Social Worker	2.00	2.98	59.84%
	Team Manager	5.81	0.63	9.78%
	Operations Manager	1.00	0.00	0.00%
	Deputy Operations Manager	1.00	0.00	0.00%
	All Social Work Qualified Roles	41.54	9.70	18.93%

	<b>Role</b>	<b>SCC Contracted</b>	<b>Locum</b>	<b>% of Workforce that are locums</b>
<b>Taunton</b>	Qualified Social Worker (Inc ASYE)	22.15	12.91	36.82%
	Consultant Social Worker	2.00	0.00	0.00%
	Team Manager	6.00	1.67	21.77%
	Operations Manager	0.00	0.00	0.00%

	Deputy Operations Manager	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	All Social Work Qualified Roles	30.15	14.58	32.60%

	Role	SCC Contracted	Locum	% of Workforce that are locums
<b>All Children's Social Care</b>	Qualified Social Worker (Inc ASYE)	162.20	42.98	20.95%
	Consultant Social Worker	10.22	2.98	22.58%
	Team Manager	34.53	5.25	13.20%
	ISRO	13.64	1.30	8.70%
	Operations Manager	10.00	0.00	0.00%
	Deputy Operations Manager	1.00	0.00	0.00%
	Strategic Manager	3.00	0.00	0.00%
	All Social Work Qualified Roles	234.59	52.51	18.29%

Our recruitment strategy is focused on graduates ('ASYEs') and bringing them through as qualified social workers; we are developing plans to employ up to 70 ASYEs and are also in talks with the University of Gloucester and Yeovil College about setting up a social worker degree programme in Yeovil. We do of course recruit experienced social workers, although this is inevitably more difficult due to the need for them (in most cases) to relocate. We also have a good record of 'converting' locum social workers to permanent status. We have a good programme of staff training and development, using our Social Worker Academy model and a number of innovative programmes such as Aspiring Team Managers, designed to prepare talented social workers for future roles.

## 9. Children's Services

From Cllr Tessa Munt

Could the Director for Children's Services confirm:

- the numbers of staff in his Department and a full breakdown of levels and grades, including vacancies and posts currently in recruitment?
- the percentage of locum staff used by his Department and the costs of those locums?
- the target percentage and target costs for locum staff within his Department for the last year and the current and next financial years?
- the target reductions for the percentage and costs of locum staff within his Department for the current and next financial years?

*Response from Cllr Frances Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Children and Families*

Officers have interpreted your question as it relates to Children's Social Care, so have excluded other areas of Children's Services such as Education and SEND.

The number of staff in Children's Social Care, by grade, is as follows. Please note this focuses on qualified social workers and higher grades up to strategic manager level:

Grade	SCC Contracted FTE	Locum FTE	Vacant FTE
G5	3.00	0.00	0.00
G6	10.00	0.00	0.00
G7	1.00	0.00	2.00
G8	58.39	9.53	4.02
G9-10	162.20	42.98	25.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>234.59</b>	<b>52.51</b>	<b>31.24</b>

Your second question requests the percentage of locums in the department and this has been provided in the answer to Jane Lock's questions, as above. The cost difference between a locum and a permanent member of staff is c. £20k and the forecast cost of employing locums over and above permanent staff is c. £1.2m this year. Our target for the frontline workforce is to have 75% permanent staff by April 2019; this target has been carried over from last year due to an increase in the turnover of permanent staff in 2017. The ambition is to have a frontline workforce that is 90% by April 2020. Please note that the total social worker workforce is currently 72% permanent.

I understand that Chris Squire, Director of HR & Organisational Development, has met with you both, in order to present and talk through the data, and is very happy to continue this dialogue. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

## 10. Learning Disabilities

From Cllr Bill Revans

### 1 Adults with Learning Disabilities - Day Services

A year ago, Luke Joy-Smith of Discovery promised that within 12 months, every person using Day services would have an updated needs assessment from SCC. In a recent newsletter from Discovery to customers and carers, Discovery said that: 'SCC recognise that the Individual Needs Assessments are a priority, but have not been able to complete them.' Adults and Health Scrutiny have requested that these assessments be completed as a matter of priority.

How many customers currently use Discovery day services?

Of these, how many have a Care Act compliant needs assessment, i.e. completed since the publication of the Care Act?

How many of these have had a needs assessment since Discovery was launched?

What is the timeline for completing all of these assessments?

What are the legal implications for the council where people have never received a care act compliant assessment?

What does the delay in completing assessments mean for the transformation of Day services' timeline?

What are the financial implications for the council of this delay given that Discovery are holding the council responsible?

What extra resources do SCC Adults Social Care need to fulfill this priority?

### 2 Adults with Learning Disabilities - Residential Care

Prior to LD Services transferring to Discovery, significant savings (around £700k p.a.) were attached to the conversion of 6 residential care homes to supported living. Delays in completing these assessments were a key reason for time lag prior to the transfers.

What is the current state of play with the transfers?

What is the timeline for completing the transfers?

What are the financial implications for the council of these delays?  
What extra resources do SCC Adults Social Care need to fulfill this priority?

### 3 Adults with Learning Disabilities - Discovery

In a presentation to Cabinet on the 15th March 2017 the criteria for the commissioning of Adults with Learning Disabilities services to a new provider were given as:

1. An organisation that understand what works well and what needs to be changed in order to improve services for customers and carers
2. An efficient, financially sustainable, organisation that is completely separate from the Council
3. An organisation that is able to innovate and develop new services to meet the needs of both current and future customers
4. An organisation that knows how to market itself and is able to attract new customers
5. An organisation that understand how to communicate with its customers, carers and staff and which manages change well

After one year, how well does the cabinet member think Discovery are meeting these criteria?

*A verbal response was provided by the Director of Adult Social Care*

### **11. Adult Social Care budget**

From Cllr Simon Coles

1. How confident is he that the budget proposal for Adult Social Care is robust?  
Bearing in mind the anticipated overspend.
2. How will he ensure that this vital service is properly funded?

*Response from Cllr David Fothergill, Leader of the Council on behalf of Cllr David Huxtable*

Thank you Simon. To be clear, there is no anticipated overspend and I am confident that this vital service is properly funded. There are of course significant pressures and increasing demand but thanks to the hard work of staff in adults and other teams such as finance and procurement, and down to our close relationships with key partners such as our local providers and the health service, we are currently managing within budget. I'm happy to arrange a briefing to talk you through how the service is funded if that would be helpful.