

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Brympton Way, YEOVIL, Somerset BA20 2HT** on **Thursday 8 January 2015**.

(9.30 am - 11.40 am)

Present:

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Tim Carroll	Sylvia Seal
Peter Gubbins	Peter Seib
Shane Pledger	Angie Singleton
Jo Roundell Greene	Nick Weeks

Also Present:

Marcus Fysh	David Norris
Carol Goodall	Sue Osborne
Tony Lock	Sue Steele
Nigel Mermagen	Martin Wale

Officers

Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Kim Close	Area Development Manager (South)
Ian Potter	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

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

103. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 4th December 2014, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

104. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Henry Hobhouse and Vega Sturgess (Strategic Director) and Mark Williams (Chief Executive).

105. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

106. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

Mrs EJ Taylor of Ilminster Town Council spoke in support of Agenda Item 10, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme Update relating to the capital grant to Ilminster Town Council and football club towards new football changing rooms and community facility. She advised that the Town Council had registered for VAT and so would be able to reclaim VAT spent on the project. They had also secured a topographical survey of the site and purchased a ransom strip of land and asked that the Committee support the grant towards upgraded football facilities for the community.

Mr A Fish of Ilminster Town Football Club also spoke in support of their capital grant application. He described how they had grown from 2 football teams in 1980 to 22 at the current time. He confirmed that a business plan, planning application and other funding had been secured and the function room facilities would be freely available for public use.

107. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that the new car parking regulations would be in operation the following week and he reminded Members to display their parking passes on their vehicles.

The Chairman also advised that the housing situation of the occupant at the Ropewalk site in West Coker had finally been resolved and the bungalow at the site would soon be demolished and the land incorporated into the Ropewalk.

Councillor Tim Carroll confirmed that the final report from the Planning Inspector relating to the South Somerset Local Plan had been received and he would shortly be circulating it by e-mail to all Councillors prior to publication on the SSDC website. He confirmed that the adoption of the Local Plan would take place at a special meeting of Full Council to be held on Thursday 5th March at 7.30pm.

Councillor Sylvia Seal reported that despite ongoing major health issues, Mrs Lesley Boucher continued to represent the Council on the Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. She commended Mrs Boucher for her dedication in reporting the issues discussed at the hospital in her quarterly reports to the Executive.

108. Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision - The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) interim funding (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman updated Members with the progress of the negotiations between the Somerset Authorities, DeFRA and the Government to secure funding to establish the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) to co-ordinate flood protection and maintenance work. He noted that there would be a meeting the following week to formally constitute the Somerset Rivers Authority and when the organisation was in place then it would drive forward a number of outstanding projects. He asked that Members confirm Councillor Jo Roundell Greene as his deputy representative on the Somerset Rivers Authority.

In response to questions from Members, the Chairman confirmed that:-

- It was not intended to establish a headquarters building or to employ staff to run the SRA.
- There was still some debate to be had with the Government over the future funding of the Authority.
- When the SRA was functioning, then information on who was responsible for each part of the organisation and its works would be agreed and available.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the urgent executive decision taken and to confirm the additional recommendation that Councillor Jo Roundell Greene be appointed as deputy representative on the Somerset Rivers Authority.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to note that, according to the provision of Section 3-47 (4) of the Constitution, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader:

1. agreed to a contribution of £43,750 as part of a £2.7million total package of funding for the 2015-16 financial year for the Somerset Rivers Authority.
2. agreed to nominate Councillor Jo Roundell Greene as Deputy Representative for SSDC on the Somerset Rivers Authority.

Reason: To note the urgent decision to contribute £43,750 towards the interim funding required by the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA), as identified in paragraph 3. This funding will come from the Flooding Reserve set up by District Executive in February 2014.

109. Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision - Acquisition of the Former Millers Garage Site, Crewkerne (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning noted that there had been a shortfall in long-stay car parking in Crewkerne for a number of years and funding had been allocated to resolve it for some time. Land close to the town centre had become available and the Assistant Director (Environment) had secured the purchase at auction for £225,000 (less than the valuation made by the District Valuer).

In response to questions from Members, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning and the Ward Member confirmed that:-

- The site would achieve 62 new car parking spaces
- There would be an access through to the existing Henhayes car park
- People who worked in the town often parked in residential areas and so the car park would be particularly useful for them.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the urgent decision taken.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to note that the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council approved:

1. Officers to attend the Symonds and Sampson auction on 28 November 2014 in Sherborne to bid on the Millers Garage Site, Crewkerne.
2. Officers to bid up to a maximum value of £275,000, this being the maximum value as set out in the District Valuer's report on the Site and taking into account that planning permission has not yet been sought for such use and detailed access arrangements have not yet been agreed.

Reason: To note the urgent decision taken under Section 3 – 47 (4) of the Council's Constitution – whereby the Chief Executive and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council agreed to the purchase of 22A East Street, Crewkerne, known as the former Millers Garage site ("the Site").

110. Setting the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2015/16 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised that this was the annual review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which had been reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee. The recommendation was to keep the Hardship Scheme at the current level of £30,000.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that the proposed changes were minor and included upratings in personal allowances and non-dependent deductions and changes brought in under prescribed regulations, including the Universal Credit.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said they had sought assurance that the changes did not imply any further risk to SSDC and she confirmed that a Scrutiny Task and Finish group would reconvene shortly to look at the 2016/17 scheme.

In response to a request from Members, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning agreed to include an executive summary at the beginning of the policy document.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Members were content to recommend the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2015/16 for adoption by Council.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive recommend to Council:-

- a. that personal allowances and premiums are uprated in line with those for Housing Benefit;
- b. that non-dependent deductions are uprated in line with the annual percentage increase in Council Tax;
- c. that the non-dependent income bands are increased by the same percentage as those in the Prescribed Scheme;
- d. that the hardship scheme budget be set at £30,000 for the 2015/16 financial year;

- e. that the remaining measures introduced from 1 April 2013 remain unchanged;
- f. that the 2015/16 Council Tax Reduction Scheme attached at Appendix A is adopted
- g. to note the scheme has been amended to reflect changes to the CTRS Prescribed Requirements.

Reason: To recommend the proposed amendments to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2015/16 financial year to Full Council for approval.

111. Council Tax - Discretionary Reduction in Liability Policy (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised that the widespread flooding during 2014 had highlighted that certain specific circumstances were not covered by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and so not eligible for relief. The proposed policy formalised discretionary awards in certain circumstances.

In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, the Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that the scheme would be open to all council tax payers and would particularly support the most vulnerable so he did not anticipate any equalities issues arising.

During discussion, it was agreed to amend Recommendation C to delegate decisions on individual applications to the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning (rather than the Revenues and Benefits Manager). With this amendment, Members were content to propose the recommendations for confirmation by Full Council.

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

- a. that the proposed Council Tax Discretionary Reduction in Liability Policy be adopted;
- b. that decisions on groups of applicants be delegated to District Executive;
- c. that decisions on individual applications be delegated to the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning.

Reason: To recommend the proposed Council Tax Discretionary Reduction in Liability Policy to Full Council for approval.

112. Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme Update (Agenda Item 10)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning advised that the provisional Rate Support Grant from the Government had been reduced by 28.1% and the final announcement on capping by the Government was still awaited. There was no proposed increase in Council Tax or car parking charges for 2015/16 and the full budget figures would be presented at the next District Executive and Council meetings for confirmation.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) confirmed that the Rate Support Grant figure was still provisional and the budget for 2015/16 could not be set until the NDR1 business rate pooling had been agreed with our Somerset partners and confirmed by the Government. She answered Members questions on points within her report and confirmed that the savings plans outlined at Appendix A would contain full comments from Managers when next presented to the Executive.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members thanked the members of the public from Iminster for attending to speak in support of the capital grant for their town and they were pleased to unanimously confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:

- a. Note the current position and timetable for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme;
- b. Approve in principle the savings and additional income outlined in Appendix A.
- c. Approve in principle the additional budget pressures outlined in Appendix B.
- d. Approve in principle that the Capital Bids outlined in Appendix C are added to the Capital Programme in 2015/16.

Reason: To note the current position on the Medium Term Financial Plan (Revenue Budgets for 2015/16 to 2019/20) and the Capital Programme.

113. Report of Scrutiny Task and Finish Group - Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingency Partnership (Agenda Item 11)

Councillor Carol Goodall, member of the Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Group which had reviewed the work of the Somerset Civil Contingency Partnership introduced the report to Members. She said the aim of the review had been to better understand the structure of the partnership and the roles and responsibilities of the partner organisations. Since the publication of the agenda, Somerset County Council had confirmed that their proposed review of the Civil Contingency Partnership would not start until after the elections in May 2015 and had indicated that the review would be completed by August 2015. Therefore, the Task and Finish Group now recommended that the funding at the existing 2014/15 level for the Civil Contingency Partnership continued for one additional year – 2015/16 to allow the partnership to continue pending the outcome of the review.

The Chairman thanked the members of the Task and Finish group for their work and he confirmed that funding for the Civil Contingency Partnership was already included in the

2015/16 budget. There was no debate and Members were content to support the amended recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive supported the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group recommendations to actively support the review and re-launch of the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Partnership as outlined in the Debrief Report and that:

- Funding at the current 2014/15 levels continues for one additional year to allow the review planned by Somerset County Council to be completed as stated by August 2015 and that:
- Clarification is sought from Somerset County Council at the earliest possible opportunity as to:
 - o the anticipated timescale for the review and re-launch as described in the debrief document The Review process, in particular, who is conducting the review? Is the review sufficiently prioritised and adequately resourced? Such is the significance of this piece of work, members ask the Executive to consider offering some resource to assist with conducting the review.
 - o What is the scope of the review, in detail, and how can partners influence the scope and be actively involved in the review process?
- Members recommend that the review considers the governance arrangements within the partnership. At the very least an annual report should be considered by each authority providing an opportunity for elected members to agree on shared aims, objectives and priorities and to consider performance over a preceding period. This is the minimum to ensure meaningful accountability within the partnership.
- Any re-launch of the partnership should clearly state what each partner can expect in return for their funding contributions, something similar to the SLA model considered by members during this review could be a useful template?

Reason: To present the findings of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group established to consider the role and function of the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Partnership (SLACCP).

114. Increasing Management Capacity at Yeovil Crematorium (Agenda Item 12)

Councillor Peter Gubbins, Chairman of Area South Committee, introduced the report and advised that the proposal was a change in the current management structure of the Crematorium to provide more capacity, however, this was no criticism of the current

arrangements. He had undertaken some initial discussions with partner councils and there were no objections to the proposals in principle but a full consultation process would be undertaken prior to implementation.

In response to questions, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) and the Chairman confirmed that:-

- The Management Committee consisted of 8 seats of which SSDC had 3 although it owned 89% of the facility.
- The management of the Crematorium would be absorbed within the workload of the Environmental Health Manager and his team.
- Under a legal agreement in 2007, it was agreed that the capital programme would be the responsibility of SSDC and in return SSDC received a proportion of the revenue.
- Money had been put aside for replacing the cremators at the Crematorium.
- SSDC employed the staff at both the Cemetery and the Crematorium on behalf of the Town Council and received funds from the Town Council for the day to day operations.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- An annual report from the Management Committee should be presented to SSDC.
- This should be a first-rate facility as it had to deal with families at a very difficult time.
- The role of the Clerk to the Burial Committee must be clearly defined.
- This is a district-wide facility and the consultation should be widened.
- The Crematorium should be run like a business as SSDC owned the majority share.
- The management arrangements of the Cemetery should remain unchanged.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That:-

- a. subject to satisfactory consultation responses being received District Executive approved the implementation of new management arrangements for Yeovil Crematorium;
- b. responsibility is delegated to the Assistant Director – Communities in consultation with the Chair of the Area South Committee to carry out consultation with the Members of the Joint Burial Committee;
- c. responsibility be delegated to the Assistant Director – Communities in consultation with the Chair of the Area South Committee to develop a management agreement with Yeovil Without PC;
- d. responsibility be delegated to the Assistant Director – Environment in consultation with the Chair of the Area South Committee to oversee the implementation of any new management arrangements.

Reason: To agree the introduction of new management arrangements for Yeovil Crematorium.

115. Upgrade to the ICT Helpdesk System (Agenda Item 13)

The ICT Manager advised of the need to upgrade the existing ICT Management System as the maintenance contract had been cancelled some years previously. Several options had been explored and it was proposed that an upgrade with the existing supplier including a maintenance contract was the best option.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the ICT Manager confirmed that the upgraded system would integrate with existing SSDC systems much better than the existing equipment.

There was no debate and Members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

- a. approved the upgrade to the ICT Helpdesk System;
- b. agreed that the Capital costs of £37,400 be found from the ICT Capital Reserve and that the ongoing revenue costs of £5,700 are added to the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2015/16 as an additional budget requirement.

Reason: To agree an essential upgrade to the ICT Helpdesk System.

116. Commercial Property Disposals - Winsham Allotments and Band Hut (Agenda Item 14)

The Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) confirmed that following further negotiations, the final version of the land transfer document had been agreed and the document had been dispatched to the Parish Council's Solicitor earlier that week.

The Ward Member, Councillor Sue Osborne, advised that the Parish Council were due to hold an Extraordinary Meeting on 21st January where it was expected that they would agree the transfer.

There was no debate and Members were content to note the verbal report of the Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services).

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the verbal report from the Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) on the conclusion of the property disposal.

Reason: The verbal report is provided for Members information.

117. Final Recommendation of the Community Governance Review of Lopen Parish Council (Agenda Item 15)

The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Democratic Services advised that this was the final report of the Community Governance Review for Lopen and it would be presented to Council the following week for final confirmation.

There was no debate and Members were content to recommend the report to Full Council for confirmation.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive recommended that Council:-

1. note the results of the consultation agree to publish them;
2. agree that the final recommendation be: "To accept the majority vote from the people of Lopen to agree to increase the number of Parish Councillors to seven";
3. agree to draw up a Reorganisation Order to give effect to this recommendation;
4. agree to contact the statutory agencies to effect the requested alteration to increase the number of Parish Councillors to seven.

Reason: To agree the outcome of the final public consultation (Community Governance Review) which has taken place in the parish of Lopen on the proposal to increase the number of Parish Councillors from five to seven (under the provisions of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007).

118. Monthly Performance Snapshot (Agenda Item 16)

Members were pleased to note the monthly performance snapshot data.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the monthly performance snapshot data.

Reason: The report is provided for Members information.

119. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 17)

Members noted the following additions to the Executive Forward Plan and Consultation database:-

- Corporate Grants Awarded during 2013/14 – March 2015
- Loan to Kingsdon Parish Council – March 2015
- Adoption of the South Somerset Local Plan – March 2015

RESOLVED: That the District Executive approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A with the following amendments;

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A with the following additions:-
 - Corporate Grants Awarded during 2013/14 – March 2015
 - Loan to Kingsdon Parish Council – March 2015
 - Adoption of the South Somerset Local Plan – March 2015
2. Noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

120. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 18)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 5th February 2015 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

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Chairman

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Date