

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 7 September 2017**.

(9.30 am - 11.03 am)

Present:

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Henry Hobhouse	Angie Singleton
Val Keitch	Nick Weeks
Jo Roundell Greene	Derek Yeomans
Peter Seib	

Also Present:

Mike Lewis	Sue Steele
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Officers:

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Ian Clarke	Director (Support Services)
Andrew Gillespie	Performance Manager
Ian Potter	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Sharon Jones	Revenues Team Leader
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

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

41. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 3rd August 2017, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

42. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Gubbins and Sylvia Seal and Clare Pestell, Director for Commercial Services and Income Generation.

43. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

44. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public present.

45. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that a very positive meeting of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) Board had taken place to discuss the refresh of the Local Plan.

46. Corporate Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report 2017/18: 1st Quarter (Agenda Item 6)

The Performance Manager introduced the report and advised that as part of the Transformation Programme the collection of performance information would change. The key performance indicators would continue to be tracked but the focus would be on the six key priority projects agreed at Council earlier that year. There were no major concerns to report in the first quarter report and wider performance information would be presented in the quarter 2 report

During discussion Members commented on the number of fly tips reported and the Performance Manager advised that there had been an unexpected number of larger fly tips to deal with that year. It was noted that this could be due to the new permit scheme for larger vehicles at the Household Waste Recycling Centres.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said they had noted that there was still no reference to performance monitoring from a customer perspective. It was felt there was a need to know when changes were implemented if and how they affected the public. They had also acknowledged during the transition through Transformation it would be difficult to produce statistics at 'in between' stages and they sought reassurance that there would be more Performance Indicators in the future. They also suggested the indicators should be reviewed using the Council Plan as a starting point.

Reference was also made to the rise in the number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants and it was noted that although South Somerset was below the national average there were areas where it was rising locally.

It was also noted that funding set aside for the superfast broadband scheme remained and could be invested in the 4G network to help police communications.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the quarterly performance report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the Corporate Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report 2017/18: 1st Quarter.

Reason: To note the Corporate Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report 2017/18: 1st Quarter

47. Westlands Entertainment & Conference Centre Refurbishment Project (Agenda Item 7)

The Chief Executive introduced the report and advised that the development phase of the centre was now complete and now that it was a service, it would continue to be

monitored in the usual way in the future together with other services. The service was still being developed and there was a business plan in place. Unforeseen circumstances which had arisen during the redevelopment were listed in the report as was the budget position. SSDC had loaned money to the project and the overspend would be added to the loan to be repaid.

In response to questions from Members and the Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Executive and Chairman advised:-

- The artists walkways was not yet complete but it was in the business plan.
- All outstanding negotiations with the contractors were now complete and the figures in the report were the final cost of the project.
- A further report on the business plan, overheads and income would be presented in December 2017 or January 2018 taking in to account the first six months trading.
- This was a new business that would take time to develop and was expected to be a fully functioning business within 3 to 5 years.
- The detailed project costs breakdown would be reported to the project board but the figures could also be made available to the Scrutiny Committee
- The sporting facilities were now complete.
- The situation of the bingo license for the venue would be checked.
- SSDC had loaned £2m to the project and the remaining funding had come from S106 contributions, Sport England, Badminton England, Somerset Cricket Board and other partner organisations. A further breakdown would be provided to Members.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the contents of the update report on the Westlands Entertainment & Conference Centre.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the report on the Westlands Entertainment & Conference Centre Refurbishment Project including the closure of the refurbishment project

Reason: To note the work of the Arts & Entertainment Service with regard to Westlands Centre Refurbishment Project and the next steps for the development of the service.

48. Business Rates Relief - New Local Discretionary Relief (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the report and thanked the members of the Scrutiny Task and Finish group and the officers who supported them for their work in reviewing and informing the policy. He said promotion of the scheme was important to the businesses who would qualify for assistance and the policy would be reviewed after 1 year of operation.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager advised that the policy was a straightforward percentage scheme of the increase in a property's rateable value and if there were any cases of hardship then there was a small allocation set aside for this.

The Revenues Team Leader confirmed that they had already calculated the number of businesses who would qualify and there would be funding remaining for the hardship scheme.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the officers who had supported the Task and Finish group and said it had been a very interesting review.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to propose the Non Domestic Rates Revaluation Support Relief Scheme for adoption by Full Council.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive recommend that Full Council approve a new local discretionary rate relief, the “Non Domestic Rates Revaluation Support Relief” Scheme, effective from 1 April 2017 as detailed in the report.

Reason: To request that full Council approve the use of the Council’s local discount powers to introduce the proposed “Revaluation Support Relief” Scheme to support businesses that have been adversely affected by Business Rates Revaluation on 1 April 2017.

49. Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services introduced the report and reminded Members there had been a workshop to discuss the Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan the previous week. He drew Members attention to the Business Rates Retention Scheme which was intended to move from 40% to 100% retention, although the government plans were uncertain, the recent adoption of the commercial strategy to generate income to close the budget gap, and, the provision of £0.8m to cover any unidentified pressures.

In response to questions from Members and the Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder advised:-

- The Transformation Project savings were on target and they would be reported on a quarterly basis.
- There was an officer working group looking at generating and increasing services income.
- Service prioritisation had not yet been agreed and this would be discussed in the future.
- One of the Peer Review members had been the leader of Sevenoaks Council and whilst SSDC were learning from other councils, there was no intention to necessarily copy them.
- The finance staff worked closely with Town and Parish Council Clerks to advise them of any changes affecting their budget discussions at an early stage and to assist them in drafting their annual budgets.

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

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. approve the Financial Strategy;
- b. note the current position and timetable for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget estimates;
- c. approve an allocation of £34,900 to passport Revenue Support Grant as Council Tax Reduction Grant funding to town and parish councils in 2018/19, and approve no passport of funds in 2019/20 when SSDC will no longer receive Revenue Support Grant income.

Reason: To confirm the proposed Financial Strategy and provide Members with information regarding the initial Medium Term Financial Plan estimates for the period 2018/19 to 2022/23.

50. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 10)

Members noted the following addition to the Executive Forward Plan and Government consultations received:-

- Update on the Westland Business Plan – December 2017
- New DCLG consultation: Business rates relief for new fibre on telecommunication hereditaments
- Cabinet Office Consultation - Access to elections: Call for Evidence

During discussion it was noted that the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation was due to be discussed at the next District Executive meeting in October and it was agreed to hold a Members Workshop to discuss this prior to the Executive meeting.

It was also noted that the Community Accessible Transport project was at risk due to an unsuccessful Lottery bid and it agreed that a briefing paper be circulated to all Members on this issue.

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

- Update on the Westland Business Plan – December 2017
- New DCLG consultation: Business rates relief for new fibre on telecommunication hereditaments
- Cabinet Office Consultation - Access to elections: Call for Evidence

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

51. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 5th October 2017 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