

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil, Somerset on Thursday 5 April 2018.**

(9.30 am - 10.30 am)

**Present:**

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

Peter Gubbins	Sylvia Seal
Henry Hobhouse	Angie Singleton
Val Keitch	Nick Weeks
Jo Roundell Greene	Derek Yeomans

**Also Present:**

Mike Lewis	Sue Steele
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**Officers:**

Netta Meadows	Director (Strategy & Commissioning)
Clare Pestell	Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation)
Angela Watson	Monitoring Officer
Nicola Hix	Lead Specialist (Finance)
Caron Starkey	Strategic Lead for Transformation
Caroline White	Commercial Property, Land and Development Manger
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Specialist

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

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### 139. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Angie Singleton asked for clarification on minute 132 - South Somerset District Council Car Park Charging Policy Paper, where Councillor Mike Lewis had asked that a monthly analysis of car parking income be kept from now on as a statistical analysis of the usage of car parks. The Chairman advised that provided the income per car parking ticket machine could be made available, he did not intend to expend additional officer time in collecting the data.

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

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### 140. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Seib and Alex Parmley, Chief Executive.

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### 141. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made by members.

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#### **142. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)**

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

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#### **143. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)**

The Chairman advised that Paula Hewitt of Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) would be speaking to members after the conclusion of the District Executive meeting on the broadband programme.

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#### **144. Transformation Project Progress Report (Agenda Item 6)**

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Economic Development and Transformation introduced the report and noted that the project was on track and on budget to deliver the expected benefits. She advised that staff in Phases 2 and 3 were currently going through their selection interviews and asked that Members took account of this when contacting them.

The Strategic Lead for Transformation advised that she had attended the Scrutiny Committee meeting and answered Members questions on Area Working and addressed their concerns that the determination of planning applications would remain with the Area Committees. She said balancing business as usual with Transformation would be difficult as Phases 2 and 3 staff were going through their selection interviews and a report on this had been drawn up by SWAP and would be reported to the Strategic Leadership Team the following week.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the Strategic Lead for Transformation for attending their meeting and answering the Committee's questions on the report. It was noted they had raised a number of questions around unfilled posts in Phase 1, staff workloads and contact with local Town and Parish Councils – members were concerned that some councils had mentioned that Transformation seemed to be being used as an excuse for delays in responding to queries within some departments.

The Chairman advised that an experienced chief planning officer had been recruited on a 3 month contract to provide support to the planning service. It was confirmed that he had previously worked for the Planning Advisory Service and would be attending all the Area Committee meetings.

It was also confirmed that the Council were hoping to recruit an HR Specialist very shortly.

During discussion, it was noted that Members could help to be a contact between their Town and Parish Councils at this time.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the progress of the Transformation Programme.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive noted the progress report of the SSDC Transformation Project.

**Reason:** It was agreed that the District Executive would receive quarterly updates on the progress of the council's Transformation Programme.

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**145. Asset Transfer Policy revised to: The Asset Disposal and Community Asset Transfer Policy (Agenda Item 7)**

The Portfolio Holder for Property, Climate Change and Income Generation introduced the report and advised that the new policy would bring asset disposals in line with the procurement of assets. It also included a measure that the council's assets were making a return on the investment in the future.

The Director for Commercial Services and Income Generation advised that following approval of the Council's Commercial Strategy the previous year, it was realised that other policies did not align with it. Although the policy allowed delegated authority to purchase investment assets up to £10m, it did not allow their sale. She also noted that the Area Chairmen would be consulted during any asset disposal process.

The Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager advised that the Council's Property Development Managers would be assessing the Council's land assets over the next 2 years and would be recommending the disposal of small non-strategic land holdings. The policy now allowed community groups to approach SSDC to purchase a freehold as well as a leasehold of an asset and there was a business case template provided to allow them to submit a case for a community asset transfer to them from SSDC.

During discussion, it was noted that:-

- Any asset already identified for disposal would continue under the current policy.
- The property team would contact the Ward Member and Area Chairman and ask for their comments on any proposed asset disposal which would be included in the report to the Disposal Assessment Group.
- Although a majority vote of approval was required from the Disposal Assessment Group, the Section 151 and Monitoring Officers had the power of veto.
- The disposal of investment properties up to a value of £10m did not include any SSDC Council offices as they were classed as non-investment properties and any proposed disposal of them would require a separate report to District Executive.
- At the current time, only the Marks and Spencer building and the Wilco building were valued as large investment properties under £10m and SSDC currently hold around 17 properties classed as investment properties.
- A large number of the SSDC land holdings were small strips of land, small garages or houses worth less than £250,000.
- Once the policy was approved then the Town and Parish Councils would be notified.
- SSDC now had 3 qualified surveyors capable of valuing land and property assets, however, if it was proposed to dispose of a large asset then independent

advice would be sought to clarify market value to ensure transparency and independence in accordance with any audit or RICS requirements.

Members expressed concern at the weight given to the Area Chairman and Ward Members comments in the report to the Disposal Assessment Group and it was agreed to re-word the disposals approval process and include the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services in the consultation process. It was noted that any disposal that fell outside of policy would be referred through the District Executive process and that the CEO in consultation with the Leader reserve the right to refer any disposal decision to the District Executive if they see fit to do so.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to approve the replacement of the existing Asset Transfer Policy with the Asset Disposal and Community Asset Transfer Policy (as amended) and note the requirement to change the Financial Procedure Rules. It was agreed the necessary changes would be presented to Full Council in May 2018.

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. approve the replacement of the existing Asset Transfer Policy with the Asset Disposal and Community Asset Transfer Policy (as amended);
- b. note there is a requirement to change the Financial Procedure Rules to accommodate the financial delegated authority limits in this policy which the Disposal Assessment Group will adopt;
- c. recommend to Full Council the acceptance of the changes required in relation to the delegated authority limits to the Financial Procedure Rules detailed in this report (paragraphs 14-16).

**Reason:** To inform members of a revised policy, with embedded procedure and governance, that streamlines the asset disposals and community asset transfer processes.

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## 146. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 8)

The following addition to the Forward Plan was noted:

- Regeneration Priority Schemes (Confidential) – May 2018

The Chairman noted that the Draft revised National Planning Policy Framework and the Supporting Housing Delivery through developer contributions consultation responses were important and he asked that the draft responses be included in the next District Executive agenda for information.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following amendment:-

- Regeneration Priority Schemes (Confidential) – May 2018
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

**Reason:** The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

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**147. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 9)**

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 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