

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil, Somerset. on Thursday 3 May 2018.**

(9.30 am - 12.34 pm)

Present:

Councillor Ric Pallister (Chairman)

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

Also Present:

John Clark	Sue Steele
Mike Lewis	Colin Winder
Tony Lock	

Officers:

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Netta Meadows	Director (Strategy & Commissioning)
Martin Woods	Director (Service Delivery)
Paul Fitzgerald	Section 151 Officer
Angela Watson	Monitoring Officer
Helen Rutter	Communities Lead
David Clews	Policy Planner (Spatial Policy)
David Crisfield	Third Sector and Equalities Co-ordinator
Alice Knight	Welfare & Careline Manager
Barbie Markey	Senior Housing Officer
Jo Wilkins	Acting Principal Spatial Planner
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Specialist

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

148. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 5th April 2018, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

149. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Angie Singleton.

150. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made.

151. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public present.

152. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that the announcement by the Leader of Somerset County Council to abolish the district councils in the county in an attempt to save money and to look at how a unitary arrangement could work had been done with no prior warning to SSDC. Whilst he regretted the lack of communication he said the proposal must be taken seriously and if necessary, external resource be commissioned to work on this. In the meantime, SSDC would continue with its Transformation programme to ensure it was in the most efficient position when entering into the debate with the other Somerset Councils

The Chief Executive noted that as the County Council was not currently financially stable, some change was required, however, any proposed reorganisation must be done for the benefit of the communities of Somerset.

During a brief discussion, Members asked that Somerset County Council give a clear message to the Town and Parish Councils and that the Chairman keep Members informed of his discussions with the County and District Councils on this issue.

153. The South Petherton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum (Agenda Item 6)

The Spatial Policy Planner advised that an independent examiner had looked at the South Petherton Neighbourhood Plan and agreed that it met the criteria. He recommended that Members accept the Plan and proceed to organising a referendum within the next two months. If more than 50% of all the electors for the area agreed then SSDC would 'make' or adopt the Plan. Once confirmed, it would become part of the Statutory Development Plan.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Spatial Policy Planner advised that:-

- The Conservation Officer had been in discussion with the Parish Council regarding a review of the Conservation Area boundary although, any subsequent changes would not affect the Neighbourhood Plan.
- It was the Council's duty to recommend to the Examiner any views which were thought useful to the Plan. The suggested changes in this instance would make the plan more useable to planning officers but it was the Examiners decision as to whether they were accepted or not.

The Chairman confirmed that where there was a Village Design Statement in place, then the planning officer would also refer to that as well as the Neighbourhood Plan in their report on a planning application.

During a brief discussion Councillor Nick Weeks expressed concern that SSDC was trying to influence a Neighbourhood Plan and said any changes made must be for good reasons as the Plan was meant to reflect that community.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree that SSDC organise a referendum for the Neighbourhood Plan for South Petherton.

RESOLVED: That District Executive:-

- a. agreed to the Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the South Petherton Neighbourhood Plan.
- b. agreed to the Council organising a referendum for local people on the Electoral Register as to whether they want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for South Petherton to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
- c. delegated responsibility to the Director for Service Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with South Petherton Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Reason: To confirm the South Petherton Neighbourhood Plan and agree to 'making' the plan following a favourable local referendum to be organised by the District Council.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

154. Strategic Development and Regeneration in South Somerset District Council (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development advised that the report set out the governance arrangements for the regeneration projects in Chard, Yeovil and Wincanton as agreed in the Council Plan. There would be challenging projects brought forward to regenerate the towns through the new Strategic Regeneration Board and local projects in other areas could still come forward through the Area Committees. The report also agreed the delegation of spending.

The Chief Executive advised that the proposals would transform the way SSDC worked to become more efficient and deliver on the Council Plan. He said the market towns were being affected by on-line shopping and so the Council was taking a community leadership role and would work with partners to regenerate the towns and resources would be invested to achieve this. He noted the proposed funding was significant but a commercial investment approach was being taken. Although a gross spend budget was proposed, it was envisaged there would only be the net cost to the Council but it allowed some flexibility to underwrite proposed schemes.

In response to questions raised by the Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Executive confirmed:-

- Although only 3 market towns were identified, this would not exclude the other smaller market towns in the district from proposing local regeneration schemes through the Area + system and Area Plans.
- Performance reports would be presented to the Area Committees although they would have to take account of commercial sensitivity.
- The Strategic Regeneration Board would monitor the cumulative risk and would produce a risk strategy and a risk log for the proposed projects.
- It was inevitable that membership of the boards would change as there were elections in May 2019 but business continuity would be maintained.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that the financial arrangements of the business cases would be tested for robustness and depending on the scale of the proposed projects, external expert views would be sought.

During debate, Members raised a number of points regarding the financial risk, the need for expert opinion on projects, the robustness of the business plans and the future reporting and scrutiny of the proposed regeneration projects. However, all Members recognised that the proposals needed to move forward and to do nothing was not an option.

The Monitoring Officer requested an additional recommendation be added to authorise her to make the necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution to reflect the recommendations and this was agreed. She also clarified that due to the Council's scheme of delegation, it was necessary to identify an Executive Member or officer to take executive decisions on projects.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to propose the recommendations to Full Council for approval.

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

- a. Discontinue the following Programme and Project Boards:
 - I. Strategic Regeneration Board
 - II. Local Development Scheme Board
 - III. The Four Area Regeneration Boards (West, North, East and South)
 - IV. The Chard Regeneration Project Board
- b. Establish a Strategic Development Board with the remit and membership as set out in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5
- c. Establish a Chard Regeneration Programme Board with the remit and membership as set out in paragraphs 6.6 to 6.16
- d. Establish a Yeovil Regeneration Programme Board with the remit and membership as set out in paragraphs 6.6 to 6.16
- e. Establish a Wincanton Regeneration Programme Board with the remit and membership set out in paragraphs 6.6 to 6.16
- f. Agree the principle of delegating a Gross Spend and Net Cost

budget to the Regeneration Programme Boards as outlined in section 7 of this report, and delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to approve funding arrangements for Gross and Net arrangements.

- g. Agree the principle of prioritising Business Rates Pooling gains for Regeneration Programmes.
- h. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution to reflect the above recommendations.

Reason: To ensure that the way the Council operates and functions as an organisation best enables the delivery of our strategic objectives and outcomes.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

155. Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2017 - 19 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Policy introduced the report and noted the difficulty in producing a Somerset-wide Homeless Strategy which all the Council's could agree to. He noted that the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 had only just come into law and officers would be working on an update to the action plan to be presented within 6 to 9 months, taking account of the impact of the new Act.

The Director for Service Delivery advised that although the Strategy currently lacked a level of detail which this Council felt was desirable, the next version would reflect SSDC's local aspirations.

The Acting Housing and Welfare Manager advised that the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 was an opportunity although it presented some challenges as well. She said it provided an opportunity to engage with partners to address other issues experienced by homeless people other than just their housing issues.

In response to questions from Members, the Senior Housing Options Officer and the Acting Housing and Welfare Manager advised that:-

- Councils who exported homeless people to other Council areas now had a duty to inform the Council where they were sent and they retained a duty of responsibility for the individual for 2 years. There had been two cases of this within the SSDC area.
- The Homeless Managers Group would be responsible for managing and monitoring the Strategy and SSDC would be working on having its own supplementary version.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to adopt the Somerset Homelessness Strategy and Review 2017-19 and the associated SSDC Implementation Plan.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive adopted the Somerset Homelessness Strategy and Review 2017-19 and the associated SSDC Implementation Plan.

Reason: To adopt the new Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2017-19.

156. Community Right to Bid Half Year Report - October 2017 to March 2018 (Agenda Item 9)

The Communities Lead introduced the report and advised that the Community Right to Bid process was well established and all the information was on the Council's website. Although SSDC had responded to a Government survey on the process in 2015, there had been no further feedback from them. She noted the proposal to discontinue the six-monthly reporting unless an SSDC asset was involved.

The Chairman noted that he had written to the Government to express the Council's concerns at the system some time ago.

Councillor Mike Lewis asked that the Assets of Community Value Register be clarified to list the old Countess Gytha School and not the new one as the local community were still interested in purchasing the building.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the Community Right to Bid Half Year Report – October 2017 to March 2018 and agreed that regular six-monthly reporting be ceased and replaced with an as required reporting basis.

RESOLVED: That District Executive:-

- a. noted the Community Right to Bid Half Year Report;
- b. approved the cessation of regular six monthly reporting.

Reason: To note the current status of the register of Assets of Community Value in South Somerset using the Community Right to Bid, for the second half of the 2017/18 financial year (October 2017 to March 2018) and to confirm the cessation of regular six monthly reporting.

157. Draft Responses to Consultations (for information) (Agenda Item 10)

The Chairman advised that the two consultation responses were important and he asked for the following amendments to be added to the responses:-

Draft revised National Planning Policy Framework

Question 12 – final paragraph – change “seems rather unfair” to “IS unfair” in bold type.

Question 14 – third paragraph to be in bold type.

Question 14 – fourth paragraph, final sentence to be in bold type.

Supporting housing delivery through developer contributions

Under Question 31, the Chairman asked where the funding for the proposed Strategic Infrastructure Tariff?

The Director for Service Delivery advised that it could be a top-slice of CIL and S106 funding but this was not yet clear.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- The Chairman confirmed that he would also write a letter to confirm that he supported the SPARSE response to the consultation.
- It was also suggested that the points highlighted above in the Draft revised National Planning Policy Framework be reiterated in a letter to the Minister and the copied to the Somerset MP's.
- The placing of top-soil on land without consultation with the relevant Parish Council was an issue in some areas and clarification on whether this was a County minerals issue or a District planning issue would be sought.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to note the consultation responses.

NOTED

158. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 11)

It was noted that the Transformation update reports should be listed as quarterly in the Forward Plan, rather than 6 monthly.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following amendments;
 - Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Charging Policy – moved to July 2018
 - Capital & Revenue Budget out-turn reports 2017/18 – moved to July 2018
 - SSDC Annual Performance Report 2017/18 – moved to July
 - SSDC Investments – June 2018
 - Additional Delegated Authority for the Investment Asset Group – June 2018
 - Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 200 (RIPA) – June 2018
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

159. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 7th June 2018 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

160. Exclusion of Press and Public (Agenda Item 13)

RESOLVED: That the following item be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under Paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

161. Budget for Chard Regeneration Programme and Yeovil Regeneration Programme (Confidential) (Agenda Item 14)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development advised that the proposals would finance the Chard Regeneration Scheme and the Yeovil Regeneration Scheme which were both specific objectives in the Council Plan.

The Chief Executive outlined the finance proposed and the possible schemes to regenerate the towns and advised that a commercial approach would be taken to fund the schemes to minimise the borrowing and net cost to the Council.

During the following discussion, the Chief Executive and Chairman answered Members questions on points of detail, and, at the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to propose the recommendations to Full Council for approval.

RESOLVED: That District Executive recommend that Full Council agree to the recommendations of the report.

Reason: To facilitate progress of the Regeneration Programme Boards, within clear parameters and defined financial envelopes set by Council.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

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Chairman

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Date