

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **District Executive** held at the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil on Thursday 6 June 2019.**

(9.30 am - 10.40 am)

**Present:**

Councillor Val Keitch (Chairman)

Jason Baker  
Mike Best  
John Clark  
Adam Dance  
Sarah Dyke

Peter Gubbins  
Henry Hobhouse  
Tony Lock  
Peter Seib



**Also Present:**

Mike Lewis  
Sue Osborne

Jeny Snell

**Officers:**

Alex Parmley  
Martin Woods  
Paul Fitzgerald  
Angela Watson  
Robert Orrett  
Charlotte Jones  
Nicola Hix  
Richard Birch  
Angela Cox

Chief Executive  
Director (Service Delivery)  
Section 151 Officer  
Monitoring Officer  
Commercial Property Manager  
Lead Specialist (People, Performance & Change)  
Lead Specialist (Finance)  
Lead Specialist (Communications, Marketing & Media)  
Democratic Services Specialist

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

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**1. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)**

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019, 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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**2. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Directors, Clare Pestell and Netta Meadows.

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**3. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

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

There were no questions from members of the public present.

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

There were no announcements made by the Chairman.

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#### 6. The Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood Plan Referendum (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Henry Hobhouse, Ward Member for Cary, thanked the Town Council and the team of volunteers who had compiled the Neighbourhood Plan. He noted that the Independent Examiner had not requested any major changes to the submitted Plan and he hoped the Referendum could be arranged shortly.

The Chairman also paid tribute to the work of the local community in compiling the Plan which would become part of the development plan for the area if confirmed by the referendum.

There was no debate and Members unanimously confirmed the recommendations of the report.

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive:-

- a. agreed the Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood Plan.
- b. agreed to officers organising a referendum for local people on the Electoral Register. The aim of the referendum is to ascertain whether local residents want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Castle Cary and Ansford to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
- c. delegated responsibility to the Director for Strategy and Support Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

**Reason:** To confirm the Independent Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications; and to set out the process for 'making' the plan following a favourable local referendum to be organised by the District Council.

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#### 7. Corporate Performance Report 2018-19: 4th Quarter (Agenda Item 7)

The Lead Specialist, People, Performance and Change advised that the report together with the current quarter data would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee the following month. She outlined the challenges faced by some of the service areas and the work being done to mitigate those challenges. She noted that the number of planning appeal decisions overturned by the Planning Inspectorate was now within parameters and improved communication with the Somerset Waste Partnership had helped to obtain data from them although they had their own scrutiny arrangements.

In response to questions from Members the Director for Service Delivery advised that:-

- the development management service were working to reduce the number of new planning applications requiring validation. The Government measure of an application being determined was from validation. Extensions of time to determine applications had been negotiated with applicants to achieve a better outcome rather than a negative refusal.
- the planning appeals lost as a percentage of all decisions had been significantly concerning 18 months ago and it constantly fluctuated. The Government asked for the percentage at certain points during a 2 year period.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Housing agreed to investigate the reasons for the apparent increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation at certain times of the year.

Members were pleased to see the number of fly-tip incidences cleared within 5 days had increased and noted the increased signage warning potential fly-tippers in problem areas. It was also noted that publicising prosecutions was a deterrent. Members also asked if information on planning appeals lost as a percentage of all decisions could be provided more regularly to them.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the District Executive noted the Corporate Performance Report 2018-19: 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

**Reason:** To note the current position of the Council's agreed key performance indicators for the period from January to March 2019 (Q4) also the end of year update on the eight priority projects included in the 2018-19 Council Plan Annual Action Plan.

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## 8. **SSDC Annual Achievements Report 2018-19 (Agenda Item 8)**

The Lead Specialist, People, Performance and Change advised that the report had been re-designed and reflected the five areas of the Council Plan. Managers had been asked to provide information on achievements within their service, both the statutory and discretionary. She said it had been a challenging year and asked if Members thought there were any achievements which had been missed from the report.

During discussion, it was noted that the format of the report was good for a print format but not so easy to read on a screen. The Lead Specialist, People, Performance and

Change advised that the design allowed the communications team to use the messages for social media posts.

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

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive:-

- a. noted the SSDC Annual Achievements Report 2018-19 at Appendix A.
- b. recommend to Council to approve the 2018/19 achievements report for publication.

**Reason:** To confirm the summary of outcomes achieved against the Council Plan Annual Action Plan for the year April 2018 to March 2019 and to propose them to Council for publication.

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## 9. Commercial Assets Update Report (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development including Commercial Strategy reminded Members that Council had agreed a Commercial Strategy in 2017 to invest in property and green products up to £75m. He noted the 4 large projects already purchased and the 4 recently purchased, including an office building in Milton Keynes. He advised that £39m of the £75m had been invested in the properties at a net 3% return. He noted that markets were becoming more competitive and although the team looked at around 50 investment opportunities per month, typically only 2 were put forward for consideration.

The Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager advised that property investments remained robust and commercial property was seen as a safe investment. The investment opportunity team were under pressure to find a potential new investment opportunity every month.

In response to a question, the Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager advised that the new properties were leased on full tenant repairing leases. Properties owned prior to the adoption of the Commercial Strategy were a mixture of tenancies and there was a sinking fund budget for the repair of those requiring them.

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

**RESOLVED:** That District Executive:-

- a. noted progress made to date in acquiring new commercial investments;
- b. noted progress being made in securing income from our existing assets;
- c. noted progress being made in disposals and transfers of existing assets, resulting in a reduction of future liabilities associated with these assets.

**Reason:** To update members on commercial investments and management of the existing asset portfolio since the last half yearly update in December 2018.

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**10. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 10)**

During discussion it was noted that the Environment Strategy should be added to the Executive Forward Plan for October 2019. The Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee said they would be happy to work with officers to produce the Strategy document. The Chief Executive confirmed that officers involved in the compiling of the Strategy would support it through the Scrutiny process.

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

- Environment Strategy – October 2019

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

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**11. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 11)**

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019 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