

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held in the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil on Thursday 4 July 2019.**

(9.30 am - 11.20 am)

Present:

Councillor Val Keitch (Chairman)

Jason Baker
Mike Best
Adam Dance
Sarah Dyke

Peter Gubbins
Henry Hobhouse
Tony Lock
Peter Seib



Also Present:

Brian Hamilton

Paul Maxwell

Officers:

Alex Parmley
Netta Meadows
Martin Woods
Paul Fitzgerald
Angela Watson
Nicola Hix
Jan Gamon
Angela Cox

Chief Executive
Director (Strategy & Support Services)
Director (Service Delivery)
Section 151 Officer
Monitoring Officer
Lead Specialist (Finance)
Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Democratic Services Specialist

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

12. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 6th June 2019, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

13. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Clark and Clare Pestell, Director.

14. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

15. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public present.

16. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman congratulated the Chief Executive and his wife on the birth of their daughter the previous week.

The Chairman advised that she and officers had attended the MJ Awards ceremony in London the previous week where they had been highly commended in the two categories they had entered. She congratulated officers for their work in reaching the final stage of the awards.

17. Allowenshay Private Water Supply (Agenda Item 6)

The Chief Executive introduced the report and advised that although it was the Council's responsibility to regulate the private water supply, it was not responsible for rectifying it. He said this was a complicated issue which was being used as a case study by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) as it was so unusual. As there was no Parish Council, there was no body to lend the money to and to lend individually would be an administrative burden therefore it was easier to grant the money. The sum requested was lower than expected and this was the only area where water improvement notices had been served so it was an exceptional circumstance.

In response to questions from Members, the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer replied:-

- It had been investigated but was not legally possible to add a supplement to a parish precept as they were a Parish Meeting. Also, Secretary of State approval would be required.
- It was for each individual community on a private water supply to resolve any issues themselves and any further requests for assistance would be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Executive.
- The grant request was linked to the water improvement notices served.
- The total cost of the scheme was commercially confidential.
- The water supply had deteriorated over a number of years to the point where the notice served recommended that all drinking water was boiled.
- The grant exceeded the amount allowed to be granted by an Area Committee (£12,500).
- It was not possible to have a scheme which provided a solution to all the private water supplies in the district as they all required different solutions, and, it was for residents to find their own solutions.

During discussion, the following points were made:

- Concern that giving a grant sets a precedent for other private water supply users to apply for a grant as well.
- The money should be in the form of a loan.

- The residents could apply for a Wessex Home Improvement Loan and the criteria for the loan scheme should be amended if it did not currently allow loans for this purpose.
- The Council provided grants to many communities and this grant would help local residents with a local solution.

It was noted that the comments of the Scrutiny Committee had been answered during their discussion.

Councillor Peter Seib proposed and Councillor Henry Hobhouse seconded that the decision be deferred for clarification of whether the Wessex Home Improvement Loan scheme could be utilised, and, for an assessment on the number of private water supplies across the district and of the potential cost implications were some or all of them to make a request for funding.

This proposal to defer the decision was put to the vote and carried by 8 votes in favour and one against.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to defer the decision for a one-off capital grant of £26,100 towards the infrastructure cost of providing mains water to Allowenshay village for further information on:

- a. clarification of whether the Wessex Home Improvement Loan scheme could be utilised;
- b. an assessment on the number of private water supplies across the district and of the potential cost implications were some or all of them to make a request for funding.

Reason: To defer the decision to provide financial support to residents of Allowenshay, Dinnington and Hinton St George in relation to improvements required to their private water supply (PWS) for further information.

(Voting: 8 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions)

18. Revenue Budget Outturn Report for 2018/19 (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report and drew Members attention to the formal transfer of funds to the Regeneration Fund for key town centres, the funding for the green agenda to support the Environment Strategy and the exceptional treasury management for which he thanked officers. He said that officers were looking at new ways to express the reports in the future to make them easier to read. The recommendations were proposed and seconded.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Committee, the Director for Service Delivery and the Section 151 Officer replied:-

- A peer review were looking at a number of options for the future of the Building Control service.

- The outturn in car park income was the same trend as the previous year and this had been adjusted downwards in the current year and was updated in the current budget.

Councillor Tony Lock said he had attended the Building Control peer review and he was sure that positive suggestions for the future of the service would be made shortly.

There was no debate and Members unanimously agreed to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the net spending for the year of £16,347,586, an underspend of £259,564 (1.6%) compared to final budget, and explanations of variances from budget holders for the 2018/19 financial year as shown in paragraphs 7-10;
- b. approve budget carry forwards of £170,282 into the 2018/19 budgets (as shown in Appendix B);
- c. approve the transfer of £500,000 to the Regeneration Fund from Business Rates Retention funding (as detailed in paragraph 26);
- d. approve the allocation of £350,000 to a new Climate Change and Environment Initiatives Fund, and support the commitment of £40,000 from this Fund towards supporting strategy development for the District and County (as detailed in paragraph 27);
- e. approve the transfer of £378,857 to the Transformation Reserve to fund transitional resources whilst changes are fully implemented;
- f. approve individual service overspends are funded from general balances and the net underspend of £89,282 after carry forwards is returned to general balances;
- g. note the use of the specific reserves in paragraph 33 and the transfers to and from balances outlined in the General Fund table paragraph 34;
- h. note the position of the Area Committee balances in paragraph 39.

Reason: To inform Members of the actual spend against budgets for the 2018/19 financial year.

19. Capital Budget Outturn Report for 2018/19 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report and drew Members attention to the investment in property acquisition and the Council's ability to continue to fund disabled facilities grants, support the Yeovil Innovation Centre and other sports and leisure investments. He noted the availability of funds for the Wessex Home Improvements loans which were recirculated as the loans were repaid.

He proposed the recommendations of the report and they were seconded by Councillor Mike Best.

There was no debate and Members unanimously agreed to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the content of the report including the total spend of £26.478m on capital schemes during 2018/19; and small variance of only £4,000 overspend across 41 completed schemes.
- b. approve the revised Capital Programme spend as detailed in paragraph 10.

Reason: To inform Members of the outturn of the capital programme of the Council for 2018/19.

20. SSDC Transformation Programme - Progress report (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Protecting Core Services including Transformation advised that there had been a constructive debate on the report at Scrutiny Committee and it had been agreed that the programme would be monitored quarterly by Scrutiny Committee in the future.

The Director for Strategy and Support Services reminded Members that it had been an ambitious programme to change how officers worked and how they worked with customers. She said that lots of processes were coming on-line and those customers who wanted to were shifting to on-line access so that officers could spend more time with those customers who were not able to access on-line services. Some of the service-redesigns had not gone according to plan and so there was a longer transition period and additional resource was requested to assist officers through a sustained period of pressure. SSDC were the first in the county to use Connect 360 with Civica and so there were no lessons to be learned from other authorities.

The Director for Service Delivery said there was a plan to clear the backlog of work, increase customer satisfaction and reduce the pressure on staff to allow the new technology to bed-in. A series of targets were being developed and they would be monitored through the quarterly reports to the Scrutiny Committee.

During discussion, the following points were made:

- There were problems in certain areas but they were improving.
- Staff had coped exceptionally well to continue to deliver their services during this period.
- There had been long delays in phones being answered in the contact centre due to the volume of calls but this was improving.

In response to questions from Members, the Chief Executive and Directors confirmed:-

- Some of the savings achieved through Transformation were being used in the interim so the £2.5m saving was only being delayed as more time was required to bed-in new systems.
- Because of the Homeless Reduction Act 2018, thorough assessments of individuals circumstances was taking longer.
- Additional resource would be added to the Customer Focus team, Development Management team and the Council Tax team but it took time to train new staff and time to change the public shift to on-line access.
- The transformation programme would be closing towards the end of the year as it was now considered business as usual.

It was noted that officers had answered questioned raised at the Scrutiny Committee at that meeting, and, at the conclusion of the debate, Members unanimously agreed to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the Transformation Programme report and progress to date;
- b. approve once off additional resources of £494,990 in 2019/20 and £240,230 in 2020/21, to support service delivery to customers during the extended transition period from old to new ways of working, to be funded from the additional business rate retention funds, reserves, income targets and next year's Budget as set out in the Financial Implications section of the report.

Reason: It was agreed by Full Council in April 2017 that the District Executive would receive quarterly updates on the progress of the council's Transformation Programme.

21. Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision - Purchase of a property in South Somerset to meet Housing Need (Agenda Item 10)

The Chairman advised that purchasing the property allowed the current occupiers to move to another area and it would now be let to another family in need of a home.

In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, the Director for Service Delivery advised that the purchase was not a commercial investment but it would provide a rental income and the future occupiers would have the opportunity to purchase a percentage of the property.

There was no debate and Members were content to note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of Council.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to use £67,620 from the Affordable Housing Capital Programme Reserve for the purchase of the remaining leasehold interest (27.6%) of a 3 bedroom adapted bungalow in Yeovil, to enable the Council to provide accommodation to people with complex needs where they are unable to access suitable accommodation from existing housing stock.

Reason: To note an urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of Council, to use £67,620 to purchase a 27.6% share in an SSDC part-owned property, for the Council to help accommodate people at risk of homelessness in South Somerset.

22. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 11)

In response to a question from the Scrutiny Committee, the Lead Specialist for Strategy and Commissioning confirmed that although the timetable to produce the Environment Strategy by October 2019 was tight, she was confident that an overarching strategy would be produced in that timeframe.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment advised of the consultation events which had taken place and were due to be held and it was noted that Town and Parish Councils could still provide feedback after the advised date.

The following addition to the Forward Plan was noted:

- Public Space Protection Orders – September 2019

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A, with the following addition:
 - Public Space Protection Orders – September 2019
2. noted the receipt of a new Consultation from Devon and Somerset Fire Service on Safer Together Service Delivery public consultation

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

23. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 1st August 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