

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held in the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil on Thursday 6 February 2020.**

(9.30 am - 11.00 am)

Present:

Councillor Val Keitch (Chairman)

Jason Baker
Mike Best
Adam Dance

Peter Gubbins
Tony Lock
Peter Seib



Officers

Alex Parmley
Martin Woods
Jan Gamon
Anna-Maria Lenz
Nicola Hix
Paul Matravers
Cath Temple
Paul Huntington
Peter Paddon
Rob Parr
Richard Birch
Richard Ward
Becky Sanders

Chief Executive
Director (Service Delivery)
Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Interim Section 151 Officer
Specialist (Finance)
Specialist (Performance)
Specialist (Compliance & Enforcement)
Lead Specialist (Economy)
Locality Officer
Lead Specialist (Communications, Marketing & Media)
Monitoring Officer
Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)

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

98. Minutes of Previous Meetings (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of previous meetings held on 7 November 2019 and 9 January 2020 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

99. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Clark, Sarah Dyke and Henry Hobhouse.

100. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

101. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public.

102. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman reminded members of the change of date for full Council and Area West in February.

103. SSDC Council Plan 2020-2024 (Agenda Item 6)

The Specialist (Strategic Planning) presented the report which invited members to recommend the adoption of the SSDC Council Plan 2020-2024, Annual Action Plan 2020-2021 and a revised set of Key Performance Indicators.

She noted that Scrutiny Committee had made some suggested amendments:

- To remove reference to the Digital Strategy as Scrutiny Committee had not considered the strategy
- Priority project 5 – that milestones are taken back through Scrutiny Committee once drafted
- Area Chapter (South) – Environment theme – reference to the example of Yeovil Rivers Community Trust should be removed.

During a brief discussion, members agreed that reference to the Yeovil Rivers Community Trust should be removed from the Area Chapter (South). The Chief Executive explained that the Council Plan was forward looking and detailed what would be done in the future. The Digital Strategy was an ambition and a direction, and reference to it in the Council Plan did not mean it had been agreed. He recommended keeping reference to the Digital Strategy in the Council Plan.

Subject to the amendment being made to the Area Chapter (South) to delete the agreed wording, members were content to propose the Council Plan, Annual Action Plan and key performance indicators to Full Council for approval,

RESOLVED: That District Executive recommend Full Council to:-

- a. endorse the new Council Plan 2020-2024 and vision, values and aims it includes (as amended);
- b. agree the annual action plan and key performance indicators for 2020-2021;
- c. note the detailed milestones and desired outcomes for each Priority Project.

Reason: To recommend the adoption of the South Somerset District Council (SSDC) Council Plan 2020 – 2024, Annual Action Plan 2020-2021 and a revised set of Key Performance Indicators.

104. 2020/21 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets and Medium Term Financial Plan (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder (Finance, Legal & Democratic Services) introduced the item which set out the proposed budget and Council Tax for 2020/21, and the estimated budget for the following four years. He acknowledged the concerns raised by Scrutiny Committee regarding timeframes to consider the report, but unfortunately the situation had been unavoidable.

The Portfolio Holder (Finance, Legal and Democratic Services) then presented the report and explained the matters before members for consideration. He provided an overview of the current and future financial environment facing local authorities and highlighted key elements of the report including:

- The outcome for next year's Business Rates pooling was currently unknown, so asking for members to consider the principle.
- The MTFP forecast as detailed in paragraph 12.
- New Homes Bonus as detailed at paragraphs 22 and 23.
- Will cease to be in the pilot area for 75% Business Rates Retention, and will revert back to 50% - detailed in paragraph 34. There was a risk the business rates pooling might not cover funding gap for regeneration programmes – detailed in paragraph 39
- Savings plans as detailed at Appendix B and that significant savings variations will be reported as part of the budget monitoring process.

During a short discussion, the comments and points of detail raised by the Scrutiny Committee were noted. Members were content to propose the recommendations for confirmation by Full Council.

RESOLVED: That District Executive:-

- a. recommend that Full Council approves the Net Revenue Budget for 2020/21 of **£15,207,150**, as set out in the Revenue Account Summary (paragraph 41) and in detail in Appendix A for the District Executive and four Area Committees, subject to any final amendments;
- b. recommend to Full Council a 2020/21 Council tax annual increase of 2.99%, increasing the annual Band D rate by £5.00 to £172.11. Full Council to note this new annual rate comprises £170.26 for SSDC services, raising £10,448,932, and £1.85 on behalf of the Somerset Rivers Authority, raising £112,315;
- c. recommends to Full Council the prioritisation of Business Rates pooling gain to Regeneration as detailed in paragraph 39;
- d. recommends that Full Council approves the new capital programme as shown in Appendix D, which includes an additional funding request of £1.887m as detailed in paragraph 63.

Reason: To set out the Draft Budget and proposed council tax for 2020/21 to enable Executive to recommend proposals to Full Council for approval.

105. Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategies 2020/21 to 2022/23 (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder (Finance, Legal & Democratic Services) presented the report which informed members of the recommended strategy in relation to capital expenditure and financing, investments and treasury management activities. He thanked officers in the Finance team for all the work that had been done recently preparing various financial documents.

There was no discussion and members were content to propose the recommendations for confirmations by Full Council.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. review and recommend that the Full Council approve the Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23;
- b. review and recommend the proposed borrowing and investment limits included in the Capital Strategy;
- c. note the Minimum Revenue Provision statement for 2020/21.

Reason: To inform members of the recommended strategy in relation to capital expenditure and financing, investments and treasury management activities.

106. 2019/20 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 31st December 2019 (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder (Finance, Legal & Democratic Services) introduced the report which provided an update on the forecast revenue financial position and budgetary variations for the financial year 2019/20.

During a brief discussion some of the comments of Scrutiny Committee were noted. The Portfolio Holder (Protecting Core Services) clarified that information about the Business Case for Building Control would be included in the next Transformation update report. The Interim S151 Officer noted she had mentioned at Scrutiny Committee that the reduction in car parking income may be partly influenced by a decline in usage. Following a point of detail raised at Scrutiny Committee, she confirmed that the capital bid included in the draft budget was refurbishment of existing parking machines.

There being no further discussion, members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the current 2019/20 financial position of the Council;
- b. note the reasons for variations to approved Directorate Budgets as detailed in paragraph 8, Table 1;

- c. note the budget virements made under delegated authority as detailed in Appendix B;
- d. approve the budget virements included in Table 4;
- e. note the transfers made to and from reserves outlined in paragraph 28 Table 6, the Area Reserves as detailed in Appendix C, and the Corporate Reserves as detailed in Appendix D.

Reason: To provide the current projection of the forecast spending and income (“outturn”) against the Council’s approved Revenue Budget for the financial year, and to explain projected variations against budget.

107. 2019/20 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 31st December 2019 (Agenda Item 10)

The Portfolio Holder (Finance, Legal & Democratic Services) presented the report which provided an update on the forecast capital financial position and budgetary variations for the financial year 2019/20.

There was no debate and members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to:-

- a. note the content of the report;
- b. approve the revised Capital Programme spend profile as detailed in paragraph 7, Table 1.
- c. approve the projects listed on Appendix B remain in the capital programme.

Reason: To provide an in-year projection in 2019/20 of the forecast spending (“outturn”) against the Council’s approved Capital Programme Budget, and to explain projected variations against individual projects and the Programme as a whole.

108. Corporate Performance Report 2019-20: 3rd Quarter (Agenda Item 11)

The Specialist (Performance) introduced the performance monitoring report which presented the current position of the Council’s agreed key performance indicators. The Leader (Portfolio Holder for Strategy & Policy) commented the report was now much clearer and understandable than in the past. She felt some indicators needed to be removed but acknowledged that was not for debate at this meeting.

The Leader referred to the comments made by Scrutiny Committee and noted that responses had been provided at the Scrutiny meeting. During a brief discussion, and in response to a comment about planning performance figures, the Portfolio Holder (Protecting Core Services) commented that good work was being done and figures were correct. The Director (Service Delivery) noted that some of the Scrutiny comments were

possibly in parallel with new processes and the different way of working. He acknowledged there were some issue with the change process.

At the close of discussion, members were content to note the report. The Specialist (Performance) noted a report regarding new Key Performance Indicators would be taken to District Executive and Scrutiny Committee in March for consideration.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to note the Corporate Performance Report 2019-20: 3rd Quarter.

Reason: To note the current position of the Council's agreed key performance indicators and covers the period from October to December 2019 (Q3).

109. Time Extensions to Public Space Protection Orders for dog fouling, dogs on leads and dog exclusion area (Agenda Item 12)

The Specialist (Compliance & Enforcement) presented the report which asked members to consider approving a time extension for two Public Space Protection Orders. He briefly explained the purpose of the two Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and why the extensions of time were recommended.

In response to queries raised at Scrutiny Committee, the Specialist noted he was satisfied there were adequate resources available across the different teams for enforcement. He provided a brief overview of how the Orders were enforced:

- The process was often reactive and in response to contact from customers.
- The area concerned would then be patrolled and monitored to gather evidence.
- If evidence, would then look to take action and / or prosecute.

The Specialist (Compliance & Enforcement) explained what was planned for the future regarding enforcement and noted a lot of work was already underway.

During a brief discussion, some members noted there were several areas where more enforcement could be done if dedicated wardens were available, and if regenerating town centres then more types of enforcement may be needed.

At the end of discussion members were content to approve the time extensions for the two PSPOs.

RESOLVED: That District Executive agreed to extend the two existing Public Space Protection Orders as set out in Annex 1 and Annex 2.

Reason: To approve the time extension of two Public Space Protection Orders; one for dog fouling and dogs on leads across the district and one for dog exclusion at the fenced area at Yeovil Country Park

110. Future of Local Government in Somerset (Agenda Item 13)

The Chief Executive presented the report which aimed to summarise the research that the five Councils of Somerset commissioned regarding options for the future for Local

Government in Somerset. The financial stability of local councils was in doubt generally, but South Somerset was currently in a good position.

The district councils preferred the direction of collaboration and integration, whereas the County Council still wished to explore unitary as their favoured approach. He explained briefly why the districts did not feel unitary was the right option going forward. The districts recommended that Option 2 (Collaboration and Integration) be fully explored and a Joint Project Board created.

During discussion, several comments were made by the Leader and other members, including:

- All district Leaders had offered to attend and speak with parish and town councils to explain the district option. County were believed to be doing the same.
- If combining authorities to get economies of scale may need to think larger again.
- Option 2 would keep the sovereignty of the districts but they would work more closely together.
- Change is necessary and inevitable due to the changes in government funding.
- Fell should be a referendum to ask residents what they want.
- Option 2 doesn't require legislation and doesn't need to be delayed.

In response to points of detail, the Chief Executive clarified there was no requirement for a referendum, and noted that if Somerset was to become unitary and the district areas disbanded, then all assets and debts would become part of the new authority.

The Leader noted it had been agreed between the districts that she and the Leader of Sedgemoor District Council be the two Leaders to lead this going forward, and would give political balance. She clarified that community consultation and engagement would include parish and town councils.

At the end of debate members were content to propose the recommendations for approval by Full Council.

The Leader thanked the Chief Executive and officers for the huge amount of work that had been undertaken to get to this stage.

RESOLVED: That District Executive recommend that Full Council:-

1. agree that a full business case should now be prepared, which fully explores Option 2 (Collaboration and Integration), being the preferred way forward at this time. This business case should come back to District Executive/Council in July 2020, along with clear recommendations and delivery plan.
2. agrees option 2 – Collaboration and Integration as this council's current preferred option for the future of local government to take forward through community consultation and engagement.
3. agree that a joint Project Board should be created, with the Leader of the Council being the representative from each Council, to oversee the work during the next stage.

Reason: To determine the way forward for local government in Somerset.

111. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 14)

The following additions and deletions to the Forward Plan were noted:

- New Key Performance Indicators – addition for March 2020
- The Future of Local Government in Somerset – Business Case – addition for July 2020 (to District Executive and Council)
- Budget Outturn Reports – deletion from May 2020 (as this is a duplication with July)

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

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

Additions:

- New Key Performance Indicators – March 2020
- The Future of Local Government in Somerset – Business Case – July 2020 (to District Executive and Council)

Deletions:

- Budget Outturn Reports – May 2020 (as this is a duplication with July)

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

112. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 15)

Members noted the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 5 March 2020 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30am.

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Chairman

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Date