

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 17 October 2019** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(7.30 pm - 9.23 pm)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Paul Maxwell (Chairman)  
Councillor Jenny Kenton (Vice-Chairman)

Jason Baker  
Mike Best  
Neil Bloomfield  
Dave Bulmer  
Hayward Burt  
Tony Capozzoli  
Martin Carnell  
Malcolm Cavill  
John Clark  
Nicola Clark  
Louise Clarke  
Nick Colbert  
Sarah Dyke  
Karl Gill  
David Gubbins  
Peter Gubbins  
Brian Hamilton

Mike Hewitson  
Henry Hobhouse  
Ben Hodgson  
Charlie Hull  
Kaysar Hussain  
Val Keitch  
Andy Kendall  
Tim Kerley  
Mike Lewis  
Mike Lock  
Pauline Lock  
Tony Lock  
Kevin Messenger  
Graham Oakes  
Tricia O'Brien  
Robin Pailthorpe  
Clare Paul

Wes Read  
David Recardo  
Paul Rowsell  
Dean Ruddle  
Peter Seib  
Garry Shortland  
Alan Smith  
Jeny Snell  
Andy Soughton  
Mike Stanton  
Rob Stickland  
Lucy Trimnell  
Anthony Vaughan  
Linda Vijeh  
Martin Wale  
William Wallace  
Colin Winder

**Officers:**

Angela Watson  
Paul Fitzgerald  
Netta Meadows  
Clare Pestell  
Jan Gamon  
Vicki Dawson  
David Crisfield  
Katy Menday  
Angela Cox

Monitoring Officer  
Section 151 Officer  
Director (Strategy & Support Services)  
Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation)  
Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning)  
Lead Specialist (Environmental Health)  
Specialist (Strategic Planning)  
Leisure & Recreation Manager  
Democratic Services Specialist

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**61. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robin Bastable, Adam Dance, Sue Osborne, Tiffany Osborne, Crispin Raikes, Gina Seaton, Gerard Tucker and Alex Parmley, Chief Executive.

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**62. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

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

A resident of Yeovil advised that he had attended a documentary film screening at the Westland Leisure Complex the previous week where although the sound was good the picture quality had been poor and out of focus. He said that it was important to get the picture quality correct or people would not make return visits.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Well-Being undertook to speak to the Manager of Westland Leisure Complex to see what could be done.

A resident of South Petherton referred to the issue of climate change and said that further action needed to be taken to place less reliance on oil based products. She referred to the Council's Environment Strategy which she said did not fill her with hope and although it was a start, she asked if there were plans to take the strategy further?

The Portfolio Holder for Environment confirmed that the Council's recognition of a Climate Emergency and its Environment Strategy were taken very seriously. She said the Strategy was only the start and it would be reviewed regularly to ensure it was effective.

A local resident also spoke regarding the Environment Strategy which he said was a positive statement of intent, however, there was no mention of divesting the Council's pension fund investments in fossil fuels. He also said that more trees could be planted and mentioned that Extinction Rebellion were planning to plant 400 trees during November. The NPPF encouraged the provision of electronic vehicle charging points in safe accessible places but only 3 were mentioned in the plan. There was also no mention of a Citizens Assembly in the Plan and he said the public and the Council should work side by side on these issues. He asked if the Council were committed to achieving their vision by 2025.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment said she hoped the questions raised would be answered during the debate of the Environment Strategy and would be happy to discuss any further points with the resident.

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

The Chairman welcomed two local students to the meeting who had taken part in the schools consultation for the Environment Strategy.

The Chairman said he was pleased to announce that Mr Derek Yeomans had been appointed as the Independent Member of the Audit Committee.

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## **66. Chairman's Engagements (Agenda Item 6)**

The list of Chairman's engagements were noted.

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## **67. SSDC Environment Strategy 2019 (Agenda Item 7)**

The Portfolio Holder for Environment introduced the report and said the enormity of climate change was stark. The recent IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report was clear that carbon emissions must be reduced by 45% within twelve years to stabilise global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius. Since SSDC recognised a climate emergency in May 2019 and undertook to deliver a strategy for adoption, officers in the Environment Community of Practice had worked tirelessly to shape it. She said the Council was committed to mitigating the effects of Climate Change and the strategy confirmed that they were not just paying lip service to that commitment.

The strategy identified 25 interventions for implementation over the course of the next two years, some of which would be under way and completed within months. Appropriate structures and processes would be developed so that targets, outputs and measures were achievable as the Council moved to reduce its carbon dependence.

She confirmed that engagement with many local stakeholders had taken place and many of their views and ideas had been incorporated into the strategy. In addition to the development of the SSDC strategy, officers were fully engaged with work to prepare a county wide Climate Emergency Strategy. She concluded by confirming that the strategy would be fully reviewed within 2 years to ensure it was relevant and fit for purpose.

In response to questions from Members, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and the Director for Commercial Services & Income Generation confirmed:-

- There was currently a budget of £350,000 to address the commitments in the Strategy.
- External expertise had been engaged to set the data baseline so that an assessment of return on investment could be made to ensure the best environmental benefit projects were put forward.
- The Council's Cycle to Work scheme allowed employees wishing to purchase a new bicycle to travel to work to benefit from savings by receiving Tax and National Insurance exemptions.
- SSDC could only plant trees on their own land and they had committed to planting 1,000 and were working with Parish Councils to increase this. The Environment Agency had committed to plant 2,000 by Autumn 2020.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- Environmentally friendly measures like solar panels should be included in new housing developments.
- Completion of the Chard to Tatworth cycleway should be added to the Strategy.
- National Planning Policy Framework needed to be strengthened to compel developers to install eco-friendly measures during development.
- The review of the Council's Local Plan was due to be discussed the following year.

- There was a need to travel less as a great amount of energy was expended in travel.
- 25% of emissions were from industry and they should be encouraged to generate their own energy possibly through solar panels.
- A website of information with links to other partners would be set up as part of the One Planet Living initiative.
- Siting segregated public waste bins in towns would encourage recycling.
- Could SSDC offer a grant scheme to residents to encourage the installation of solar panels?

The Director for Commercial Services & Income Generation agreed to provide a written answer to the question of how the Environment Strategy compared to the other Council's other 5 key areas of focus.

At the conclusion of the debate, it was proposed that an update on the progress of the Strategy be a standing item of business each month. This was agreed and the majority of Members were content to confirm the adoption of the new South Somerset Environment Strategy 2019 and the identified intermediate actions and next steps.

**RESOLVED:** That Full Council:-

- a. approved and adopted the new South Somerset Environment Strategy 2019;
- b. agreed the identified intermediate actions and next steps.

**Reason:** To agree the adoption of the South Somerset Environment Strategy 2019.

*(Voting: 52 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention)*

## **68. Presentation from Chief Inspector Sharon Baker of Avon & Somerset Police (Agenda Item 8)**

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Sharon Baker of Avon and Somerset Police.

The Chief Inspector provided Members with a Power Point presentation on the work of the Police. She said:-

- South Somerset had 6 police locations across the area, 3 had Patrol officers and Neighbourhood teams and 3 had just Neighbourhood teams. There were no plans to close any of the stations, but some may move to co-locate with Local Councils or fire stations where it makes sense.
- Crime had changed so policing had also adapted. About 30% of police work related to crime and the rest was people in crisis, those missing, suffering mental ill health etc. Also people were more likely to be a victim of crime in their own home with on-line cyber crime.
- All prisoners were now taken to Bridgwater which had expert facilities and detainee staff who dealt with them, so freeing officers to return to work. There were also fewer prisoners due to legislative changes and most people were interviewed voluntarily by appointment.

- Body worn video cameras were helping by capturing evidence from a scene and improving evidence and therefore there were more earlier guilty pleas and less complaints.
- New technology now meant that officers did not need to be in a police station. Laptops and mobile phones allowed them to work in the community.
- Analytics allowed immediate access to crime trends in an area which was helpful for officers at Parish Council meetings.
- Officers and sergeants met every fortnight to discuss their priorities and could bid for further support if needed to deal with a particular issue.
- They were trialling Facebook accounts to talk to the public and could be followed on Twitter where wanted photos could be posted. The public were reporting on social media rather than direct to the police.
- Operation Uplift would mean an increase of around 330 officers per year for the next 3 years.

In response to questions from Members, the Chief Inspector confirmed:-

- There were 50 uniformed officers across South Somerset and 50 across Mendip.
- The Neighbourhood teams generally did not respond to emergency calls but they did respond to slow-time requests.
- All the beat teams had been moved to work the same shift pattern. This had increased productivity and was better for the health and wellbeing of staff.
- Officers who were moved for development reasons would be replaced in the towns which they left.
- Operation Remedy had been operating for 6 months and was very successful. It had focused on burglary, drugs and knife crime.
- The mini-police project were working with 3 schools in Somerset and would be expanding to more as it was very positive.
- Operation Topaz was aimed at disrupting child sexual exploitation. They raised awareness by presentations to schools and briefings for governors.
- It was difficult to say how prevalent the county lines drug issue was but the established lines were targeted and beat officers carried out daily checks on vulnerable people who were susceptible to cuckoo drug dealing.
- The police worked in partnership with many organisations to reduce police time spent dealing with mental health issues.

The Chief Inspector agreed to follow up individual enquiries made by Members.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Baker for attending and providing an informative presentation and answering Members questions.

**NOTED.**

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## **69. Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of Antisemitism (Agenda Item 9)**

The Leader of Council noted that the report had been supported by District Executive and said she felt strongly that the Council should adopt the definition. She said that Local Authorities had a valuable role to play in tackling hate crime in partnership with the police. Although eradicating anti-semitism could not be achieved by the Council it should show leadership. She proposed the definition be adopted.

The Specialist for Strategic Planning confirmed that the Government had invited the Council to adopt the definition in 2017 and had again written that week.

Councillor Kaysar Hussain confirmed that he supported the adoption of the definition. He said that any type of hate towards belief needed to be confronted in all walks of life.

Councillor John Clark confirmed that he had abstained from voting at District Executive because the proposal was directed at one religion only although he has not against the definition. He confirmed that he would abstain from voting again.

The definition was seconded by Councillor Linda Vijeh and on being put to the vote, was carried by 49 votes in favour, 0 against and 2 abstentions.

**RESOLVED:** That Full Council agreed to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism along with the accompanying illustrative examples.

**Reason:** As a measure that supports the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010, and its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism contributes to the council's approach to promoting equality and meeting its equality duties to the public, customers, contractors/suppliers and staff.

*(Voting: 49 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions)*

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## **70. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 10)**

The Leader of Council introduced the report and invited questions on any of the decisions taken.

Councillor Michael Lewis noted that a confidential report regarding the future management of the Council's Leisure Facilities had been discussed at the District Executive meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October and he felt the majority of Members may not be aware of the report and decision.

The Monitoring Officer advised that all confidential reports were available to Members but not all had subscribed to receive them. If Members wished to ask a question on a confidential item then the report could be discussed at a future meeting of Council.

The report of executive decisions was noted.

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## **71. Motions (Agenda Item 11)**

There were no Motions submitted by Members.

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## **72. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 12)**

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

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**73. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)**

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Full Council would take place on **Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at **7.30 p.m.**

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**74. Exclusion of Press and Public (Agenda Item 14)**

The Chairman asked for Members agreement to hear the following report in confidential session because it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of the authority. This was agreed by Members and it was:-

**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).

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**75. Wincanton Town Centre Strategy Governance and Finance - (Confidential) (Agenda Item 15)**

The Portfolio Holder for Area East Committee introduced the report which would agree the establishment of the Wincanton Town Strategy to regenerate the town. He confirmed the first meeting of the Board would be 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

The recommendations were proposed by the Portfolio Holder and seconded by Councillor Jason Baker. There was no debate and Members unanimously confirmed the recommendations of the report.

**RESOLVED:** That Full Council agreed to:-

- a. note the content and agree the recommendations of the report.

**Reason:** To confirm the arrangements for the Wincanton Board and approve the overarching budget to begin delivery of the Wincanton Strategy.

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

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Chairman

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Date

