

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **South Somerset District Council** held on **Thursday 21 October 2021** in the Westlands Entertainment Venue - Westlands.

(6.30 - 7.22 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Paul Maxwell (Chairman)
Councillor Wes Read (Vice-Chairman)

Jason Baker	Ben Hodgson	Dean Ruddle
Robin Bastable	Val Keitch	Peter Seib
Mike Best	Andy Kendall	Alan Smith
Dave Bulmer	Jenny Kenton	Jeny Snell
Hayward Burt	Tim Kerley	Andy Soughton
John Clark	Tony Lock	Rob Stickland
Adam Dance	Kevin Messenger	Lucy Trimnell
Sarah Dyke	Graham Oakes	Gerard Tucker
Karl Gill	Robin Pailthorpe	William Wallace
Brian Hamilton	David Recardo	
Henry Hobhouse	Paul Rowsell	

Also Present On-line:

Tony Capozzoli	Michael Lewis	Crispin Raikes
Nicola Clark	Pauline Lock	Garry Shortland
Nick Colbert	Mike Lock	Mike Stanton
David Gubbins	Tricia O'Brien	Linda Vijeh
Peter Gubbins	Sue Osborne	Martin Wale
Mike Hewitson	Clare Paul	Colin Winder
Charlie Hull	Oliver Patrick	

Officers:

Jane Portman	Chief Executive
Jan Gamon	Director (Place and Recovery)
Nicola Hix	Director (Support Services & Strategy)
Kirsty Larkins	Director (Service Delivery)
Jill Byron	Monitoring Officer
Karen Watling	Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
Lynda Pincombe	Specialist - Strategic Planning
Brendan Downes	Lead Specialist - People, Performance & Change
Angela Cox	Specialist (Democratic Services)
Michelle Mainwaring	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

61. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neil Bloomfield, Martin Carnell, Malcolm Cavill, Louise Clarke, Kaysar Hussain, Tiffany Osborne and Gina Seaton.

62. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 16th September 2021 and also the Council meeting of 19th November 2020 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

63. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

64. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

Councillor Jason Baker noted the recent flooding across the district in the previous 24 hours and he said that it was the third time in 3 months that some residents had their homes flooded. He said he had been assured by Somerset County Council that a report was forthcoming and action would be taken to rectify the drainage issues but he encouraged his fellow Councillors who were also County Councillors to pursue the issue on behalf of the residents affected.

(Subsequent to the meeting, the SCC flood risk manager has been invited to attend Scrutiny Committee to discuss flooding concerns in the district).

65. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman remembered Geoff Clarke, a former District Councillor who had recently passed away. He had served from 1999 until 2011 representing Crewkerne Ward and he had also been a former Mayor of Crewkerne

The Chairman also thanked all Members for conducting themselves with dignity and respect and he noted that the late Jo Cox MP had once said that there was more that unites us than divides us. He spoke of the tragic death the previous week of Sir David Amess MP whilst carrying out his constituency duties in Leigh on Sea. He asked Members to join him for a minute of silence in memory of Sir David Amess MP.

Members stood for a minute of silence.

He noted that information had been circulated to all Members on personal safety and he asked that Members consider it in undertaking their duties.

66. Chairman's Engagements (Agenda Item 6)

The list of Chairmans Engagements were NOTED.

67. Appointment of a Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services asked Members to confirm the appointment of Karen Watling to the position of Chief Finance Officer until March 2023. He noted that she had been the Interim Section 151 Officer for 6 months and there would be a cost saving in making the position fixed term rather than a contract. He also noted that with 18 months remaining before the new Unitary Council, it would be difficult to recruit a quality officer to the post. He noted that the future financial practices were being aligned to the local government reform agenda which was a significant exercise and he commended the appointment of Karen Watling as Chief Finance Officer to Council and the subsequent financial implications.

The recommendations were seconded by the Leader of Council and Members unanimously confirmed the appointment Karen Watling as Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) with effect from 1st November 2021 to 31st March 2023.

RESOLVED: That Full Council agreed:-

- a. to formally appoint Karen Watling as Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) with effect from 1st November 2021 to 31st March 2023 on a 17 month fixed term contract at an annual salary of £109,000.
- b. that the additional budget required in this financial year to fund this appointment and the cost of the existing interim arrangements, of £106,665, is funded from the MTFP Support Fund earmarked reserve (see paragraph 23).
- c. that the additional budget required to fund this appointment for next financial year, of £52,082, is approved as a growth item to the 2022/23 budget (see paragraph 23).

Reason: To confirm the appointment, on a fixed term basis, of one of the Council's Statutory Officer Roles, the Section 151 Officer.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

68. Procurement Strategic Framework and Revised Standing Orders (Agenda Item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services advised that the proposal was to update the Council's existing procurement framework in the light of

changing legislation. The Government had made a number of changes as part of their Levelling Up agenda and Industrial Strategy and as the UK had left the European Union. Therefore substantial changes were required to the SSDC procurement strategy to align them with this legislation. Amendments were also required to the Council's Constitution which would be reported to the next appropriate meeting of Council.

Councillor Dean Ruddle clarified that he had no business association with the company D N Ruddle Civil Engineering Ltd which was listed as a supplier to the Council in the procurement spend analysis.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded and unanimously agreed by Council.

RESOLVED: That Full Council agreed:-

a. to adopt the following procurement documents:

- Revised Contract Standing Orders
- Procurement Strategy
- Social Value Policy
- Contract Management Framework

and update the Council's Constitution accordingly.

b. to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to make minor amendments to the Contract Procedure Rules, provided any such amendments are reported to the next appropriate meeting of Council.

Reason: To confirm the adoption of a suite of procurement documents by Council.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

69. Notification of a Decision taken under delegated powers in respect of a Dispensation for a Councillor (Agenda Item 9)

There was no debate and Council were content to note the dispensation granted to Councillor Malcolm Cavill by the Chief Executive under section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED: That Full Council agreed to note:-

a. That the Chief Executive approved a dispensation for Councillor Malcolm Cavill from attending meetings of the

Council by reason of illness for a six month period commencing 14th October 2021, in order to avoid Councillor Cavill ceasing to be a member of the authority under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

b. that the dispensation would last until 14th April 2022.

Reason: To note the general dispensation has been granted by the Chief Executive under section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 for a Councillor from attending Council meetings due to ill health over a six month period.

70. Report of Executive Decisions (Agenda Item 10)

The Leader of Council introduced the report and invited questions.

She noted the report which established a Joint Committee in Somerset for the implementation of local government reorganisation would comprise of 5 representatives from the County Council and the Leaders from each of the 4 District Councils. Substitutions would be allowed and their first meeting would be held on 5th November and they hoped to have the draft Structural Changes Order to discuss.

In response to questions, the Leader of Council confirmed:-

- The Public Space Protection Orders report should sit within the Community Safety Portfolio.
- The compilation of the Joint Committee in Somerset for the implementation of local government reorganisation had been set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (previously the MHCLG) and it was their intent that the County Council would have one more representative than the District Councils. It was hoped that one of the District Council Leaders would be the Vice-Chairman of the Committee. They would all work in co-operation for the benefit of the residents of Somerset.

The Council NOTED the report.

71. Audit Committee (Agenda Item 11)

The Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee regretted that he had not been present at the meeting but would circulate a written report if required.

The report was NOTED.

72. Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 12)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee introduced the report and he thanked those Members and officers who attended to assist the Committee. He noted that they had held a workshop to discuss Community Infrastructure Levy which had been very interesting. The Scrutiny Committee had fed comments and questions through the joint scrutiny panel to the Somerset Waste Partnership during the summer and had received robust responses. He also asked if the Scrutiny Committee could assist the Somerset Rivers Authority in the recent flooding incidents within the district. He concluded by reminding Council that there was space in the Scrutiny work programme and by thanking the Scrutiny Specialist for her dedication to her work.

The Chairman said he would be attending a meeting of the Somerset Rivers Authority joint scrutiny panel shortly and he would mention the flooding incidences across the district.

The report was NOTED.

73. Motions (Agenda Item 13)

The Portfolio Holder for Environment introduced her Motion and reminded Council that it had declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and was working towards carbon net zero by 2030. This would be delivered through the Environment Strategy and aimed to embed it into the creation of the new unitary council. She said the Motion supported the Climate and Emergency Private Members Bill, and proposed joining the UK100 and Countryside Climate Network to join with other organisations and local government leaders to demonstrate the Council's commitment to tackle climate change. She listed the key aims of the bill to take existing legislation further and noted that the Government were not on track to meet their 2050 emissions target. The UK100 and the Countryside Climate Network were lobbying for more resource from central government to enable local authorities to take ambitious climate action. Being part of the network would enable the sharing of knowledge, enable collective lobbying of the government to benefit local communities and ensure SSDC were part of the group shaping national policy to tackle environmental problems. She concluded that agreeing the motion would demonstrate to communities that SSDC would work with others to do all it could to mitigate against climate change. She commended the motion to Council which was seconded by Councillor Oliver Patrick.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- Climate change was being fought and some battles were won and some not. Fighting in alliances meant you could do more and deliver more.
- MP's must be encouraged to support the Climate and Emergency Private Members Bill.

- Concern at people who had recently caused disruption to roads around London to highlight the Insulate Britain campaign and it would be prudent to add some condemnation of this action within the motion.
- There will be challenges for rural communities particularly in coping with the charging of electric vehicles and also the insulation of older listed buildings. Some areas of agriculture were ahead in ecology and tackling climate change issues.
- Heat source pumps were not the only option for the future of heating homes. Electric space heaters were much more efficient than gas for Co2 emissions and were no longer very expensive.
- Area East Committee had recently purchased two infra-red cameras to use in rural areas to take pictures of properties to help identify areas of heat loss. This should help householders to insulate their properties where it was needed.
- Propose that the motion be added to say that SSDC do not support any illegal actions which harm the ideals of the motion (proposal not seconded).
- The suggestion to criticise protestors in the motion would only serve to dilute its intention.
- Rural communities were dependent upon cars as bus services in Somerset were very poor. We should lobby for more bus routes to take cars off the roads.

Councillor Oliver Patrick, in seconding the Motion, said children would study what people were doing now to protect the environment and the Council must act now or there may be further disruptive demonstrations. The Motion demanded action from world leaders who would be meeting at COP26 in Glasgow shortly and also in South Somerset to ensure the Council was taking action on climate change. He said SSDC had already taken action by planting thousands of trees, introducing additional kerbside recycling, changing to a renewable energy provider, trialling e-scooters in market towns, installing solar panels on council-owned buildings and EV charging points in council-owned car parks. But the Council should always seek to do more as proposed in the Motion. He concluded that he supported the Motion and was pleased to second it.

A vote was taken and it was supported by 32 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: That Full Council agreed in principle to:-

- a. commit to delivering on the UK100 declaration through its Environment Strategy and pledges to continue this work and embed it in the creation of Somerset's new unitary council
- b. support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill
- c. write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill; and
- d. write to the CEE Bill Alliance, the organisers of the campaign

for the Bill, expressing its support (campaign@ceebill.uk)

- e. continue work on mitigating climate change by pledging to join the UK100 the alliance of local government leaders for cleaner, more powerful communities
- f. join the Countryside Climate Network
- g. write to UK100 to confirm the above membership@uk100.org
- h. inform the local media of these decisions

Reason: To support the UK100 declaration, the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill and to join the Countryside Climate Network.

(Voting: 32 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention)

74. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10 (Agenda Item 14)

There were no questions raised by Members under Procedure Rule 10.

75. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 15)

Members noted that the next meeting of Full Council was a reserve date of 18 November and it would only be called if there was business to progress.

The following Full Council meeting would be held on Thursday 16 December at 6.30pm – venue to be confirmed.

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Chairman

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Date