

## MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Somerset Building Control Partnership Joint Committee held on Thursday, 24 November 2022 at 2 pm in the Council Chamber, Mendip District Council, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5BT.

### COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

#### Mendip District Council

Cllr Damon Hooton (Chair 2022/23)

#### Sedgemoor District Council

Cllr Andrew Gilling

#### Somerset West and Taunton Council

Cllr Marcus Kravis

### OFFICERS PRESENT:

Helen Bowen	Democratic Services Officer
Claire Dicken	Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Dowden	Sedgemoor District Council
Paul Grummett	Somerset Building Control Partnership Manager, Sedgemoor District Council
Vicky Lowman	Somerset West and Taunton District Council
Janet Pascoe	Accountant, Sedgemoor District Council
Vicky Parsons	Mendip District Council

Agenda Item	Subject	Actioned By
1	<b>Chair's Announcements</b>  The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and set out the procedures the meeting would follow.	
2	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Apologies had been received from Cllr Mike Caswell, Sedgemoor District Council, Cllr Andrew Sully (Vice-Chair), Somerset West and Taunton Council and Cllr Laura Waters, Mendip District Council.	
3	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  None.	

<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Public Participation</b></p> <p>None.</p>	
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Previous Minutes</b></p> <p>The minutes for the meeting of 12 May 2022 were agreed.</p>	<p><b>Claire Dicken</b></p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Revised Operational Plan and Targets for 2022-23</b></p> <p>The Somerset Building Control Partnership Manager presented a report which explained the main function of the Partnership was to ensure that the Councils could meet their statutory and regulatory duties in respect of building control matters in a timely manner. It was a statutory service which administered legislation relating to the built environment. It operated in such a manner as to establish and maintain a high reputation for both itself and the partner councils.</p> <p>The service had two elements which were described as fee earning and non-fee earning work.</p> <p>The Plan went on to set out the Operational Priorities for 2022/23 which included ensuring the Partnership was fully aware of the proposed changes in legislation and the responsibilities associated thereof, and the unification of Building Control in Somerset.</p> <p>This review of the Operational Plan had been prepared against the background of significant challenges posed by the Unitary proposals for Somerset, a New Regulator for the construction Industry and the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>Whilst application numbers had dropped slightly in the second quarter of this year, the market share had been maintained at 70%. The Partnership had performed well during the last financial year.</p> <p>A recent consultation had been carried out regarding fee charges, mainly for demolition notice and Initial Notice submissions. This could lead to an increase in income. Detailed results would be reported back when available.</p> <p>Forecasting in the short to medium term at the moment was very difficult due to the cost-of-living crisis, hopefully the original budget trends would be maintained.</p> <p>Performance indicators would remain as last year.</p>	<p><b>Paul Grummett</b></p>

	<p>The Partnership had continued to invest in training and development of staff.</p> <p>All staff were still embracing the remote working ethos, and it appeared in general terms that there had not been any reduction in service delivery to customers.</p> <p>The Partnership had its own standalone web presence and online payment system, as well as being directly contactable by client's. This meant staff were able to offer a seamless service.</p> <p>South Somerset Building Control had asked for some assistance regarding site inspections and the Partnership was in the process of doing this.</p> <p>During the discussion which followed the Manager said he hoped the service would continue to develop its staff after Vesting Day. However, this would be dependent on its new management.</p> <p>The Manager said significant work had been and would continue to be undertaken during the forthcoming year as part of the Unitary proposals. This included a newly branded website.</p> <p>He explained Building Control data migration would take place after Vesting Day.</p> <p>The democratic governance and oversight of the Building Control service after Vesting Day had yet to be decided.</p> <p>In response to queries, the Accountant explained that the staffing structure post Vesting Day had not been set yet. Once the staffing structure was known the Accountant would be able to set up the accounts for the service setting out the fee earning and nonfee earning parts of the service.</p> <p>Members welcomed the contents of the report.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>The revised Operational Plan and Targets for 2022-23 were noted.</p>	
7	<p><b>Conclusion of the Somerset Building Control Partnership</b></p> <p>The Partnership Manager gave a verbal report.</p>	<p><b>Paul Grummett</b></p>

	<p>He said he was personally pleased to have been part of such a successful Partnership. He said at the beginning the decision to enter into a Partnership had been difficult. However, through the commitment shown and particularly through the hard work of the staff the Partnership had worked very well.</p> <p>The Chair said he was also pleased to have been part of the Partnership which had proven to be exemplary.</p> <p>Sarah Dowden was invited to speak. She said the Partnership had worked incredibly well particularly throughout COVID. She said something which had made a massive difference was the way the Manager had pushed for the development of staff and this had been appreciated by the team.</p> <p>Although the Partnership was being closed down, an effort would be made to push its best interests forward.</p> <p>Members agreed the Partnership had proved to be a great success.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>Noted.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Urgent Business</b></p> <p>None</p>	
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Exclusion of the Press and Public</b></p> <p>The Somerset Building Control Partnership resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during item 10 on the grounds that exempt information (as defined in Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972) of the following description was likely to be disclosed:</p> <p>Category 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including those of the Council).</p>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Somerset Building Control Partnership Financial Report for 2022-2023</b></p> <p>The Accountant for Sedgemoor District Council had prepared a report.</p> <p>The report explained the Partnership was now part way through its seventh year of operation.</p>	<p><b>Janet Pascoe</b></p>

A financial performance report for 2022/23 was attached to the report for information. It covered the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.

From 1 April 2023 the Local Government Reorganisation would commence. The new Somerset Council would have the responsibility of agreeing the 2023/24 budget.

Members thanked the Officer for a very clear report and clear explanation of it.

They agreed the Building Control Partnership had been a success story and this was down to its management and leadership. Members thanked the organisation for its hard work.

In response to queries the Accountant explained that any surplus of money would go to the new Somerset Council.

There was some concern that the new Council may see the service as an opportunity to raise funds.

The Officer explained the service would still be subject to CIPFA regulations. These ensured the service should break even. Building Control was a mandatory service and it should continue to be managed in the future so that it would continue to break even. Any reserves should be used to balance the books within the budget.

**RESOLVED**

To note the financial performance report for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.

The meeting finished at approximately 2.40 pm.