

SOUTH HAMS EXECUTIVE



Minutes of a meeting of the South Hams Executive held on Thursday, 6th June, 2024 at 10.00 am at the Council Chamber - Follaton House

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Brazil
Vice Chairman Cllr Thomas

Cllr Abbott
Cllr Hodgson

Cllr Dommett
Cllr O'Callaghan

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Dennis
Cllr Penfold
Cllr Taylor

Cllr Oram
Cllr Steele (via Teams)

Officers:

Senior Leadership Team
Head of Democratic Services
Monitoring Officer
Assistant Director – Strategy (via Teams)
Head of Revenues & Benefits
Head of Housing
Principal Housing Officer
Senior Strategic Planning Officer

1. **Welcome**
E.1/24
In opening the meeting, the Leader welcomed Cllr Dommett to her first meeting as a Member of the Executive.

2. **Moment Of Reflection**
E.2/24
In recognition of it being the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landings, at the invitation of the Leader, the Chairman of Council addressed the meeting. In so

doing, he acknowledged the courage and sacrifice of the men and women involved on that momentous day and invited Members and officers to stand for a moment of reflection.

3. **Minutes**

E.3/24

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 18 April 2024 were confirmed as a true and correct record.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

E.4/24

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting and these were recorded as follows:

With regard to agenda item 11 ('Staverton Neighbourhood Plan' (Minute E.11/24 below refers)), Cllr J Hodgson advised that by virtue of having been an observer to the process (in her capacity as the local Ward Member), she declared a personal interest in the item and, as such, took part in the debate and vote thereon.

5. **Public Question Time**

E.5/24

The Leader informed that two questions had been received in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules. However, these had both been deferred to the next Executive meeting (to be held on 18 July 2024) in light of the Council now being in the pre-election period.

6. **Executive Forward Plan**

E.6/24

Members were presented with the most recently published version of the Executive Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Executive meetings for the next four months and the contents were duly noted.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) For future iterations of the Plan, it was requested that officers populate (and give greater consideration to) the column heading titled: '*Consultees and Means of Consultation*';
- (b) Unless informed to the contrary, it was noted that officers were still intending to present the draft Productivity Plan to the Executive meeting to be held on 18 July 2024;
- (c) In terms of updates to the next iteration of the Plan, Members requested that:

- the 'Waste Services Update' agenda item on 19 September 2024 being broadened out to include reference to a progress update on the Community Composting initiative; and
- a review into the recently launched Planning Enforcement Protocol being scheduled for the Executive meeting to be held on 21 November 2024.

7. **Corporate Peer Challenge 2024**

E.7/24

The Executive considered a report that set out the findings and conclusions of the recently undertaken Corporate Peer Challenge.

During the ensuing debate and, in recognition of such a positive concluding report, there was widespread thanks extended to the Senior Leadership Team and all Members (both past and present). Whilst it was acknowledged that the report had been so positive, the importance of the Council not being complacent was also emphasised.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the positive assessment of South Hams District Council provided in the Local Government Association's feedback report following the Peer Challenge in March 2024 be noted; and
2. That the recommendations set out in the report with the proposal to collaborate with partners and key stakeholders to develop an action plan in response to the recommendations made, be endorsed, with an initial draft action plan to be considered at the next Executive meeting (to be held on 18 July 2024).

8. **Cost of Living Crisis: Plans for Household Support Fund Allocation (1 April to 30 September 2024) and 12-month review of the Revenues and Benefits service.**

E 8/24

The Executive was presented with a report that sought Member support for the implementation of a series of measures to support residents during the Cost of Living Crisis.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) Members praised the Head of Revenues and Benefits for her tireless efforts in generating service improvements. Furthermore, Members asked that

the officer relay their thanks to her team for the levels of thoughtful support that they provided to residents;

- (b) The Executive was assured that officers had a very close (and positive) working relationship with colleagues from Citizens Advice;
- (c) The leadership role being played by the Council in the Devon Care Leavers initiative was welcomed.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the Head of Revenues and Benefits takes immediate steps to:
 - a) progress support payments of £500 to Devon Care Leavers known to be living at an address in the district on 1 June 2024;
 - b) to progress support payments of £500 to Devon Care Leavers newly notified by Devon County Council to be living at an address in the district between 2 June and 30 September 2024; and
 - c) release the balance of the Household Support Fund for an open application process until 30 September 2024 or until the Fund is fully spent, if sooner; and
2. That the progress made by the Revenues and Benefits service in the last 12 months, following the service review, be noted.

9. Q3 and Q4 Write Off Report - 2023/24

E.9/24

A report was considered that informed Members of the proposal to write-off a series of debts with a value of more than £5,000 for the period from 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2024.

In discussion, reference was made to:

- (a) the Corporate Debt Policy. By way of an update to the debate at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 28 September 2023 (Minute AG.18/23 refers), officers informed that the Corporate Debt Policy had now been implemented. In addition, a new Enforcement Agent Contract would be procured now that a new Procurement Framework had gone live and an invitation to tender would be issued in the upcoming weeks;
- (b) payment arrangements. It was noted that Debtors who entered into individual voluntary arrangements may be required to pay back a proportion

of their debt. Furthermore, it was recognised that the Council was now in a position to take earlier (and quicker) action in respect of debt management.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That it be noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulations, the Section 151 Officer has authorised the write off of individual debts totalling £74,023.54 as detailed in paragraph 3 of the presented agenda report; and
2. That the write-off of the individual debts totalling £124,438.41 (as shown in exempt Appendix A of the presented agenda report) be approved.

10. Housing - Parish Profiles and Update on South Hams Housing Offer

E.10/24

The Executive considered a report that sought approval for the introduction of 'Parish Profiles', a broad basket of data and information, designed to help provide a greater understanding of each demographic within a community and to help identify areas of need.

The report also provided an update on the South Hams Housing Offer.

In her introduction, the lead Executive Member made specific reference to:

- the delay in residents being able to move into the St Anns Chapel Development. The Member apologised for the delay (that was attributed to a legal dispute between the Council and its contractor) and informed that it had now been resolved and she was therefore confident that residents would be moving in within the next few weeks. The Member also wished to put on record her thanks for the diligence, support and input from the local Ward Member, who had demonstrated real community leadership on this project;
- refurbishment work was ongoing on the temporary accommodation units at Westville, Kingsbridge; and
- the South Hams Housing Offer. In highlighting that promising progress was being made, if any local Ward Member was contacted by a landowner regarding the Offer, they were encouraged to signpost them to either the Council website or lead officers.

During debate, particular reference was made to:

- (a) the Parish Profile approach. Members commended the Profile approach and were of the view that local Ward Members and local town and parish councils would have an instrumental role to play in both their ownership and ongoing accuracy (and relevance) of contained information. Having already taken the

Profile to a local Parish Council meeting, a Member provided the following feedback:

- especially in smaller parishes, some context was needed around some of the statistics;
 - some fact checking was required regarding the accuracy of some of the information set out; and
 - it would be helpful to include reference to some community facilities;
- (b) affordable housing policies. Some Members stated that current Central Government rules and policies in relation to affordable housing simply did not work. It was therefore hoped that these areas could be tightened up as part of the review into the Joint Local Plan;
- (c) the merits of town and parish councils undertaking their own Housing Needs Surveys. When questioned, the Leader expressed his view that he would never discourage a town or parish council from carrying out their own Survey, however he did have personal reservations about their merit and was of the view that they were out of date as soon as they had been published and there was now a need for the Council to be more sophisticated in its approach to demonstrating Housing Need;
- (d) the South Brent Community Land Trust (CLT). With regard to progress on the CLT, it was agreed that officers would provide an update to an interested Member outside of this meeting.

It was then:

RESOLVED

:

1. That the Parish Profile approach be endorsed; and
2. That the progress being made on the South Hams Housing Offer be noted.

11. Staverton Neighbourhood Plan

E.11/24

The Executive considered a report that sought approval for the making (adoption) of the Staverton Neighbourhood Plan

During the ensuing discussion, particular reference was made to:

- (a) the voter turnout. The voter turnout of 37% was felt to be encouraging and reflective of the extensive levels of community consultation that had been carried out;

- (b) the quality of the Plan. A number of Members commented that the Plan was of an exceptional quality and thanks were consequently passed on to both the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

It was then:

RESOLVED:

1. That the Staverton Neighbourhood Development Plan (as set out at Appendix A of the presented agenda report) be made (adopted); and
2. That the Director of Strategy & Governance be instructed to publish the Decision Statement (as set out at Appendix B of the presented agenda report).

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON MONDAY, 17 JUNE 2024 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES)

The Meeting concluded at 11.20 am

Signed by:

Chairman
