

MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on Monday, 10 July 2017 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Shepton Mallet commencing at 6.30 pm.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Philip Ham	Portfolio Holder for Transformation
Tom Killen	Vice Chair of Cabinet and Deputy Leader of the Council
John Parham	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Corporate Services
Harvey Siggs	Chair of Cabinet and Leader of the Council
Nigel Taylor	Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood and Community Health Services
Nigel Woollcombe-Adams	Portfolio Holder for Planning, Growth and Housing Services

ASSISTANT PORTFOLIO HOLDERS PRESENT:

Councillors Simon Davies, Mike Pullin, Alan Townsend and Danny Unwin

OTHER COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Councillors Bryan Beha, Peter Bradshaw, Nick Cottle, Damon Hooton, Roy Mackenzie, Terry Napper, Graham Noel, Timothy Rice and Dick Skidmore

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Ian Bowen	General Manager – Planning and Growth Services
Stuart Brown	Chief Executive
Tracy Aarons	Deputy Chief Executive
Paul Deal	Section 151 Officer
Claire Dicken	Committee Officer
Jenny Pitcher	Senior Economic Development Officer
Sally Taylor	Empty Homes and Landlord Liaison Officer
Jai Vick	General Manager – Housing Services

Agenda Item	Subject	Actioned by
1	Chair's Announcements The Chair explained the procedures in the case of an emergency and asked that all mobile devices be switched to silent.	
2	Apologies for Absence None	

3	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None</p>	
4	<p>Public Participation</p> <p>a. Items on the agenda: – none</p> <p>b. Items not on the agenda: – none</p>	
5	<p>Previous Minutes</p> <p>The minutes for the Cabinet meeting held on 22 May 2017 were agreed.</p>	<p>Claire Dicken</p>
6	<p>Somerset Growth Plan 2017- 2030</p> <p>The Deputy Leader of the Council outlined a report which stated that the Somerset Growth Plan set the vision for economic growth between 2017 and 2030; it would attract and guide investment, to overcome barriers and maximise sustainable growth from local opportunities, benefiting Somerset’s communities, businesses and residents. The Growth Plan had been developed in partnership with Somerset Local Authorities, business representative organisations and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>It was a refresh of the initial plan that was published in February 2014 and took into account various influencers such as the Somerset County Plan and the vision projects; the Heart of the South West Productivity Plan consultation and the Government Industrial Strategy consultation.</p> <p>The Somerset Growth Plan had been noted and endorsed by Scrutiny Board on 26 June 2017.</p> <p>Options Considered</p> <p>It was imperative that Somerset had a clear understanding of its local priorities to be able to effectively influence the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) priorities within the emerging Productivity Plan, which was due to be published later in 2017. This would help to ensure Somerset received its fair share of any future funding allocations.</p> <p>Not only would the LEP be competing on a national scale for funds, but there would be competition within the Heart of the South West LEP area (Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay). Somerset local authorities therefore agreed that it was vital to work together to deliver a consistent and clear</p>	<p>Jenny Pitcher</p>

message of the County's priorities. Therefore no alternative options were considered.

During the discussion that followed Members said the Plan was an excellent document. They said it was informative and positive and would be good for the future of Mendip.

In response to queries the Deputy Leader of the Council explained that the interests of Frome and Strode College should be included in the Plan. It should be remembered that the Plan was a very high level strategy.

Members noted that the LEP had been very successful and was doing a good job of getting investment into the South West of England. However, Members said there was work to be done to make sure Mendip benefitted from the investment. It was hoped that improvements in the road infrastructure could help improve this. The local Member of Parliament had been contacted to help with this issue.

Members further said that a challenge was finding and retaining a skilled workforce within the region. It was noted that many new homes would need to be built in the next few years including adequate infrastructure.

Members agreed that Superfast Broadband was also essential to Mendip in order for it to successfully compete with cities such as Bristol for investment.

The Leader of the Council said that Clarks International in Street were planning on starting a new shoe manufacturing line which was great news for the district, as was the development of Dulcote Quarry

Members said Mendip should continue to build on its existing skills such as in food production and tourism. It was noted that a beer company had recently invested heavily in securing premises at the Bath and West Showground.

RESOLVED

To endorse the Somerset Growth Plan 2017-2030.

Reasons for the resolution

The Somerset Growth Plan set out a vision and key priorities to strengthen the county's economic prospects in the future. By endorsing this Plan, the Council would be able to collaborate and influence future outcomes on programmes and projects, both within, and those which went beyond the scope of the local district, while seeking to maximise economic outcomes

	<p>and shared prosperity locally.</p> <p>By endorsing the Somerset Growth Plan, Mendip would strengthen its ability to deliver one of the Council's key Corporate Priorities.</p>	
7	<p>Draft Mendip Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020</p> <p>The Deputy Leader of the Council outlined a report which stated the previous Economic Development Strategy for Mendip had been approved by Cabinet in January 2013 and had guided the Council's activities in supporting economic growth across the District between 2013 and 2016.</p> <p>The draft Mendip Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020 sought to build on this work, and would form the strategic framework for the delivery of future growth activities across the District, in a rapidly changing economic landscape.</p> <p>The draft Mendip Economic Development Strategy had been noted and endorsed by the Scrutiny Board on 26 June 2017.</p> <p>Options Considered</p> <p>The Strategy was designed to support delivery of the Council's priority for Growth, as identified in the 2017-2020 Corporate Plan 'Shaping the District.' A review of the Mendip Economic Development Strategy was therefore deemed appropriate, to follow on from the previous strategy which ran from 2013-2016.</p> <p>Against a backdrop of the referendum and a new period of economic uncertainty, there had been calls both regionally from the LEPs, and from central Government, for local authorities to articulate their key issues and economic challenges.</p> <p>In this context a decision was taken to review the strategy for a further period from 2017-2020, building on progress made to date, but also incorporating a new and stronger emphasis on future skill needs, and building better links between industry and education locally, amongst other priorities.</p> <p>During the discussion that followed Members welcomed the Strategy. They said it was an essential part of the Council's work.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the average age of workers and the diversities of the workforce and the sorts of work that would be attractive to them. It was noted that the district had already attracted an agriculture and food production hub.</p>	Jenny Pitcher

	<p>Members said they would particularly welcome a science park to go some way to replace the type of industry that used to be carried out at the former Thales site in Wells.</p> <p>Some Members were seriously concerned about the provision of employment sites. It was noted that some landowners would prefer to develop their land for houses rather than have employment land.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>To approve the draft Mendip Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020.</p> <p>Reasons for the resolution</p> <p>By setting out key aims and ambitions to support future economic growth, the Mendip Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020 would help the Council to meet its leadership role with businesses, partners and stakeholders, both locally and regionally. This would help to improve the delivery of stronger economic outcomes both for businesses and our local communities.</p> <p>By adopting the proposed strategy, the Council would strengthen its ability to deliver one of the Council's key Corporate Priorities.</p>	
	<p>The Chairman altered the order of items as follows</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Proposals to alter the Scrutiny Process within the Council</p> <p>The Leader of the Council outlined a report which stated that following concerns from across all parts of the Council regarding the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny process work had been carried out to identify ways in which the Council could make scrutiny an integral part of the actions and business of the Council.</p> <p>A Member workshop enabled Councillors to identify what was currently working well, what was not working as we had hoped and what a 'good' scrutiny process might look like. This information had been collated and used to develop the proposals with this report.</p> <p>The proposals look to increase the size of the Scrutiny Board and make better use of the wider skills of elected members. The main board would meet quarterly but, in between meetings, four working groups would be tasked to take forward actions around the areas of:</p>	<p>Tracy Aarons</p>

- Policy and strategy
- Working with town councils
- Performance management
- Project working

The leads of these working groups would report back to the main Scrutiny Board meeting. By enabling scrutiny actions via the working groups, using the main Board meetings to hear feedback on this work and then spend extended time focusing in depth on a specific service or function, Councillors would be able to better understand the activities and performance of the Council and offer their views and opinions. It was also hoped that with this wider working more Councillors would become actively involved in the workings of the council.

Members of Scrutiny had had an active role in reshaping the way the scrutiny process could work across the organisation. At its meeting of 26 June 2017 the Scrutiny Board agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the proposals discussed be adopted.

Councillor Damon Hooton, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Board was invited to speak. He said he was pleased to be involved in making positive changes and hoped that Cabinet would support them.

During the discussion that followed Members supported the proposals. It was hoped that the newly formed Member Officer Development Group could be used to help embed the changes.

The Leader of the Council said it was important to broaden the discussions at the top. Therefore he suggested that the Constitution be changed to read that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Board would meet with the Chairman and Vice Chairman Cabinet.

He was sure that the Constitution would need further updates as the new regime bedded in. Such changes would need to be considered by the Standards Committee, prior to endorsement by full Council.

One Member wondered whether it should be made possible for Shadow Cabinet Members to play a larger part in the scrutiny process. Shadow Cabinet Members would be encouraged to attend meetings and participate in them.

It was suggested that the Council consider whether to recommend that the Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Board be remunerated as the position and the responsibility that went with it was increasing.

	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Approve the proposals within the report and recommend to full Council that the proposals and the necessary constitutional changes as discussed are implemented.</p> <p>Reasons for the resolution</p> <p>Members across the Council considered that the current Scrutiny process had been failing to deliver an effective inquiry and challenge. To enable the Council to move forward effectively and to deliver better outcomes for the Mendip area there was a need to alter the way the Council scrutinised itself. The proposals had been developed by members to help address current limitations and to help the Council deliver on its aspirations.</p>	
8	<p>Empty Homes Strategy</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Growth and Housing Services outlined a report which stated the purpose of this strategy was to outline the Council's approach to assisting empty home owners and helping to bring their properties back into use, and when necessary intervene and make use of the powers in accordance with the Part 4 of the Housing Act 2004. It set out what empty home owners could expect from the Council and its officers.</p> <p>Scrutiny had recommended the Empty Homes Strategy for approval.</p> <p>Options Considered</p> <p>The Council believed in a clear, fair, proportionate, consistent and transparent policy on enforcement when required.</p> <p>The Council aimed to achieve consistency through the advice that was offered, but consistency however did not mean simple uniformity. There were many variables involved in making a decision which included the scale of the problem, the risk to health, the attitude and actions of owners. The ability to have flexibility within the policy was therefore important.</p> <p>Councillor Roy Mackenzie was invited to speak. He said he fully supported the Strategy.</p> <p>In response to queries the Officer explained that the Council offered both grants and loans.</p> <p>During the discussion that followed Members fully supported</p>	Sally Taylor

	<p>the Strategy. They said they had noticed how many empty properties there were in the district. Members were encouraged to let the team know whenever they spotted an empty property.</p> <p>It was suggested that the Waste Collection Service may be able to report long term empty homes.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>To endorse and approve the Private Sector Housing Empty Homes Strategy.</p> <p>Reason for the resolution</p> <p>To ensure that the Council continued to work with empty home owners to help them bring them back into use and to help provide affordable and safe homes.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>2016/17 Quarter 4 Budget Monitoring and Outturn Report</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Corporate Services introduced a report which outlined the Budget Outturn position for 2016/17 and requested for Earmarked Reserves as part of the year end process. The figures, once approved would form an important element of the Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>As part of the 2016/17 budget setting process, the Council approved £1.592m of budget reductions. This was expected to be delivered.</p> <p>Options Considered</p> <p>No formal options appraisal is applicable to this report.</p> <p>During the discussion that followed Members welcomed the report. Especially impressive was the Council Tax collection rate.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder thanked the Section 151 Officer and the Deputy Corporate Finance Advisor for their hard work to produce a balanced account.</p> <p>The Chairman said the Council continued to face a difficult financial climate, therefore, it was prudent to retain robust balances to smooth the potential effect to the tax payer of further cuts.</p>	<p>Paul Deal</p>

	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>1. To note the contents of the report, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the final Net Revenue Outturn position for the year showing a surplus of £28k (Appendix 1a and 1b) and the implications for the authorities reserves position. • the achievement against the 2016/17 budgeted savings proposals in year (Appendix 3) • the Capital Outturn figures showing a £455k underspend (Appendix 4a and 4b) • the level of Aged Debt as at 31st March 2017 (Appendix 5a and 5b) • the in-year collection levels for both Council Tax and NNDR. • The levels and return on the cash investments. <p>2. To approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the virements actioned in quarter 4 as show in Appendix 2 • the specific revenue earmarked reserve requests totalling £5,414k (Appendix 2). Approval to drawdown the identified amounts anticipated to be spent in 2017/18 budget will be included within the quarterly budget monitoring reports. • Carrying forward Capital Approvals totalling £614k where the capital spend is planned in later years. Approval to drawdown the identified amounts anticipated to be spent in 2017/18 budget will be included within the quarterly budget monitoring reports. <p>Reasons for the resolution</p> <p>To inform Members of the financial health of the Council as at 31 March 2017.</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder Decisions</p> <p>The following recent Portfolio Holder decisions were noted.</p> <p>2017 277 – Environmental Protection Contractor</p>	

12	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>The Council's Forward Plan was noted.</p>	
13	<p>Minutes for Information</p> <p>The following draft minutes were noted:</p> <p>Draft Audit Committee minutes 5 April 2017 Draft Scrutiny Board minutes 26 June 2017</p>	
14	<p>Urgent Business</p> <p>The Chairman had agreed to take the following items as urgent business:</p> <p>Capita Business Services Ltd and 5 Councils Partnership</p> <p>This report updated Cabinet on variations to the service commencement dates under the 5 Councils Corporate Services Agreement for services to Hart District Council, Mendip District Council, Havant Borough Council and East Hants District Council (the Agreement). Associated with the Agreement was an Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) which governed the relationship between the abovementioned Councils.</p> <p>Given the innovative and dynamic nature of the Agreement and IAA this report sought delegation to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, to agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) subsequent changes and variations to the Agreement; (b) subsequent changes and variations to the IAA; (c) to take any further action necessary. <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>(1) Cabinet note the position outlined in this report regarding service current commencement dates.</p> <p>(2) Delegated authority is granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader to agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) changes and variations to the Agreement; (b) changes and variations to the IAA; 	<p>Stuart Brown</p>

	<p>(c) to take any further action necessary to give effect to the current or varied Agreement and IAA.</p> <p>(3) It is noted that the updated IAA will be reported to Full Council in due course.</p> <p>Grenfell Tower</p> <p>The Leader of the Council said that following the Grenfell Tower fire which killed 80 people on 14 June 2017 at a 24 storey block of public housing flats in North Kensington, every Council had been given cause to stop and think about the safety of its residents.</p> <p>Members noted that although there were no high rise buildings in the district, it was important to think carefully about the Council's role.</p> <p>As a result it was proposed that the Cabinet set up a Working Group to look at the Council's general approach to safety and emergency planning, and specifically our contracts, and whether any action taken by the Council had led to a change in the safety of Mendip's residents.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Working Group should consist of the Deputy Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition, the Chairman of Scrutiny Board, Cllr Nigel Taylor and a member of the Green Party. Meanwhile, other Councillors with relevant experience and qualifications such as Councillors David van Dyk and Tim Rice may be called upon to give advice.</p> <p>The Chief Executive advised that it was important to make sure that the Terms of Reference for the new Group were clear and that this could be considered and agreed upon at the first meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>That a Working Group consisting of the Deputy Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition, the Chairman of Scrutiny Board, Cllr Nigel Taylor and a member of the Green Party be set up to review the Council's general approach to safety and emergency planning, and specifically our contracts and whether any action taken by the Council had led to a change in the safety of Mendip's residents.</p>	<p>Stuart Brown</p>
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The meeting closed at approximately 8.15 pm.