

SOUTH HAMS EXECUTIVE



Minutes of a meeting of the **South Hams Executive** held on **Thursday, 22nd April, 2021 at 10.00 am Via Teams**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Pearce
Vice Chairman Cllr Bastone

Cllr Hopwood
Cllr Hawkins

Cllr Baldry

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Austen
Cllr Brazil
Cllr Hodgson
Cllr Kemp
Cllr Pannell
Cllr Pringle
Cllr Rowe
Cllr Spencer
Cllr Taylor

Cllr Birch
Cllr Foss
Cllr Holway
Cllr Long
Cllr Pennington
Cllr Reeve
Cllr Smerdon
Cllr Sweett

Officers:

Senior Leadership Team
Monitoring Officer
Democratic Services Manager
Senior Specialist – Parking, Waste & Localities

78. **Minute's Silence**

E.78/20

As this was the first formal Member meeting since both the Duke of Edinburgh and Ms Tracy Winser (who had worked for the Council from 1991 to 2015 and had led on the successful Transformation Programme) had sadly passed away, the Leader asked those in attendance, as a mark of respect, to observe a minute's silence in their memory.

79. **Minutes**

E.79/20

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 11 March 2021 were confirmed as a true and correct record.

80.

Urgent Business

E.80/20

The Chairman advised that she had agreed for one urgent item to be raised at this meeting that related to supporting our business communities. This item was considered urgent in light of the associated time constraints and would be considered immediately.

(a) ARG Policy – Supporting Our Business Communities

The Deputy Leader proceeded to introduce this urgent item and presented a report that recommended an approach to provide more support to businesses through grant payments.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (i) Officers informed that the recommendations had been drafted to take into account the potential for the guidance to still be revised further;
- (ii) Members noted that one of the key intentions of the Policy was to ensure that any businesses that had not been able to apply for previous grant schemes would be able to under these provisions;
- (iii) In light of the amount of public monies that had been set aside for business support, a Member hoped that records would be made available for local Ward Members that set out all of the businesses that had been in receipt of a grant and how much each had been awarded;
- (iv) The request was made that such grants need to be processed and received by local businesses as soon as was practically possible.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the revised approach to the ARG Policy be approved to support the business community, local economy and local place in response to further funding being made available from Central Government, subject to the existing allocation being spent by June 2021;
2. That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the use of up to £498,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve to fund any wider business support measures approved by the Council on 25 March 2021 that cannot be funded from the new ARG allocation;
3. That approval be given to the use of the ARG funding to make payments for the remaining LRSO Open applications,

up until 30 April 2021, when the LRSG Open scheme closes, as the LRSG Open funding allocation is close to being fully spent, so as to ensure the maximum amount of grant support for the business community; and

4. That authority for the administration of the ARG scheme continue to be delegated to the Director for Place and Enterprise, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Leader of Council and the lead Executive Member for Finance, including the decision as to how to fund wider business support measures, once the further guidance on the ARG has been published and clarified.

81. **Declarations of Interest**

E.81/20

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:

Cllr N Hopwood declared a personal interest in Item 7: 'Motorhome Policy' (Minute E.84/20 below refers) by virtue of her ownership of a Motorhome and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon; and

Cllr J Sweett declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Item 2(a): 'Urgent Business: (a) ARG Policy – Supporting Our Business Communities' (Minute E.80/20(a) above refers) by virtue of being a recipient of some of the Grant Funding that had been made available for businesses and remained in the meeting during the debate on this item.

82. **Public Question Time**

E.82/20

It was noted that one public question had been received in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules for consideration at this meeting:

(a) Question received from Dr Thelma Rumsey

Does SHDC have a Tree Strategy? What measures will be taken to retain mature trees vital within our landscape? In recognising their importance could SHDC consider increasing staffing - another arboriculturalist plus dedicated team of assistant and legal?

(Mature trees (ignoring ash) are being removed at alarming speed. Protection is essential.)

In reply, the Deputy Leader started by thanking Dr Rumsey for submitting her question and paid tribute to the work carried out by tree wardens across the District.

The Deputy Leader then advised that the Council did currently have a *Tree Protection, Inspection and Management Policy and Procedures* document. This document was not dissimilar to a *Tree Strategy* but was now in need of updating. This would see a broader strategic approach to Tree Management and Protection, and would embrace additional important issues related to climate change, air quality and the impacts resulting from current pest and diseases, for example - *Ash dieback*. The Government was already reviewing this at a national level (***England Tree Strategy – Consultation 2020***) with the intention of issuing guidance and directives to local authorities. Aware that this was due, the Council was minded to see the outcome so it could help shape our own approach to an *SHDC Tree Strategy*, in particular because this would enable better opportunities to tap into funding sources etc.

In addition, the Deputy Leader informed that there were already robust processes in place within our current legislative framework for protecting trees to ensure their retention in developments. Similarly, the revised National Planning Policy Framework now secured protection of ancient and veteran trees. The local authority proactively worked to retain trees with the resources available, and must act reasonably in its approach to secure tree protection when applying Tree Preservation Order legislation. This was where the support of our community was of particular importance, especially the highly valued role that tree wardens play in helping the Council to retain and protect the district's trees when they came under threat. The Council was also working with our partners such as Devon County Council and the Woodland Trust in shaping a collective response to climate change and the significant adverse impacts arising from Ash dieback.

Finally, Cllr Bastone advised that the Council continuously monitored our resourcing regarding our statutory responsibilities, including arboricultural matters within the Council to ensure that the service was maintained.

83. **Executive Forward Plan**

E.83/20

Members were presented with the Executive Forward Plan setting out items on the agenda for Executive meetings for the next four months and noted its content.

84. **Motorhome Policy**

E.84/20

Members were presented with a report that highlighted the ever-increasing numbers of motorhomes / campervan users that were opting to use car parks and other locations for overnight stays in the South Hams. As a consequence, the report identified opportunities to amend car park operations and made recommendations relating to overnight sleeping within Council off-street car parks.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the likely economic benefits arising from the proposals. Members reiterated that the primary purpose of the proposals was to provide a much needed boost to the local economy as opposed to income generation for the Council. In expanding upon the point, Members also acknowledged that the proposals were not intended to compete with existing privately owned local campsites;
- (b) an amendment to the motion. An amendment was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** as follows:

That approval be given to the variation of the off-street parking orders by the Head of Assets, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Commercial Services and the Leader of the Council to allow overnight sleeping within designated Car Parks (as set out in Option B of the presented agenda report), subject to:

- *It being recognised that this decision is now subject to a 21 day public consultation exercise being undertaken (paragraph 3.2.5 of the presented agenda report refers); and*
- *Car parks at North Sands, Salcombe; Slapton; and Torcross being charged at £15 per night, with the remaining Car Parks at £10 per night.*

In debate on the amendment, there was widespread support for inclusion of reference to the public consultation exercise. A number of specific points that were raised by local Ward Members in debate were encouraged to be submitted as part of this consultation process. However, there was a difference of opinion expressed with regard to the revised pricing proposals, with some Members being of the view that £15 for all car parks was excessive, whereas other Members considered the proposed charges to be reasonable.

When put to the vote, it was declared **CARRIED** by three votes to two that the amendment be approved and therefore incorporated into the substantive motion;

- (c) the proposals, if adopted, being initially for a twelve-month trial period. Whilst welcoming the proposal for a trial, Members also felt that a user survey should be carried out throughout the year that would help to glean feedback before a decision was made as to whether or not the trial should be made permanent;
- (d) increased enforcement and monitoring. In the event of the proposals being introduced, some Members felt that it would be critical for the Council to undertake more frequent day and night time enforcement and monitoring activity. Furthermore, the need for increased litter bin provision in these car parks was noted;

- (e) village hall car parks. Members encouraged parish councils to explore any opportunities that they may have to adopt similar provision within their village / parish hall car parks.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the variation of the off-street parking orders by the Head of Assets, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Commercial Services and the Leader of the Council to allow overnight sleeping within designated Car Parks (as set out in Option B of the presented agenda report), subject to:

- It being recognised that this decision is now subject to a 21 day public consultation exercise being undertaken (paragraph 3.2.5 of the presented agenda report refers); and
- Car parks at North Sands, Salcombe; Slapton; and Torcross being charged at £15 per night, with the remaining Car Parks at £10 per night.

85. Electric Vehicle Charging and Renewable Energy Strategy

E.85/20

The Executive considered a report that presented a progress update on the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging and Renewable Energy Strategy.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) In reply to some Member concerns over the lack of progress of solar panel installation in Council Car Parks, it was noted that this was largely attributed to balancing the significant capital expenditure costs with the actual solar gain from such installation;
- (b) Some Members hoped that measures could be put in place to ensure that there was sufficient turnover of users who would be able to park in the spaces that were set aside for Electric Vehicle Charging Points;
- (c) With regard to the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy, the lead Executive Member reminded the meeting that such provision did not have to be the sole responsibility of local authorities;
- (d) The importance of the appropriate infrastructure being in place throughout the entire South West region was also noted.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the progress of the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy to date be noted;

2. That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve capital expenditure of up to £170,000 from the Capital Programme Contingency Reserve (as set out in the Finance Section of the presented agenda report) as follows:
 - (a) £80,000 for the upgrade of the network and rapid charger install at Totnes Depot; and
 - (b) £90,000 for the network upgrade and limited initial phase of additional rapid chargers at Follaton House, to facilitate the conversion of the light commercial vehicle fleet to Electric Vehicles.
3. That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the spend of up to £15,000, funded from the Climate Change Earmarked Reserve, to fund an externally commissioned report to investigate and scope opportunities primarily for Electric Vehicle Charging Points within the Council's property portfolio, namely: car parks, depots and offices. Additionally, to explore opportunities for solar and battery storage across the estate; and
4. That the contribution of these schemes towards the Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity adopted aims be noted.

86. **Corporate Strategy Development**

E.86/20

Consideration was given to a report that set out the proposed timeline and process for developing the new Corporate Strategy, together with the resources to support its implementation.

In discussion, the need for swift progress to be made to ensure that a new Corporate Strategy was presented to the Council for adoption was reiterated.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Chief Executive and the Director of Governance and Assurance be instructed to develop the Corporate Strategy, in line with the timeline and programme set out in Section 4 of the presented agenda report.

87. **Development Management/ Planning Enforcement Strategy**

E.87/20

A report was considered that informed of a Development Management / Planning Enforcement Service Review that was to be undertaken.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Specifically with regard to Planning Enforcement, Members hoped that an outcome of the Review would be that cases would be either subject to enforcement action or closed. It was considered regrettable that a number of cases were held in abeyance for a number of years;
- (b) In light of the number of misconceptions associated with Development Management and Planning Enforcement, there was felt to be a need to educate local residents, community groups and town and parish councils.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the review of the Development Management and Planning Enforcement Services (as set out in Sections 3.2 to 3.11 of the presented agenda report) and the subsequent development of a Service Improvement Plan be endorsed; and
2. That officers be instructed to bring back to the Executive a report and Service Improvement Plan within the next three months.

88. Release of Section 106 Funds for Dartington Woodland Adventure Bike Track Project

E.88/20

The Executive considered a report that sought approval of the release of £11,387 of Section 106 funds towards the Dartington Woodland Adventure Bike Track project.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the work of the Dartington Recreation Association. In his introduction, the lead Executive Member informed that he had recently met with representatives of the Association. The Member proceeded to pay tribute to the representatives and, in highlighting how fantastic the facility was, hoped that other Community Groups within the South Hams would aspire to obtain similar provisions;
- (b) a statement made by the local Ward Member. The local Ward Member was invited to provide a statement to the meeting during which she stated that she was not against the development of a Bike Track. However, she did have real concerns over the choice of a mature woodland site as its location. Whilst not referred to in the presented agenda report, the Member also highlighted that the local Parish Council had raised objections to the project.

In stressing the need for the Council, in its capacity as the Local Planning Authority, to uphold its responsibilities, the Member

concluded by asking that the Association re-consider siting the Track on to an adjacent grass area.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That £11,387 be released of Section 106 funds towards the Dartington Woodland Adventure Bike Track project.

89. **Write-off Report for 2020/21**

E.89/20

A report was considered that presented the write-offs for the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) Members thanked residents and officers for their support and hard work during what had been an incredibly difficult twelve month period;
- (b) With regard to the frequency of reporting, Members felt that, in the future, it would be appropriate for write-off reports to be presented on a six-monthly basis and it was agreed that this should be reflected in an additional recommendation.

It was then:

RESOLVED

- 1) That, in accordance with Financial Regulations, it be noted that the Section 151 Officer has authorised the write-off of individual Council debts totaling £187,751.43 (as set out in Tables 1 and 2 of the presented agenda report);
- 2) That the write-off of individual debts in excess of £5,000 (totaling £241,406.95) as detailed in Table 3 of the presented agenda report be approved; and
- 3) That the Executive be in receipt of future Write-off Reports on a six monthly basis.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF E.80/20(a) PART 2 AND E.85/20 PARTS 2 AND 3 WHICH WERE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 20 MAY 2021, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON TUESDAY, 4 MAY 2021 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).

The Meeting concluded at 12.30 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
