

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT
COUNCIL HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY 28
SEPTEMBER 2023**

MEMBERS

* Cllr G Pannell – Chairman

* Cllr B Taylor – Vice-Chairman

* Cllr V Abbott	∅ Cllr S Jackson
* Cllr G Allen	* Cllr L Lawford
* Cllr J P Birch	* Cllr M Long
* Cllr L Bonham	* Cllr J McKay
* Cllr J Brazil	* Cllr P Munoz
* Cllr J Carson	* Cllr A Nix
* Cllr B Cooper	* Cllr D M O’Callaghan
* Cllr S Dennis	* Cllr C Oram
* Cllr A Dewynter	∅ Cllr S Penfold**
* Cllr N Dommett	∅ Cllr A Presswell**
∅ Cllr T Edie	* Cllr S Rake
* Cllr D Hancock	∅ Cllr M Steele**
* Cllr J D Hawkins	* Cllr D Thomas
* Cllr J M Hodgson	∅ Cllr G Yardy
* Cllr N A Hopwood	

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

** Denotes attendance over Teams in a non-voting capacity

Officers in attendance and participating:

For all items: Senior Leadership Team; Monitoring Officer; Democratic Services Manager; Head of Revenues & Benefits (via Teams) Community Services Operations Manager (via Teams)

24/23 MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 29 June 2023 were confirmed as a true and correct record, subject to the correction of the attendance of Cllr S Jackson who was present at that meeting.

25/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting but there were none made.

26/23

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

From Mr John Grocock:

“With regard to Cllr Julian Brazil’s article in the Totnes Times (September 7) regarding local planning matters, this comment ‘Every week I am contacted by families desperate for a housing solution’ suggests that more have been added to the 766 that was the headline figure in May

Would Cllr Brazil please clarify whether there are now more families needing affordable housing and if so, what is the updated figure?”

Response from Cllr O’Callaghan (lead Executive Member for Housing):

In her response, Cllr O’Callaghan thanked Mr Grocock for his question and made the following statement:

The Housing waiting list has increased since May and we now have 845 households on the housing register in housing need, with a further 680 who wish to be considered for social housing but are currently adequately housed. The figure fluctuates to some degree and, in April of recent years, has been as follows:

*April 2023 – 798
April 2022 – 895
April 2021 – 690
April 2020 - 631*

Across Devon between April and July 2023, the Housing Register rose by over a thousand households.

This is also reflected nationally and demonstrates the challenges in the private sector housing market and the slowdown in movement in the social housing sector.

As a Council, Housing is a top priority for us for our residents. There are already 19 houses in the Council’s ownership, seven houses at Sherford, which are temporary homes and which will be ready for occupation by Christmas 2023, with a further four other temporary homes being purchased. There are also eight homes at St Anns Chapel which will be ready in late Autumn, and available for Affordable Rent, and these will be advertised on Devon Home Choice, with preference being given to people with a connection to the local area. These properties will be managed by the Council.

At the discretion of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman sought clarity as to whether or not the figures that had been quoted included temporary winter lets. In response, Cllr O'Callaghan committed to providing a response to this question in writing outside of the meeting and also agreed to provide a copy to Mr Grocock.

27/23

SUPPORTING OUR CARE LEAVERS: COUNCIL TAX

A report was considered that sought approval for the adoption of a Council Tax Discount Scheme relating to Care Leavers.

In discussion, Members welcomed the leading role that had been taken on by the Council in the development of this Scheme and wished to record their thanks to the Chief Executive for being so instrumental in this regard. Some Members also highlighted that this had represented a very good example of the County and District Councils working together in partnership to develop a solution to a shared problem.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Council Tax Discount Scheme for Care Leavers as set out at Appendix A of the presented agenda report be adopted with effect from 1 October 2023.

28/23

SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES - REVIEW

The Council considered a report that set out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on an updated Scheme of Members' Allowances.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Having tasked an Independent Remuneration Panel with making a series of recommendations on an updated Scheme, some Members felt it to be only appropriate for the Council to then give them full weighting and approve them accordingly;
- (b) In support of the proposed increase in the Basic Allowance, Members highlighted that any such measure to potentially attract (and retain) individuals to stand for election should be supported. Furthermore, Members stated that the role of being a local councillor had never been more demanding or time consuming and, such was the level of commitment required to undertake such an important role, that no Member should feel guilty or embarrassed to accept an increase in their Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances (at paragraph 3 of the presented agenda report) be agreed and that the revised draft Scheme of Members Allowances (as shown at Appendix D of the presented report) be adopted with immediate effect, with any consequent increases in Allowances being backdated to 10 May 2023.

29/23

MEMBER APPOINTMENTS

The Council considered a report that recommended some revisions to the size and membership of the Licensing Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 Municipal Year. The report also recommended an appointment to the role of the Council's Armed Forces Covenant Champion for the remainder of this Council term.

With no debate ensuing, it was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the size of the Licensing Committee be increased from 8 to 10 Members, with the Quorum being set at 6 Members;
2. That Cllr N Dommett (Lib Dem Group) and Cllr A Presswell (Green Party Group) be appointed to serve on the Licensing Committee and that Cllr Lawford (Lib Dem Group) be appointed as a Substitute Member for the Licensing Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 Municipal Year; and
3. That Cllr A Dewynter be appointed to serve as the Council's Armed Forces Covenant Champion for this Council administration (i.e. until the date of the Annual Council meeting in May 2027).

30/23

REPORTS OF BODIES

That the minutes and recommendations of the undermentioned bodies be received and approved subject to any amendments listed below:-.

(a) Development Management Committee - 28 June 2023

(b) Executive - 28 June 2023

(c) Audit & Governance Committee - 6 July 2023

(d) Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 20 July 2023

(e) Development Management Committee - 26 July 2023

(f) Audit & Governance Committee - 27 July 2023

(g) Licensing Committee - 31 August 2023**(h) Executive - 21 September 2023****E.22/23 Supporting Our Care Leavers: Council Tax**

Members noted that this recommendation had already been considered at agenda item 6 (Minute 27/23 above refers).

E.28/23 Review of Capital Programme (Capital Programme Monitoring) and Review of Earmarked Reserves

Specifically with regard to the Shadycombe Car Park proposals, a local Ward Member stated the consequent economic benefits that would be generated. It was therefore his hope that a fully costed proposal would be brought back to Members in due course.

It was then:

RESOLVED

- 1) That the following three capital projects be withdrawn from the current Capital Programme: Whitestrand Replacement of Toilets and Showers (£659,993); the Currently Unallocated Residual Housing Capital Budget (£85,157) and the Contingency Capital Budget (£268,184). (NB. this would free up capital resources of £1.013m, which is potentially available for future corporate priorities and can be re-purposed);
- 2) That Shadycombe Car Park and Sherford Commercial Land Acquisition be withdrawn from the Capital Programme and it be noted that this would not free up any capital resources;
- 3) That all other capital projects, be progressed in line with the existing capital projects within the overall Capital Programme;
- 4) That the content of the Capital Programme Monitoring Report (as set out in Appendix B of the published agenda report) be noted which highlighted current expenditure on capital projects between April 2023 and July 2023 of £1.400m, being 13% of the profiled budget for 2023/24 (the first four months of the financial year); and
- 5) That the outcome of the review of revenue reserves be approved, releasing revenue reserves of up to £1.541m which were potentially available to support the delivery of the emerging Corporate Strategy.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

It was noted that no Questions on Notice had been received in accordance with Council Procedure Rules.

32/23 **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

It was noted that no Motion on Notice had been received in accordance with Council Procedure Rules.

33/23 **CHAIRMAN'S CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Prior to formally closing the meeting, the Chairman wished to put on record his thanks to those Members and officers who had attended his recently held Civic Service, extending particular thanks to those who had generously supported his chosen charity, the RNLI Dartmouth Lifeboat Station Appeal.

(Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 2.30 pm)

Chairman