

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT** on **Tuesday 3 February 2015**.

(10.05 am - 12.25 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Graham Middleton
Nigel Mermagen	Sue Osborne
Tim Inglefield	David Recardo
Pauline Lock	Martin Wale
Tony Lock	

Also Present:

Tim Carroll

Officers

Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Alasdair Bell	Environmental Health Manager
Colin McDonald	Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

106. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

107. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Clarke, Nick Colbert and Carol Goodall.

108. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

109. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

110. Issues arising from previous meetings (Agenda Item 5)

There were no issues raised.

111. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Sue Steele, as a Governor of Musgrove Park Hospital, reported that the hospital had been working with the Royal Marsden Hospital in London to assist with the improved treatment of women with cancer.

112. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 8 January 2015 (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman noted that the Scrutiny comments had been considered and were included in the District Executive minutes that had been circulated.

113. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 5 February 2015 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 5 February 2015. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration.

Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (presentation) – item 6

- No comments

Somerset Waste Partnership Business Plan 2015/16 – item 7

- Members commented that it would be useful to have more detail behind how the budget as set out in the tables on pages 12 and 13 were arrived at. It was also suggested that the latest outturn and variance figures would have been useful.
- Members felt more communication and education was needed to remind the public of what could be recycled and noted that the Business Plan contained plans for this.

2014/15 Revenue and Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter ending 30th December 2014 – item 8

- Page 29 – Members sought clarification that our Disaster Recovery Plan was up to date, tested and implementable.
- Page 52 – Usable Reserves – members asked if it would be possible in future to indicate the capital and revenue reserves separately.

2014/15 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter ending 30th December 2014 – item 9

- Members asked if the loan to the Somerset Waste Partnership had been finalised yet.
- Page 69 – Members noted that some schemes showed zero across the board such as the Park Homes, Ilton and questioned why such schemes were still indicated in the report.

Revenue Budget 2015/16 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme – item 10

- A member asked what level of tolerance was used when calculating the budget given that the Revenue Support Grant and New Homes Bonus had yet to be confirmed.
- Page 24 of the Budget Book – members noted the increase in income for Property Services and enquired about what projects had led to such a rise in the figures.

Investing in Market Housing – item 11

- Members sought clarification on the issues regarding Right to Buy and what the implications would be and the detail of how these implications would be mitigated.
- Scrutiny queried how the ‘need’ would be defined as stated in para.6 – how will this be applied consistently?
- Members queried what the risk would be if the market changed.
- Scrutiny queried the recommendation for purchases to be agreed at Portfolio Holder and senior officer level, and whether it was more appropriate for a decision to be made by District Executive to allow for this new policy initiative to be accurately monitored in the first 12 months.
- Members queried if SSDC would be the direct landlord for any future purchases and the associated implications.
- It was queried where this policy would sit with other policies relating to housing and homelessness.
- It was noted there was no risk assessment included with the report.

Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance – item 12

- Members asked if any issues had been encountered in the past few years
- Scrutiny recommend that the element of the policy regarding unsecured loans should be reviewed. Members were of the opinion that there should be some come back on defaulted loans and the policy should be ‘tightened up’.

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 – item 13

- It was noted that Scrutiny Committee had received a presentation on the same subject at the November meeting. Members did not raise any additional comments to those raised at the November meeting where members questioned the risks and costs associated with the community remedy, and associated investigations regarding complaints and allegations.

The Living Wage – item 14

- Members sought clarification as to whether deleting the spinal column points as set out in the report constituted a change of policy in that SSDC are now committed to delivering the 'Living Wage' rather than the legally binding minimum wage?
- **Councillor Induction Programme 2015 & Future IT Proposals for Councillors – item 15**
- Members did not raise any comments about the Induction programme but raised a number of issues regarding the future IT proposals including:
 - Members questioned the proposed amount, after tax and National Insurance, did not seem much to purchase a suitable item of equipment, printer, paper and ink.
 - Members queried how the sum of £320 had been arrived at.
 - Some members raised concern that there may be a risk of the business of SSDC being affected if going paperless, especially during any bedding-in period.
 - It was felt a number of members may not be comfortable with such a big step in I.T. provision, and some members might require more, and different types of support to others.
 - Members accepted the proposal was a way forward but in practical terms did not think it was ideal solution.
 - Battery life at meetings would probably be an issue.
 - It was commented that many members would require the use of Microsoft Word and Excel and queried whether they would be widely available for tablets.
 - Members fully supported the principle of going paperless and digital, but felt how it would be delivered, the associated costs and support needs required further investigation and options.

Family Focus programme Update – item 16

- Members noted the report but expressed disappointment at the 'next steps' detailed on page 132 regarding 'getset' in South Somerset – in that Somerset County Council had failed to recruit to the South Somerset Delivery posts.

Access from Memorial Hall car park to land at the rear of the Dolphin Hotel, Wincanton – item 17

- Members noted the report but did not raise any concerns.

Monthly Performance Snapshot – item 18

- Members noted the report.

District Executive Forward Plan – item 19

- Members noted the report.

114. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 9)

The Scrutiny Manager noted that the Council Tax Reduction Group had been reconvened and was acting as a sounding board for some work being undertaken by the Revenues & Benefits Manager.

115. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 10)

With reference to the meeting of full Council in January, the Scrutiny Manager informed members that an item regarding the possibility of reviewing the Planning Scheme of Delegation would be added to the Scrutiny Work Programme for consideration after the elections in May.

116. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The representative on the Avon and Somerset Police & Crime Panel tendered his apologies for the Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2015. It was suggested that a written report was made rather than a verbal one, or that report be made to a later meeting.

117. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 3 March 2015 in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman