

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 March 2015**.

(10.00 am - 12.55 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Pauline Lock
Nigel Mermagen	Graham Middleton
Pauline Clarke	Sue Osborne
Nick Colbert	David Recardo
Carol Goodall	Martin Wale

Also Present:

Ric Pallister

Officers

Pam Harvey	Civil Contingencies Manager
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Laurence Willis	Assistant Director (Environment)
Paul Wheatley	Principal Spatial Planner
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager

118. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

119. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Inglefield and Tony Lock.

120. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

121. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised.

123. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed members that she had attended the recent meeting of the Somerset Waste Board. She also encouraged members to complete the Scrutiny Feedback Questionnaire which was circulated following last month's Scrutiny Committee meeting. Information provided would form part of an 'end of term' report to be submitted to next month's meeting.

124. Civil Contingencies Presentation (Agenda Item 7)

The Civil Contingencies Manager attended the meeting at the request of members, to provide a debrief following an incident last year when several undocumented migrants were found by police within the district.

Following the presentation, members made the following points:

- Members thanked officers for their excellent work during this incident
- Members raised concerns that it seemed inappropriate for district council employees to be responsible for people who were under arrest – should this not be the responsibility of the police?
- The complexity of delivering multi-agency civil contingency arrangements was noted.

In conclusion, members noted the continued good work of the Civil Contingencies Manager and asked that representations be made to the relevant bodies, including central government, asking for better arrangements for dealing more effectively with any undocumented migrants in the future.

125. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5 February 2015 (Agenda Item 8)

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

126. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 5 March 2015 (Agenda Item 9)

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

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 3rd Quarter 2014/15 (item 6)

- Members were pleased to note that whilst PI003 is still showing as an exception, performance is improving. Scrutiny members suggest that it would be helpful if the numbers as well as percentages were reported to provide greater context.
- Members also suggest that it would be beneficial if future monitoring reports could include data on the number of planning applications determined within time frames and those which are not. Whilst this is no longer a statutory indicator, it would be a useful indicator of overall performance for members. The Strategic Director has informed members that this information can be made easily available.

Adoption of the South Somerset Local Plan (item 7)

- Members considered the process undertaken to get to this point and noted the significant implications of not adopting the Plan. Scrutiny comments related to the process undertaken to develop the Plan with members noting that Full Council would be an opportunity for wider debate.
- Members were grateful to Principal Spatial Planner for clarifying that planning policies HG3 and HG4 were more likely than SS2 to be impacted by recent government announcement on the levels at which affordable housing contributions are triggered. Scrutiny sought clarification on how the plan will react to any national policy changes and the results of legal challenges being mounted by other local authorities?
- Clarification was also sought on the potential for developers to notice that during the life of the plan, the 5 year housing supply could become outdated and were informed that fluctuations will happen and that an effective monitoring process should help manage this situation.

District Wide Voluntary Sector Grants (items 8 to 13)

- Members sought clarification that the unallocated monies within the Health and Wellbeing fund would be held in reserve for future similar bids and not removed from the budget or used in other areas.
- Members were pleased note the positive financial position of the SSVCA but requested that more detailed financial information, similar to that which has been provided in the past, is made available to keep members fully up to date.
- A question was asked about the issue of duplication – SSDC are funding very similar organisations, as well as providing Welfare advice ourselves and Scrutiny seek assurance that every effort is made to avoid duplication.

Access from Memorial Hall Car park to land at the rear of the Dolphin Hotel, Wincanton (item 14)

- Members asked for clarification on the map – the arrow appears to show the entrance being on the Quaker Meeting House land rather than the Dolphin hotel?

Establishment of the Somerset Growth Board (item 15)

- Whilst members were supportive of the principle of ensuring the Somerset case is well made to the LEP, there were some concerns expressed as to how the Growth

Board would fit in with the current LEP structures and how what steps would be taken to ensure the proposed board remained outcome focused and did not become a 'talking shop'.

- There was some discussion about seeking to ensure formal representation of the Growth Board on the LEP and Leader agreed to take this point forward with the other Somerset leaders and Chief Executives.
- Scrutiny members requested that a further report is brought forward in 12 months to monitor progress.

Retail Relief from Business Rates (item 16)

- Scrutiny suggest that the recommendations make it more explicit that a further report on the policy relating to business rate relief for childcare provider will be brought forward as part of the budget setting process next year.

Loan to Somerset Waste Partnership for Waste Vehicles (item17)

- Members supported the recommendations.

Huish Academy Artificial Grass Pitch Project (item 18)

- Members noted that this has been extensively discussed at Area North Committee. They sought reassurance that the school are aware of risks associated with the funds identified via s106 trigger clauses not being reached.

Community Right to Bid - Assets of Community Value (item 19)

- Scrutiny sought clarification as to what would happen in a building was in the hands of receivers at the time of sale and were informed that the building would be except from the Community Right to Buy process for the first sale.

Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership Update (item 20)

- Scrutiny members were pleased to note that the majority of funds allocated in Somerset had been allocated to South Somerset and felt that this reflected the efforts of the officers and members involved.
- Members asked what would happen in April at the end of the initial period and what would happen to any remaining funds unallocated at that time?

Disposal of the workshop in Helliars Road, Chard (Confidential) (item 25)

- Members supported the recommendations.
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127. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 10)

The Scrutiny Manager noted that the Council Tax Reduction Group had met for a second time and that work was progressing well.

128. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 11)

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that she had attended the inaugural meeting of the Somerset Rivers Authority. It was noted that Scrutiny should keep a watching brief to ensure the positive momentum achieved to date was maintained.

129. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Manager noted that an 'End of Term' report would be submitted to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting, being the last meeting prior to the elections. The report would look to show the key achievements of the Scrutiny Committee over the past 4 years as well as reflect on the challenges and opportunities for the future.

130. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 31st March at 10.00 a.m. in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman