

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil** on **Tuesday 2 December 2014**.

(10.00am - 11.40 am)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Sue Osborne
Pauline Clarke	David Recardo
Carol Goodall	Martin Wale
Pauline Lock	

**Also Present:**

Tim Carroll

**Officers**

David Norris	Development Manager
Andrew Gillespie	Area Development Manager (West) / Performance Manager
Anuska Gilbert	Performance Officer
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

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**80. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 November 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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**81. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)**

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

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**82. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

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**83. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)**

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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#### **84. Issues arising from previous meetings (Agenda Item 5)**

There were no issues raised.

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#### **85. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

The Chairman reminded members there would be a presentation at District Executive in December by the Environment Agency about flooding trigger points. The item was open to all members and she encouraged anyone with an interest to attend.

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#### **86. Planning Appeals - Update (Agenda Item 7)**

The Development Manager provided a short verbal presentation highlighting statistics about the number of planning applications that had been lost on appeal. Reference was made to the number of appeals in the current financial year and in the past three years, and he indicated the reason why he believed there were more appeals now was probably due to the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework.

It was noted that whilst the number of appeals lost reported in the quarterly performance monitoring reports was disappointing for the first six months of this year, the figure had improved since October with 70% of appeals being won. He felt the figures would be back on target by the end of the year.

During discussion the Development Manager responded to questions and comments raised by members. Members also made some suggestions including:

- a workshop providing similar information would be very useful for members.
- similar information should be included in the member induction process following the elections.
- Would be useful to have copies of all appeals available in the members room for reference.

The Chairman thanked the Development Manager for attending the meeting.

**ACTION:** Members to note the presentation.

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#### **87. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 6 November 2014 (Agenda Item 8)**

The Scrutiny Manager updated members regarding the Task and Finish Broadband report that had been considered. District Executive had noted all Scrutiny comments made and agreed that a submission be made to the House of Commons Committee on Environment Food and Rural Affairs about the lack of effective communication and clarity of the broadband programme for rural areas, and to alert the Committee to this Council's concerns about the Connecting Devon and Somerset's approach. It had also been agreed to establish a working group and further details were included in the minutes for the District Executive meeting.

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**88. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 December 2014  
(Agenda Item 9)**

**Presentation from the Environment Agency on Flooding Trigger Points – item 6**

- As no report no comments were made.

**The Somerset levels and Moors 20 year Flood Action Plan – Proposed Somerset Rivers Authority – item 7**

- Members received a verbal updated report, including draft revised recommendations, from the Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) and were pleased to note the progress being made.
- Members sought clarification about who would have responsibility for the funding coming to Somerset from Government.
- Scrutiny understood the time constraints involved with this fast moving issue and took the unusual step of voting on formally endorsing the proposals as explained by the Assistant Director, which was carried unanimously.
- It was queried if the word 'Authority' could be used in the title without legislation.
- Members of the Scrutiny Committee re-iterated the position reached by members attending the Portfolio Holder briefing on this matter in October: that the creation of a fully functioning Somerset Rivers Authority, backed appropriate legislation and sustainably long term funding arrangements – namely the ability to precept is fundamental to the successful delivery of the Flood Action Plan and should only be created if these conditions are met. Members were very conscious of the need to avoid creating a partnership with no real 'teeth'.

**Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014/15 – item 8**

- Members were pleased to note that the complaints figures remained relatively low.

**Non Domestic (Business) Rate Pooling – item 9**

- Scrutiny made no comments.

**Additional Revenues Team Resources – item 10**

- Scrutiny members did not raise any issues and were content the recommendations went forward. Scrutiny members accepted that without the additional resource, there would be serious implications for the future performance of this statutory service.

**Community Right to Bid – Assets of Community Value – item 11**

- Scrutiny noted the report.

**Monthly Performance Snapshot – item 12**

- Scrutiny noted the report.

### **District Executive Forward Plan – item 13**

- Scrutiny made no comments.

### **CONFIDENTIAL – Exclusion of the Press and Public**

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the Committee resolved that the press and public be excluded from the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, i.e. “Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

### **Delivery of the Car Parking Strategy (Confidential) – item 16**

- Members made comments in closed session
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## **89. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 10)**

The Scrutiny Manager updated members on the progress of the current Task and Finish Review:

### **Budget**

The group had completed its work and the draft report was being circulated and finalised.

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## **90. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 11)**

The Scrutiny Manager updated members on several items:

- Joint Waste Scrutiny – Somerset County Council were now providing the officer support A meeting was due to be held shortly to which Councillors Sue Steele and Carol Goodall would be attending, and one if items to be discussed was proposed future changes to service delivery.
  - Flooding Steering Group – the group had not met since the last Scrutiny Committee meeting and were not due to meet for a while. It was noted there was much being done by other parties at the current time.
  - Task and Finish Reviews – due to Election timeframes the capacity to undertake any new Task and Finish work is likely to be reduced in the new year.
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## **91. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)**

The Scrutiny Managed informed members that due to report deadlines and the Christmas break, the items on the Police & Crime Panel and Health Scrutiny would be re-scheduled for the February meeting.

**ACTION:** Members to note the updates.

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**92. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 13)**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 6 January 2015 in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman