

## 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 2 June 2015.**

(10.00 am - 12.30 pm)

**Present:**

**Members:** Dave Bulmer (Chairman)

Clare Aparicio Paul	Tiffany Osborne
John Clark	Garry Shortland
Sue Osborne	Rob Stickland
	Martin Wales

**Also Present:**

Ric Pallister	Jo Roundell Greene
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**Officers**

Anuska Gilbert	Performance Officer
Andrew Gillespie	Performance Manager
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jason Baker, Gye Dibben, Val Keitch and Sue Steele.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised.

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

There were no Chairman's announcements.

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## **7. Presentation - Introduction to Scrutiny (Agenda Item 7)**

The Scrutiny Managers outlined the key aspects of South Somerset District Council's Scrutiny function, including statutory roles and responsibilities as well as the importance of Scrutiny maintaining an independent, objective and non-partisan approach.

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## **8. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 June 2015 (Agenda Item 8)**

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 4 June 2015. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration.

### **SSDC Annual Performance Report (Agenda item 6)**

- Members formally recommended that Scrutiny are actively involved in any future review of Performance Indicators, as mentioned by the Performance Manager at the meeting.
- Members queried if recent changes to working practices, in particular the introduction of hot-desking arrangements had had any impact on the sickness absence levels?
- Clarity was also sought over PI's 006 and 007 relating to Inward investment – Scrutiny recommend that the reporting against these indicators is clarified to show the number of jobs actually created.

### **Capital Outturn report (Agenda item 7)**

- On page 18, members questioned why only two post completion reports had been completed?
- Members also asked for an explanation as to why the Capital Spending Pattern on page 16 consistently shows an underspend, although it was noted that the gap is narrowing.
- Members noted that there is no reference to the Infrastructure Reserve, and although they noted that very little of this reserve has been spent, it would still be useful to see it reported.

### **Revenue Budget Outturn Report (Agenda item 8)**

- Members sought clarification on the figures relating to NNDR contained in paragraph 22 on page 44 – does this figure mean that we had an additional £132k NNDR debt than that of the grant? What is being done to mitigate this in the future?

### **Superfast Broadband (Agenda item 9)**

- This complex issue has been the subject of a detailed Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, and as we have reported in the past, this is a very frustrating issue, caused mainly by the lack of information from the CDS project team. When this matter was considered by DX in June, members of the Scrutiny Committee fully endorsed the recommendations that although an agreement in principle to provide the funding could be made, no actual monies should be released until assurances had been provided that:
  - a) Businesses premises would be a priority; and
  - b) That the money would be spent in South Somerset.
- Members of Scrutiny Committee note that despite the best endeavours of officers, these assurances have not been provided and this now poses a difficult decision going forward. Members noted that the Devon District Councils are having their contribution covered by Devon County Council and so essentially; this leaves SSDC as the only District yet to commit the funding.
- Members noted that the provision of reliable Broadband is very much a local priority and the risk of taking a decision that results in not providing this service to our residents is very real.
- In conclusion, members felt that in the absence of the information that would be presented verbally to DX members, they were unable to support a decision either way at this stage.
- Members also suggested that approach to this matter could be referred to the National Audit Office as the whole process involves significant amounts of public money and this authority is being asked to proceed in the absence of the usual safeguards that we have come to expect.

### **ICT Software and hardware upgrades (Agenda item 10)**

- No Comments

### **Designation of a Neighbourhood Area – Castle Cary and Ansford Parishes (Agenda item 11)**

- No comments

### **Appointment of Honorary Aldermen (Agenda item 12)**

- The committee supported the criteria and rights proposed.

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## **9. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 9)**

There were no updates from the Scrutiny Managers.

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## **10. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)**

The Scrutiny Managers explained to members the importance of setting a balanced and well managed Scrutiny Work Programme and emphasised that the decision as to what to include in the Work Programme rested with the members of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Managers went on to explain the various processes that are in place to support this including the Scoring Criteria and the Report Request Template.

In response to a suggestion put forward by Cllr Clark concerning call response times with the Contact Centre, the Committee completed a report request template and asked that a report be included on the August Scrutiny Committee Agenda.

Members also agreed that at the July Scrutiny Committee meeting, they would consider whether to include the issue of the Planning Scheme of Delegation as suggested by Full Council in March, in their future Work Programme.

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**11. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 11)**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 30 June at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman