

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 29 September 2015.**

(10.00 am - 12.30 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Sue Osborne
Dave Bulmer	Tiffany Osborne
John Clark	Alan Smith
Gye Dibben	Rob Stickland
Val Keitch	Martin Wales

Also Present:

Mike Beech	Jo Roundell Greene
Ric Pallister	Sylvia Seal

Officers

Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Vega Sturgess	Interim Chief Executive
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Steve Joel	Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being)
Colin McDonald	Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Kim Close	Assistant Director (Communities)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager

51. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September were approved as a correct record subject to amending Minute number 46 to reflect that the 2014/15 rather than 2013/14 Housing figures were showing improvement, and were signed by the Chairman.

52. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Claire Aparicio Paul, Tony Lock and David Recardo. Councillor Alan Smith was in attendance as substitute for Councillor David Recardo.

53. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

54. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised.

56. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reminded Scrutiny Committee Members that a visit to West Dorset District Council has been arranged for members on Wednesday 14th October and that all members interested in attending should contact either of the Scrutiny Managers to confirm their attendance.

Members were informed that following on from the recommendation made at the last Scrutiny Committee meeting, a place on the Westland's Leisure Complex Project Board had been allocated to a Scrutiny Member. The Chair of Scrutiny had attended the first meeting of the Project Board and would continue to be the Scrutiny representative until after the Full Council decision on 13th October. If members agree to proceed with the project, Scrutiny Committee members will be asked to nominate a representative on the Board.

The Chairman clarified that under Agenda item 8 – reports to be considered by District Executive – the Westland's Leisure Complex report contained confidential appendices and if members wished to refer to the financial information contained in those appendices, the Committee would need to move into confidential session.

57. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 3rd September 2015 (Agenda Item 7)

Members noted the update given by the Scrutiny Committee Chairman.

58. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1st October 2015 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive Agenda for 1 October 2015.

Westland Leisure Complex (Agenda item 6)

In order to discuss the matter fully, it was proposed and agreed that the Committee would move into confidential session for this item as some of the financial information contained in the appendices is classed as confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members were also reminded that the financial information supplied in the confidential report is subject to a Non-Disclosure Agreement with AugustaWestland.

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) and Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing attended the meeting and presented the report to members.

The Assistant Director updated members on the following points:

- Since this matter was last considered by members in early September, property advisors had been commissioned to undertake a condition survey of the asset – members were referred to the full report contained in the confidential papers.
- The condition survey had identified that the roof structure is essentially clear but with some additional works identified to address issues such as end-lap corrosion.
- Additional work on hire analysis over the past two years shows that hire income was in fact greater than previously reported.
- As requested, a risk register has been developed and will be updated as the project progresses.
- An initial meeting of the Project Board had agreed that AW be requested to retain the asset in its' current condition until completion and transfer of the asset.
- AW had been approached about the possibility of separating the Sporting facilities from the Leisure facilities. They had responded by saying that their preference would be for the site to be transferred as a whole, at this stage, they would be prepared to put the option of splitting the site to the Finnmeccanica Board for consideration. The Assistant Director informed members that if the site were to be split, the other funding Partners (AW and Yeovil Town Council) had indicated that they would not be prepared to contribute any funding to a sports only site and that the ticket levy proposal could not be applied to a sports only facility.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) then updated members on the following financial aspects of the project.

- The principles of capital spend
- Estimated expenditure and income associated with the project;
- Impact on capital receipts;
- Benefits of internal borrowing including the revenue implications;
- The current SSDC budget position and the need for members to reallocate resources in line with priorities if the decision is taken to proceed;
- The affordability of the project and the impact on balances.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- In response to a query about the membership of the various sporting clubs associated with the site, members were informed that members are drawn from all over the district, and not just from Yeovil.
- If SSDC were to take over the running of the site, it would be open to the whole community with all current restrictions removed and with a 'pay and play' policy introduced where possible. This would not apply to the cricket facilities as the Cricket clubs would be required to maintain their own facilities and so would have exclusive use.
- All hire agreements would be negotiated taking into account VAT implications.
- An agreement in principle had been agreed from Yeovil Town Council, other Parish Councils within Area South had been identified as potential funding partners but had not yet been approached. It was not envisaged that Parish Councils outside of Area South would be approached for funding.

- It was queried that The Octagon Theatre is subsidised by SSDC and that when combined with the 'sister venue' at Westland's this level of subsidy would only increase. Members were informed that the financial performance of the Octagon is continually improving and that if the two venues are 'joined' there will need to be a 'truing up' exercise of 'back office' costs. In practice this will see the costs of the Octagon decrease.
- The Westland's Entertainment Venue will fundamentally not be a third theatre for Yeovil;
- Members suggested that having a 3 year business plan would help in making the final decision.
- Members were again reminded that officers had been asked to prepare the report on a 'worst case scenario' basis.
- All external funding sources had been explored and this would continue to be the case;

Following the discussion, a member of the committee proposed that the matter was put to the vote to enable Scrutiny to provide a clear indication to District Executive, this was seconded and subsequently the committee voted as follows on the recommendations contained in the report: 5 for, 3 against and 3 abstentions.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan (Agenda item 7)

The Assistant Director (Corporate and Financial Services) outlined the report and stated that whilst she was confident that a balanced budget would be set for 2016/17, no such certainty could be provided beyond this. She also referred members to the section of the report which outlines the key budgetary risks facing the authority.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- In response to a query about Service Redesign and the reduction of personnel associated with this process the Strategic Director – Place responded that it was essentially a way of looking at processes, assessing better use of technology and focusing on the best outcome for customers. Business Transformation is a more holistic look at how we do things.
- Members noted that the mentioned the need for the MTFP to reflect the Council's priorities and that the current plan has now expired – members queried what the process is for refreshing the Council Plan and how the wider membership would be involved in this key piece of work.

Affordable Housing Development Programme (Agenda item 8)

- Members thanked the officer for a very detailed and thorough report.
- Members asked that funding generated by HG4 and the geographical spread be kept under review and reported to members.

Loan to Hinton St George and Locally Rural Community Services Ltd (Agenda item 9)

- members sought reassurance that SSDC would have first charge on the property if the loan is agreed and agreed with the suggestion that the Loans policy should be revisited in light of the number of reports now coming forward to Council for approval.

Wyndham Park Community Facilities and Primary School Provision (Agenda item 10)

- Members supported the recommendation which will help address the chronic shortage of primary school places in Yeovil.

Community Right to Bid Quarterly Update Report (Agenda item 11)

- Members noted this report

Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

- Members asked when the issue of two hours free car parking (as discussed via a Motion to Full Council) would be included in the Forward Plan – at the time, members were informed that any decision on this would have to be taken as part of the 2016/17 budget setting process which is underway.
-

59. LEADER Programme - Rural Economic Development (Agenda Item 9)

The Assistant Director (Communities) attended to present this report which had been requested by Scrutiny Members.

The report outlined the purpose of the LEADER Programme, funding arrangements and how SSDC members can engage with the Programme.

Members commented that progress with the Programme had been frustrating, taking into account the disruption of national and local elections earlier in the year.

It was noted that there is now a revised launch date of 14th October, and that it was likely any bids would be considered in the last quarter of the year.

Members asked if the various programme strategies could be circulated, although it was noted that these strategies were probably now out of date.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for preparing the report and responding to their questions.

60. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 10)

The Chair of Scrutiny stated that the members of the Council Tax Reduction Strategy had recently had a very successful meeting and were currently working on their final report which would come before the Scrutiny Committee next month.

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the Licensing Task and Finish Group was progressing well and that there would be a final meeting of the group on 21st October with recommendations coming forward to the November Scrutiny Committee meeting.

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

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that there a visit for Scrutiny Members to West Dorset District Council had been arranged for the evening of Wednesday 14th

October. She stressed the importance of this visit in advance of upcoming decisions on joint working and asked all members to contact Jo Gale to confirm attendance.

It was agreed that a set of questions for West Dorset Officers and Members, prepared by Councillor John Clark would be circulated to all members of the committee – members were asked to send through any additional questions in advance of the visit.

62. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the Scrutiny Work Programme.

63. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 13)

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

.....
Chairman