

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT** on **Tuesday 5 July 2016**.

(10.00 am - 12.10 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Sue Osborne
Mike Beech	Tiffany Osborne
Dave Bulmer	Garry Shortland
John Clark	Rob Stickland
Val Keitch	Martin Wales

Also Present:

Jo Roundell Greene	Angie Singleton
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Officers

Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Paul Wheatley	Principal Spatial Planner
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager

13. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2016 were amended to show Cllr Amanda Broom was present not Cllr David Recardo, and then approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Lock and Amanda Broom.

15. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

16. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions raised by members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

18. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed the committee, that as a member of the Transformation Board, she had attended a Transformation Programme - technology platform – awareness event at the Innovation Centre. The event was for members to see presentations from suppliers showing the technology and solutions they provide that could support the future model - Agilisys, Verint, IEP (Intelligent Enterprise Solutions), Civica and IBM Optevia.

The next transformation board meeting is tomorrow where they will be making decisions with regard to procurement.

The Vice Chairman with the support of the Deputy Leader updated the committee on the work of the Strategic Alliance, explaining work was progressing on work streams and they had been learning from Sedgemoor with regard to lettings.

19. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 2 June 2016 (Agenda Item 7)

Members noted the update given by the Chairman of Scrutiny Committee this included a reminder regarding the forthcoming presentation and workshops on:

- Informing the forthcoming Economic Development Strategy 2016 - 2020 Economic Development.
 - Transformation with consultants Ignite
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20. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 7 July 2016 (Agenda Item 8)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the reports contained in the District Executive Agenda for the 7 July 2016 and made the following comments:

Five-year Housing Land Supply Update (agenda item 7)

The Principal Spatial Planner and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning (Place Making) introduced the report and raised the following points during discussion and in response to member questions:

- SSDC can currently demonstrate 4 years and two months housing land supply.
- SSDC is not unique in facing this challenge, a recent Savills report highlights approximately 50% of other Councils across the country are also not able to deliver a 5 year housing supply.
- There are implications to not having a five-year housing land supply, but it does not mean that the Council has to give an “automatic” approval to all schemes, the Council’s starting point is still the Local Plan, and if the scheme is a poor scheme that creates unacceptable impacts then it can still be refused.
- Ultimately the issue is affected by poor delivery against targets over the last 10/11 years, since 2006, which includes a period of major recession and lack of activity in the construction sector.
- The Council’s ability to set out a future supply of sites for housing remains healthy and has been fairly consistent – it is the fact that delivery figures (number of homes

built each year) is falling behind target and makes the overall calculation more difficult..

- The delivery is not coming forward on some of the larger sites as quickly as expected.
- There are some complicated sites (mixed use, both housing and employment land and requiring substantial infrastructure) which are taking longer to deliver than had been expected.
- The solution is unlikely to be reached by reducing the number of homes that are required to be built in South Somerset, as population is growing, and so the housing requirement is likely to stay similar to what it is now. The forthcoming Strategic Housing Market Assessment will be publicised soon, and is likely to show a similar housing requirements figure.
- It's not just about giving the permissions, developers will only build where they are confident they can sell, and so there is an issue about market capacity. .
- To help larger sites come forward SSDC may need to consider underwriting some of the risks or infrastructure costs.
- CIL is unlikely to have an impact on sites coming forward.
- A planning Case Officer will always consider the policies relating to housing and the local plan, the context and circumstances of the site, the locality and the housing delivery in the local area. Although you cannot ignore SSDC has less than five years supply. In looking at future housing requirement figures there may be the opportunity to factor in issues such as the local wage economy.

Approval of the Somerset District Authorities Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy 2015-2020 and the environmental Protection Enforcement Policy 2015-2020 (Agenda item 8)

Members supported the recommendations.

2015/16 Revenue Budget Outturn Report (Agenda item 9)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) introduced the report. She raised the following points:

- An additional £1.9 million Council Tax collected this year compared to the previous year and £1.476 million collected of previous year's arrears.
- An additional £0.7 million Business Rates collected this year compared to the previous year and £2.56 million collected of previous year's arrears.
- The successful appeals for Yeovilton and the Doctors Surgeries have had an impact on business rates but there is money in reserves in readiness for this.

Members were concerned regarding the areas shown in the report where income was less than expected. Donna Parham explained the shortfall against the Crematorium was due to spending on improvements. She confirmed a report will be coming forward with regard to advertising on the web and the Brympton Way canteen for members to make a decision.

2015/16 Capital Budget Outturn Report (Agenda item 10)

Members supported the recommendations

Key4Life – At Risk Preventative Programme in Somerset (Agenda item 11)

During discussion members raised the following points:

- Is funding also being sought from the Police and Crime commissioner for this project?
- There are many organisations (estimated over 30) who work in a similar role to this organisation helping offenders in this area.
- There is estimated to only be 1 organisation who works to support victims of crime in this area.
- It may be beneficial for additional research to be undertaken with regard to this project.

Annual Review of SSDC Partnerships (Agenda item 12)

Members discussed the report and requested:

- A brief update in terms of review and performance of the Market Towns Investment Group and the Safer Somerset Partnership.
- Clarification of what the removal of the register could mean in real terms? Members were specifically concerned re the potential removal of the Strategic Partnership against Hate Crime, given the current reports of the increase of this behaviour.

Community Right to Bid Quarterly Update Report (Agenda item 13)

Scrutiny Committee considered the report and commented (based on experiences in their wards) that some communities are not giving appropriate consideration to the impact and implications of registering an asset on the list.

21. Scrutiny Committee Report - Request For Further Information On Newly Created Boards (Agenda Item 9)

The Chairman introduced the report and made reference to the previous meeting when members agreed to request a report.

During discussion members sought clarification of the decision making process for each of the boards from the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) and the Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services).

The committee raised the following points/questions:

- The Income Generation board has no delegated powers, all decisions regarding expenditure for income generation will go to District Executive. District Executive can utilise up to 5% of Unallocated Capital Receipts (currently up to £900,000 per annum), and if a single element exceeds £900,000 the decision will be taken by Full Council.
- Transformation Board has delegated powers to spend up to the amount that full Council allocated to the project.
- Donna Parham Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) is on the Transformation Board and it is part of her role to ensure monies are spent in accordance with planned expenditure.
- The actions of the Transformation Board will be recorded at each meeting and presented to members quarterly.
- Transformation Board will have no pre-decision Scrutiny. Can the meeting timetable be altered to enable this?

- There is no 'call-in' provision for decisions taken by the Transformation Board.
- Having Scrutiny Committee members on the Transformation Board doesn't preclude Scrutiny of Transformation.
- The decision of full council to proceed with transformation was on the basis of the report presented to it and the objectives set out within. It is a very important project and the decision did not mean that members would not be allowed to track progress against those objectives.
- Should non-executive members be on the transformation board if it is decision making?
- Are Councillors Sue Steele and John Clark going to have conflicts of interest being on both the Transformation Board and Scrutiny Committee?
- Can agendas and reports be made available to all – perhaps use ModGov.
- Can all members attend all board meetings to observe? Just like committee meetings.
- If I am on a board, am I there in a Scrutiny capacity? If I have to bring information back how do I go about reporting confidential information?
- The main purpose of Transformation is to save money, this needs to be clear in the Vision of the Transformation Board terms of reference. A specific figure should be included as detailed in the Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members agreed a document detailing the comments and concerns should be shared with the Leader of Council to ensure the discussions at August Scrutiny Committee are informed.

22. Rural District Council Network - Scrutiny of Rural Access to Health. (Agenda Item 10)

Members agreed to participate; no additional questions were suggested at the meeting.

It was agreed an invitation to participate should be sent to all members.

23. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 11)

Members were updated as follows on the progress of the Task and Finish Groups currently underway:

Council Tax Reduction Review 2017

The Scrutiny Manager explained this Task and Finish group are due to meet again on 14th July. The group intend to consider all the evidence to date, including impact assessments and to make decisions regarding:

- What should be included in the consultation?
- Who should be consulted?
- How the consultation should be promoted?
- What work if any needs to be carried out with external organisations to encourage continual feedback?

Discretionary Housing Payments

This Scrutiny Manager explained the next meeting is scheduled for 15th July and will be attended by representatives from Shelter and Citizen's Advice to advise members on various sensitive issues relating to this review.

Consent to Dispose of Housing Stock / Local Connections Allocation Policy

The Scrutiny Manager explained a further meeting is arranged for 28th July to assess the evidence gathered so far and to consider SSDC's rural lettings policy.

NNDR

NNDR discretionary relief policy review – the changes from the revised policy have taken effect from 1st of April, this has resulted in some more feedback from ratepayers, the Task and Finish group will review this and changes in legislation regarding mandatory relief to ensure the policy still achieves what it set out to do and that the impact of the changes to mandatory relief are taken into account. This group has yet to be formed invitations to all members will go out shortly when officer time permits.

24. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 12)

The Leader of Council submitted a request to establish a Task and Finish group to consider elements of the proposals to establish a combined authority should members agree at Full Council to make an 'in principle' decision to create a Combined Authority.

The suggestion was that the Task and Finish group would work to address the concerns raised by members and to provide clarity and reassurance prior to any formal commitments being made to allow members to support the 'in principle' decision in July, thus ensuring SSDC remains an active participant in the ongoing Devolution discussions whilst providing capacity to thoroughly investigate the pertinent issues.

The Committee agreed they would be happy to establish a Task and Finish group; however this would be to consider suggestions and evidence provided by an officer. This is due to the committee members and Scrutiny Managers already having a substantial workload.

Cllr Jon Clark volunteered to participate in the Task and Finish group.

25. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

Members discussed that District Executive had agreed to defer the review of Performance Monitoring until after Transformation and agreed they would like opportunity in the work programme to consider:

- If the existing measures are still relevant and providing the specific detail that members feel they need, is it fit for purpose
- If amendments should be made now a new Council Plan has been adopted
- If different measures should be reported to better benchmark and measure the impact of the forthcoming changes as a result of transformation

The Scrutiny Manager informed the committee that Keeley Rudd, Chief Executive of Community Council for Somerset (CCS), had agreed to meet with members to discuss how SSDC and CCS could work more closely together to achieve more for the community. She was awaiting a response regarding potential meeting dates.

26. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on 2 August 2016, in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman