

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 August 2016.**

(10.00 am - 12.00 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	John Clark
Neil Bloomfield	Val Keitch
Amanda Broom	Sue Osborne
Dave Bulmer	Rob Stickland

Also Present:

Clare Aparicio Paul	Jo Roundell Greene
Ric Pallister	Angie Singleton

Officers

Rina Singh	Interim Chief Executive
Catherine Hood	Finance Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager

27. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Beech, Tony Lock, Tiffany Osborne, Garry Shortland and Martin Wale.

29. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

30. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

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

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

32. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed the committee she had attended a Transformation Programme meeting since Scrutiny Committee last met and explained:

- The recommendation from Scrutiny Committee to amend the Transformation Board Terms of Reference to include achieving savings as stated in the Business case was accepted.
- The specifics of the roles she and Cllr John Clark will have on the Transformation Board and how this will work practically alongside their Scrutiny Committee Chairing responsibilities.

Cllr Dave Bulmer noted the Strategic Alliance group had not met since the last Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Deputy Leader and Interim Chief Executive Officer explained that there are progressing three work streams of the Strategic Alliance:

- Creation of a Lettings Agency (although this work related more to South Somerset than Sedgemoor District Council)
- Energy provision for residents - addressing fuel poverty, encouraging people to consider switching and potentially consider income generation
- Formalising the process with regards to Income Generation to take forward to Joint Leaders Advisory Group.

There was discussion around the Energy provision work stream, all ideas and suggestions are encouraged and should be put forward to the Assistant Director (Environment).

33. Response to Scrutiny Questions to the Leader (Agenda Item 7)

Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the responses provided to the questions circulated under separate cover.

In response to member questions the officer and executive members in attendance raised the following points:

- The decisions this board would make are with regard to options for progressing the project as set down in the parameters of the Full Council report – within the agreed timescales and budget.
- Cllr Ric Pallister is the project sponsor; it is his responsibility to ensure the board are effectively working to achieve what was set down in the report to Full Council on 17th March 2016 and within the parameters in terms of timescales and budget. Anything outside of the scope would have to come back to members to be discussed.
- Only members on the Board vote, no officers have a vote, voting will only be in terms of how the programme is managed, considering aspects of delivery. It's about getting early direction and utilising member's knowledge of communities and resident's needs.

- Cllr John Clark added that the voting procedure on the board was clearly set out.
- There are named substitutes on the Income Generation Board but this is different from Transformation Board, as transformation is a process and a delivery vehicle for what members have already defined so cannot be considered the same as the other Boards.

Scrutiny Committee members were satisfied with the responses provided and the agreed process going forward to enable effective Scrutiny involvement.

34. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 7 July 2016 (Agenda Item 8)

Members noted the update given by the Chairman of Scrutiny Committee.

35. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 August 2016 (Agenda Item 9)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the reports contained in the District Executive Agenda for the 4 August 2016 and made the following comments:

Approval of South Somerset District Council's Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy (2016-2021) (Agenda item 7)

Member's sought reassurance that the reputational risk to the Authority of adopting a more reactive than pro-active approach is adequately managed?

Draft Asset Management Plan 2016-17 (Agenda item 8)

Whilst members acknowledged that the report states there will need to be some flexibility to manage the limited resources available in the delivery of the Asset Management Plan, Scrutiny Committee members feel it is important that workloads are monitored.

Members also were pleased to note the clarification given by the Leader that the cessation of the Strategic Asset Steering Group (SASG) would not affect the democratic decision making processes already in place.

Update on Equality Objectives Action Plan (Agenda item 9)

Members were pleased to note that their concerns relating to Community Safety Actions had now been addressed.

2016/17 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 30th June 2016 (Agenda item 10)

Members sought clarification about the ANPR Car Parking arrangements and why this project was running behind schedule. They were grateful to the Finance Manager for providing some clarification about the contract negotiation process and hope the issues can be resolved as soon as possible.

Members asked that progress towards achieving the Transformation Programme savings are made explicitly clear in budget monitoring reports and it was agreed that this information would be shown as a separate reporting line in the future.

2016/17 Capital Budget Monitoring report for the period ending 30th June 2016 (Agenda item 11)

Members commented on the fact that a move away from Home Improvement Grants to loans had had an adverse effect on the number of applications. They were pleased to note the Leader's comments that a revised procedure for administering the loans would be coming before members shortly.

Draft Proposals of the Community Governance Review of Yeovilton Parish Council (Agenda item 12)

Scrutiny Committee made no comments.

Monthly News Snapshot (Agenda item 13)

The Leader highlighted the success of the scheme run by Somerset Care and Repair.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 14)

Scrutiny Committee made no comments.

Exclusion of 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 items 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).

Westlands Leisure Complex – Urgent Executive Decision (Confidential) (Agenda item 17)

Members made comments in confidential session.

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

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 that the Task and Finish group met on 14th July. Members agreed what should be included in the consultation and discussed how best to encourage a good representation of the community and representatives of those who may be considered vulnerable to participate.

Discretionary Housing Payments

This Scrutiny Manager explained the next meeting is scheduled for 16th September and that the previous meeting had been attended by a senior Shelter representative. Members had had a very good discussion about what constitutes 'reasonable living expenses' and the group would now be working to devise an appropriate SSDC policy to reflect this information. Any relevant evidence gathered by this Task and Finish Group will be shared with the Council Tax Reduction Task and Finish Group.

Consent to Dispose of Housing Stock / Local Connections Allocation Policy

A report is currently being prepared for consideration by the HomeFinder Somerset Board outlining members suggestions for ensuring sustainable local communities are supported through providing appropriate local housing for local people.

Further work is being done to fully understand the impact of the decisions by the various Housing Providers to dispose of stock within South Somerset. The evidence gathered by the Task and Finish Group to date indicates that South Somerset has very limited ability to influence their decisions so the focus of the group is now on ensuring the risk of such disposals is fully understood and reflected in SSDC policies and procedures. A further meeting will be held in September to progress this.

NNDR

Whilst the Council Tax support work will cease during the consultation period, the revenues staff will be able to work with members throughout September to review the NNDR discretionary relief policy, an invitation will go out shortly to all members.

Community Council for Somerset

The Scrutiny Manager explained Keeley Rudd the Chief Executive Officer from the Community Council for Somerset (CCS) is coming to meet with members on Monday 8th August to identify if, and how, CCS and SSDC could work better together to achieve more and better outcomes for the community.

Street Trading

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that this work was a continuation of the work of the previous Licensing fees and charges Task and Finish group and would be focusing on refreshing the Council's policies and procedures in relation to Street Trading. The first meeting is scheduled to take place on 28th September at 10am.

Councillors Jason Baker, Neil Bloomfield, Val Keitch and Rob Stickland indicated they wished to take part in this review.

Devolution

The Scrutiny Manager updated members on the Task and Finish Group that had been established at the request of the Leader (and subsequently agreed by Scrutiny Committee) with the aim of supporting members in understanding the implications of moving towards a Combined Authority.

Within the Strategic Alliance with Sedgemoor District Council, two of their elected members would be joining this review;

Cllr Mick Lerry, Leader of Labour Group
Cllr Kathy Pearce, Chair of Community Scrutiny
Cllrs John Clark and Sue Osborne will be the SSDC representatives on this Task and Finish Group. An initial meeting will be arranged for September.

Rural Services Access to Health Scrutiny Exercise

Following the agreement of members to participate in this national project a meeting has been arranged for 21st September at the Deane House, Taunton. Somerset County Council are considering joining with SSDC, WSC and TDBC to carry out this review. The Chairman indicated that she would like to participate in this review and an invite would be sent out to all members seeking additional representatives.

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

There were no updates on matters of interest.

38. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that Garry Orr – CEO of Yarlington Homes would be presenting a paper to Scrutiny Members at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting, outlining his proposals for Right to Buy receipts in the future.

39. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on 30 August 2016, in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman