

## 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 November 2016.**

(10.00 am - 12.05 pm)

**Present:**

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

Jason Baker	David Norris
Mike Beech	Rob Stickland
Amanda Broom	Martin Wales
Val Keitch	

**Also Present:**

Clare Aparicio Paul	Angie Singleton
Jo Roundell Greene	

**Officers**

Anna-Maria Lenz	Performance Officer
Charlotte Jones	Performance Manager
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Steve Joel	Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being)
Barbie Markey	Senior Housing Officer
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
David Mansell	Somerset Waste Partnership

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dave Bulmer, John Clark, Tony Lock, Sue Osborne and Gary Shortland,

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

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

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

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

The Chairman explained that she had attended the most recent meeting of the Transformation Board held on 17<sup>th</sup> November. Members commented that following the agreement at last month's Scrutiny meeting that Scrutiny Committee members would receive the Transformation Board agenda and papers in advance of the meetings, to facilitate more effective Scrutiny. However, members had only being sent a list of the items due to be discussed without any detail and this did not achieve that objective. They also commented that the notes of the Transformation Board would be more useful if they were written in a way that those not present at the meeting could understand.

The Deputy Leader said she would take the issue of the content of the meeting notes to the Transformation Board, but that in terms of Scrutiny members receiving the full agenda in advance of Transformation Board meetings, this had never been the intention as this would in effect mean that Scrutiny were scrutinising things before they happened and this would inevitably slow the process the up.

The Scrutiny Manager read out the following statement on behalf of Cllr Dave Bulmer relating to the Strategic Alliance:

"The Leaders of South Somerset District Council and Sedgemoor District Council would have been absent and therefore it was felt appropriate to defer the meeting. The Officer meetings are still taking place; these are monthly and now being headed up from Sedgemoor by Allison Griffen, Director of Customer and Communities."

The Chairman presented the Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) with a card on behalf of the Committee to wish her well when she leaves the authority after many years at the end of December.

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**83. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 3 November 2016 (Agenda Item 7)**

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

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**84. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1 December 2016 (Agenda Item 8)**

The Scrutiny Committee considered the reports contained in the District Executive Agenda for the 1 December 2016 and made the following comments:

**Recycle More – Domestic Waste Collection Services (Agenda item 6)**

The Committee welcomed David Mansell – Development and Monitoring Manager – Somerset Waste Partnership to the meeting. Mr Mansell gave a very detailed presentation to members outlining the proposals for the Recycle More Project, during

which he advised that the proposal was aimed to divert more waste from going to landfill sites. In the trial, there had been a 27% reduction in residual waste when refuse was collected every 3 weeks and garden waste every 2 weeks with recyclables collected weekly. Although the cost was projected to be £2.2m, there would be an annual saving of £1.7m so the costs would be recovered within 18 months. There were reputational risks and so an extensive communications plan was in place including the development of an app to inform residents when their recycling was due. They were also looking at consolidating their vehicle depots to one in the east of the district and one in the west. Providing all the partner Councils agreed to participate in the scheme, and, the decision was confirmed by the Somerset Waste Board at their meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> December, then new waste collection vehicles would be ordered and the scheme would commence in phases from October 2017 to October 2018.

Following the presentation:

- Members thanked the Assistant Director (Operations and Customer Focus) for all her hard work on this project along with the officers from the Somerset Waste Partnership.
- Members noted the potential reputational risk that SSSC could face during the roll out phase. Scrutiny Committee request reassurance that adequate measures will be put in place to minimise the impact on the Customer Services Team and to avoid an overlap of rolling out Recycle more and the Transformation of Customer Services as such an overlap could cause a significant problem to this project, if this could be shown in the communication and project plan and circulated to members this would be most helpful.
- Members were pleased to note additional resource had been factored in to address any issues that arise during the roll out.
- David Mansell confirmed that the procurement of the vehicles will take into account the accessibility issues for some of the properties in South Somerset.
- A member reported that some residents already find the restrictions on Household recycling centres are prohibiting recycling and this could be exacerbated by Recycle More.
- One Committee member stated that some constituents were concerned about how to deal with animal waste if this was to only be collected on a 3 weekly basis. David Mansell confirmed there are no health concerns with nappies adult hygiene products or animal waste being left for three weeks although they do advise that it is double bagged.
- Members asked for clarification on the review process that would be followed to monitor the effective implementation of this project.
- Members of the Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

#### **Quarterly Corporate Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2016/17 (Agenda item 7)**

- PI031 – Percentage of calls to contact centre solved at contact centre. Members were pleased to see some figures had been published with regard to the % of calls answered and to note that the Performance Team had started to work to understand abandoned calls.

- PI032 – Staff Sickness Absence – Members stated that during periods of significant organisational change such as the Transformation Programme, it is important to monitor the level of staff sickness absence due to work related stress. Whilst it was acknowledged that it would not be appropriate to report this information in an open forum, Scrutiny members sought reassurance that this is being captured corporately and monitored.
- PI 035 - % of Council Tax Collected – members asked if a narrative could be provided stating how much of the Council Tax collected in a specific quarter has been used to clear arrears accrued in previous years – this would help form a more accurate picture of collection rates.
- Complaints – in line with Scrutiny Best practice, members agreed that Scrutiny should look at developing a more proactive role in monitoring corporate complaints.
- Within the Council Plan, members sought clarification under C1.03 as to which Doctors Surgery is being purchased and converted?
- Scrutiny Committee requested refresher training of the TEN System in the New Year.

### **Local Strategic Partnership South Somerset Together (SST) Six Month Review Report (Agenda item 8)**

Members noted that this is now a much slimmed down version than in the past and reflected that SSDC no longer financially contributes to the partnership. It was noted that the partnership is now much more about facilitating a collaborative approach between South Somerset agencies, members asked if the slimmed down version had gone too far and if there was any risk that opportunities are being missed.

The Deputy Leader commented that a lot of good work had been delivered under this umbrella between the hospital and the college but was not mentioned in the report.

Members requested an update on the Troubled Families Project to come forward in the New Year – whilst it is acknowledged that this is now mainstreamed by Somerset County Council, this was initially a high profile local initiative which came under the umbrella of the LSP.

### **District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 9)**

Members commented that it is hard to know what some reports are about based on the report titles included in the Forward Plan – *Purchase of Land in SSDC* being a good example. The Forward Plan is a crucial document for the Scrutiny Committee and we would like to ask that as much detail as possible is included.

### **Chard Town Centre Redevelopment – Update Report (Agenda item 12)**

There was no discussion. Scrutiny members supported the report recommendation.

## **85. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 9)**

The following Task and Finish Groups are currently in progress:

### **Consent for Disposal of Properties**

This group is now re-focusing on the impact of the disposal of properties by Housing Providers on SSDC's Rural Letting's Policy. Following evidence gathered by the Task and Finish Group it is clear that Yarlinton Homes in particular are committed to continue to dispose of rural properties and that SSDC must now seek to mitigate the impact of this as far as it possible. A report summarising the findings of this review and proposals for future work will come forward in the New Year.

### **Discretionary Housing Payments**

This Group will meet on 3<sup>rd</sup> of January for a final review of the policy and to agree the report which will come to Committee in February.

### **Street Trading**

The draft Street Trading Policy is now out for consultation – the consultation period will end on 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

### **Council Tax Support**

The Task and Finish report is being compiled and is scheduled to come forward to Scrutiny Committee next month.

### **National Non Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief**

The Scrutiny Manager explained that within the Autumn Statement it was announced that Rural Rate relief would be increased. This will remove the disadvantage that would have been caused by the change to the small business rate relief policy. This leaves a disconnect with organisations that are in receipt of charitable relief that have a small Rateable Value that needs to be considered and will be reported on.

### **Right to Buy Clawback**

A meeting date is being co-ordinated, hopefully for December.

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## **86. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 10)**

The Chairman welcomed the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) and the Senior Housing Options Officer, and explained that they had been invited to attend the meeting to expand on the proposals to create a Private Sector Leasing and Letting Service contained in a recent Portfolio Holder decision (25/11/16).

The officers outlined the nature of the proposals and during the discussion, the following points were made:

- The Portfolio Holder decision making route had been followed as in effect this is a relatively small project;
- Such models are already in existence all over the country;

- It is anticipated that following announcements made as part of the Autumn Statement relating to regulating private landlords and arrangements for Buy-to-let mortgages, demand for schemes such as this will only increase.
- It is a cost effective way of discharging Homeless Duties.
- Repairs to properties will remain the responsibility of the landlords, unless repairs arise as a result of tenant damage. We are taking a risk management approach – there will always be some tenants who cause damage, and equally, there will those that don't.
- The letting agreement will include a boiler agreement;
- If damp occurs in a property, if it is caused by a property fault, it will be the responsibility of the landlord but not if caused by tenant lifestyle;
- If appropriate tenants will be offered Furnicare vouchers to help with furnishing properties;
- It was acknowledged that this project may be the new product that is needed to encourage more private sector landlords, the current climate is prohibitive to small investors due to changes in the tax regime and mortgages.
- There is a 'Fit and Proper Landlord' criteria that will be used to assess the suitability of those landlords coming forward under this project.

#### **87. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)**

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that following their request last month that the Economic Development Strategy be brought to Scrutiny, the Scrutiny Managers had contacted the Economic Development Manager and had been informed that following Scrutiny's original request in January to be involved in the review of the ED Strategy, an all member workshop had been held. Following those workshops, work had begun on the new Strategy but one unknown element at the time of the workshop was the start date of our new Chief Executive, Alex Parmley. The Chief Executive is keen to have an input into the Strategy and we have paused to allow him time to give his input into the document.

As soon as there has been an opportunity to further discuss the Strategy with the Chief Executive, and perhaps take a stronger steer from him, we will refine our drafting and give Scrutiny Committee a clearer indication of the timetable.

#### **88. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)**

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2017, in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman