

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 January 2018**.

(10.00 am - 12.00 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Rob Stickland
Dave Bulmer	Gerard Tucker
John Clark	Martin Wale
David Norris	Colin Winder
Alan Smith	

Also Present:

Jo Roundell Greene Val Keitch

Officers

Paul Fitzgerald	Section 151 Officer
Nicola Hix	Lead Specialist (Finance)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Specialist
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

93. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

94. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Goodall and Tony Lock.

95. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

96. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

98. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed members that following the meeting in November with the Director of Strategy & Commissioning and the Performance Manager to discuss

Performance Monitoring – a follow up workshop for Scrutiny members had now been arranged for 10am to 12 noon on 17 January.

The Chairman noted that at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting a question had been raised about ownership of Foundry House. She noted a detailed response had since been received from the Director of Commercial Services & Income Generation, and she summarised the information for members.

99. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 7 December 2017 (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman noted that the Scrutiny comments had been considered and were included in the District Executive minutes which had been circulated.

100. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 January 2018 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 4 January 2018 and made comments including:

Heart of the South West (HotSW) – Joint Committee (Agenda item 6)

- Members generally endorsed the concept of progress with a single Joint Committee.
- Members asked if a formal response had been submitted by SSDC to the productivity strategy consultation and if a copy could be circulated to all members.
- Several members were concerned about some of the assumptions that were detailed in the report including:
 - Assumption that Somerset County Council have adequate resources
 - That initial contributions from member authorities for 2018/19 will be adequate (Rec F).
- Regarding the risk matrix – members queried if the financial risk had been accurately reported in the risk profile matrix ‘after officer recommendation’.
- Para 8 on page 5, second bullet point – members sought reassurance that Economic Development within SSDC had the resources and was strong enough to take this forward.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19 (Agenda item 7)

- Scrutiny made no comments as the matter had been thoroughly considered during a Task and Finish Review – the final report of which is included within the appendices for this item.

SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress Report (Agenda item 8)

- It was noted that several times in the past (not necessarily at Scrutiny) members had requested a chart showing people involved with Transformation, including their photos and key responsibilities, but this had still not materialised.
- Scrutiny noted that members had previously been informed that a fortnightly or monthly communication / newsletter would be sent to all members, however this seemed to no longer be happening.
- Scrutiny sought re-assurance that the right level and type of communication was going out to staff.
- The report indicated that the Transformation project is on budget and schedule, however Scrutiny noted the report did not detail the ripple effect on services and any impact on service delivery. Are all services meeting targets?
- Page 34, para 20 – Scrutiny requested that any predicted reductions in service delivery as we progress through Transformation, should be communicated to members and appropriate stakeholders, in order to help manage customer expectations.
- Page 37, Programme status report – Scrutiny noted the table at the top of the page did not define a key and so it looked like a line of ‘number ones’ – it was felt the table needed to be clearer about what it identified.
- Page 39 – under Accommodation, it mentions that the Building Contractor has indicated terminating the contract with SSDC, but the report did not indicate what was being done to address the matter.
- Page 41, Workstream status report – members noted it would be useful if under the ‘Key activities next period’ if the activities could be prioritised or some narrative provided as to the importance of an activity.
- Members queried if there were core posts remaining vacant in the programme, and if so, would it be an additional risk to the programme?
- Page 50 – Members were pleased to note that there will be an external user group. As Scrutiny are commencing a Task and Finish shortly for Customer Accessibility and online services, it was queried if there was an opportunity for some collaborative work?

Annual Review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) (Agenda item 9)

- Members sought assurance that this would cascade down through the new structure.
- Scrutiny queried if the new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) would have any impact on the RIPA?

2018/19 Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan Update (Agenda item 10)

- Members were pleased to note from the Section 151 Officer that the government settlement announced shortly before Christmas slightly improved SSDC’s financial position.
- Members noted that the government were possibly looking to restrict Councils on borrowing for property investment, and queried the implications for SSDC should restrictions be made.
- Members expressed concern that there did not seem to be any in depth reporting of commercial property investments. Scrutiny requested separate more detailed reporting in the future to inform if investments purchased under the Commercial Strategy are performing as per the expected returns detail in the strategy.

- Business Rates Pooling (page 89) – members queried if any of the pilot schemes should go on to become national policy, would it be a positive impact for budgets in future years? Had any assumptions on pooling been made when calculating the forward budget as detailed in the report?
- Para 7, page 83 – members queried if a figure had been set yet regarding the Council Tax premium on empty properties.
- Para 16, page 86 – members queried what the £10k for strategic management events and sponsorship had been for and why it was an unavoidable pressure?
- Para 27, page 87 – it was queried how the figure of £50k had been derived for a Treasury Risk Management Reserve.

Yeovil Street Markets (Agenda item 11)

Scrutiny raised a number of questions and concerns including:

- The income for the Saturday Market is not included in the report, why? Can some indicative figures be provided?
- Will SSDC still get income from the licensing as it's not clear in the report?
- What is the view of the Yeovil Chamber of Commerce with regard to the influence and impact of the Market?
- Has discussion taken place with Yeovil Town Council, and have they been offered the opportunity to manage the market?
- Is there a charter for the Market, would this form part of the performance management part of an agreement with an operator.
- There are not enough safeguards in the proposed arrangement to ensure effective operation and minimisation of risks. Why is the arrangement proposed so loose and open ended?
- Is it wise to be looking to pursue the option when only one provider was interviewed?
- Para 16 of the report mentions that Markets and Events are key to the overall success of the town centre, how will this proposed arrangement ensure this?

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

- Members noted that an item regarding the Council Plan and Annual Action Plan was scheduled for February – members queried if there would be any consultation with members or opportunity for comments prior to the report coming forward?

101. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 9)

Members noted the updates provided by the Scrutiny Manager on each of the Task and Finish Groups currently in progress or commencing in the near future.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2019 – The Task and Finish group had held their second meeting and were progressing with potential options to reduce administration time for the scheme. At the next meeting members will begin to assess options in detail considering impact.

Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy - No updates since the last update.

Car Parking Charges – Review to commence once resource allows. Members briefly discussed the subject and noted the car parking strategy was also out of date. There

was a general opinion that the Car Parking Strategy, in terms of planning future parking provision, should be reviewed prior to a Task and Finish review of car parking charges.

Transformation – Customer Accessibility - the review will commence later in January 2018. The Scrutiny Committee have tasked this group to work with the Transformation Team to identify and deliver Best Practice to provide accessible on-line information and services for all. The group will compile its own project scope and terms of reference, to include meeting times. Volunteers were requested for the group. In response, Councillors Colin Winder, Dave Bulmer and David Norris expressed an interest in being on the Task and Finish Group.

102. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 10)

There were no matters of interest.

103. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The Scrutiny Manager updated members that the report regarding the Innovation Centre would come forward in the next few months, and information on the Innovation Centre may form part of a wider progress report. She also noted that the Portfolio Holder would attend the next meeting, on 30 January, to provide an update regarding the refurbishment of the Crematorium.

Members were asked for any issues they may wish to see added to the future Work Programme. One suggestion put forward related to the increased grant funding awarded (since the original application approved) to a dual-use centre at an Academy without any changes to the community usage being offered. It was suggested that possibly there could be a post-project analysis or look at the wider general remit of grants, funding and dual-use agreements, in particular those to / with Academies. The topic was supported by members.

104. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 10.00am on Tuesday 30 January in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman