

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room - Council Offices** on **Tuesday 2 July 2019**.

(1.30 - 4.05 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Gerard Tucker (Chairman)

Robin Bastable
Brian Hamilton
Charlie Hull
Paul Maxwell

Sue Osborne
Robin Pailthorpe
Jeny Snell



Officers

Jo Gale	Scrutiny Specialist
Martin Woods	Director (Service Delivery)
Paul Fitzgerald	Section 151 Officer
Netta Meadows	Director (Strategy & Support Services)
Charlotte Jones	Lead Specialist (People, Performance & Change)
Jo Morris	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

9. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nicola Clark, Brian Hamilton, Mike Lock, Crispin Raikes, Mike Stanton and Rob Stickland.

11. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Sue Osborne declared an interest in District Executive Agenda Item 6 – Allowenshay Private Water Supply, as Allowenshay was located within her ward.

12. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

14. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reminded members that there was a display in the Council Chamber of ideas generated by school children in connection with tackling climate change.

The Chairman noted that members had received an email from the Scrutiny Specialist inviting members to join the Task and Finish Review of Council Tax Support Scheme. The Scrutiny Specialist confirmed that she would contact those members interested in joining with a date for the first meeting.

Members were informed of the response received from the Customer Focussed Team Manager in relation to the concerns and queries raised by the member of the public at the previous meeting.

Members were encouraged to attend the Listening and Questioning Skills Training scheduled to take place on 15 July and 22 July.

15. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 July 2019 (Agenda Item 7)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 4 July 2019 and made comments as detailed below. Responses to questions were provided at Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officers or Portfolio Holder with the exception of the questions highlighted in bold

Allowenshay Private Water Supply (Agenda Item 6)

- Clarification was sought as to whether the one-off capital grant would also include the infrastructure for providing mains water to Dinnington and Hinton St George as referred to in the purpose of the report.
- In relation to recommendation c that a further request may come forward from other residents, members questioned how this would be funded? Members also raised concerns that this could prompt requests from other residents in South Somerset who also would like improvements to private water supplies that have not been budgeted for.

Revenue Budget Outturn Report for 2018/19 (Agenda Item 7)

- A member queried why the income target for car parking had been increased from 2018/19 given the evidence base showed a decrease in car park spend in previous years?
- A member asked if any consideration had been given to outsourcing Building Control given that the income from building control application fees was decreasing due to competition from approved inspectors.

Capital Budget Outturn Report for 2018/19 (Agenda Item 8)

No comments or questions were raised.

SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress report (Agenda Item 9)

With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, the Director - Strategy and Support Services gave a brief overview of Transformation in advance of Scrutiny Committee considering the progress report.

- Members queried when completion of the Transformation Programme would be expected?
- Members requested how the £494,990 in 2019/20 and £240,230 in 2020/21 would be allocated and sought reassurance how services would be maintained and pressure on staff reduced.
- Members sought clarification on the types of additional staffing for example would the money be used for overtime, agency staff etc.
- Members asked whether the funding requested for additional resources in the Transformation Programme Progress report included money to cover the over spend for additional staff as detailed in the revenue budget outturn report?
- Has there been an increase in staff turnover post January?
- A member suggested that it would be useful to receive the minutes from the Transformation Board.
- Members requested ongoing monitoring of the progress and outcome as a direct result of the additional resources.
- Members requested an explanation as to why the additional resources were not impacting on the net annual savings figure.

The Committee supported the recommendations of the report to quickly address the issues identified and to minimise impact on service delivery.

In response to the queries and comments raised, members were informed of the following:

- The Transformation Programme would come to an end towards the end of the year with a view to becoming business as usual, in that new processes can be created and systems changed to move in a more agile way. Continuous improvement will be ongoing in order to stay relevant and keep moving forward.
- There were pressures throughout the organisation during the transition process which has extended beyond the period that we intended. It was always known that the change period would be difficult.
- One of the outcomes of the additional finance would be to relieve pressure on staff.
- A staff survey has been undertaken and is currently being analysed.
- The transition process has taken longer than expected which had built up a backlog in some areas. The additional resource is required to relieve those backlogs which will also help improve staff morale, customer service response times, delivery times on a number of services and performance measures.
- Some of the funding would be used towards extending our approach to Graduates in some areas, supporting the Case Officer Team, extending planning agency staff contracts, looking at measures to retain staff and offering additional hours to part-time staff.
- The revenue accounts show a small underspend across the Council, although some teams were over-spending, this was balanced out across the total Council budget.
- The additional resource is a one off non-recurring injection of funds. The operating model design has delivered the expected financial savings and would not be impacted by the additional resource. It was an injection of investment over a limited

period, it could be said that the transformation payback period has now been extended.

- The previous structure was very different to the current one so it was not appropriate to compare turnover rates now compared to old types of posts.
- Exit interviews were undertaken to identify any issues.
- The quarterly update reports submitted to District Executive would include an update on the impact of the additional funds, as well as progress and outcomes being achieved as a result of the additional investment.

Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision – Purchase of a property in Somerset to meet Housing Need (Agenda Item 10)

- A member queried whether this would be classified as a commercial investment?

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 11)

- Members referred to the Environment Strategy and raised concerns that the timescale is too tight to properly engage with all sectors (**Members raised specific concerns with regard to how the Town and Parish Councils would be involved**) and suggested possibly delaying the Strategy until the New Year and having an interim report in October detailing the framework.
- Members sought clarification of how the Environment Strategy would link with the climate change work being undertaken at a countywide level.

16. Review of Quarterly Performance Monitoring (Agenda Item 8)

The Lead Specialist People, Performance and Change gave a brief presentation on the new Key Performance Indicators, aligned to the Council Plan Annual Action Plan. She presented the new style performance reports and explained that they could be revised through the year based on member's feedback. She also explained that there would be monitoring of the delivery plans.

Members made the following comments:

- Members asked for a measure to capture the percentage of planning applications that have been given an extension and a break down by the reason for the extension.
- The current planning measures does not provide enough information with regard to planning validation.
- Members requested the Planning Appeals be moved from Protecting Core Services to Environment so that all planning related indicators could be together.
- Members asked for access to the operational indicators such as fly tipping on the Members Portal.
- Members would need continuity in terms of data captured in order to make comparisons over the longer term.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Specialist People, Performance and Change for her presentation.

17. Review of Work Practices, Reflecting on Scrutiny Committee Members Training, and Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local & Combined Authorities (Agenda Item 9)

The Scrutiny Specialist gave a brief refresher from the key learning points from the training delivered in May and asked Committee members to consider proposals for working practices and work programme items that had been compiled at a meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs as agreed at the previous meeting.

It was agreed that a copy of the presentation slides would be circulated to all members. Items for the Scrutiny Work programme would be considered at the next meeting.

18. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)

The Chairman noted that following a meeting with the Chair and Vice Chairs, it had been suggested that a rolling programme of a maximum of three Task and Finish Groups would be manageable for the Committee to work on.

Members noted the current Task and Finish Groups as follows and that suggested dates for meetings would be circulated in due course:

- Review of Council Tax Support Scheme
- Environment Strategy

It was agreed to review suggestions for future work items at the next meeting.

Members noted that a request had been received for a second member to join the County-wide Joint Scrutiny of the Climate Change Strategy. It was agreed that Cllr. Paul Maxwell would join Cllr. Gerard Tucker as a member on the Group.

During a short discussion about meeting arrangements, members felt that attendance at meetings should be monitored and the committee meeting start time be reviewed again in September.

19. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Member noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 30th July 2019 at 1.30pm in Council Chamber B, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman