

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held as a Virtual Meeting using Zoom meeting software **on Tuesday 2 June 2020.**

(10.45 am - 12.30 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Crispin Raikes (Chairman)

Robin Bastable
Nicola Clark
Brian Hamilton
Charlie Hull
Mike Lewis
Sue Osborne

Robin Pailthorpe
Jeny Snell
Mike Stanton
Rob Stickland
Gerard Tucker



Also Present:

John Clark
Sarah Dyke
Henry Hobhouse
Val Keitch

Tony Lock
Lucy Trimmell
Linda Vijeh

Officers

Alex Parmley
Netta Meadows
Kirsty Larkins
Jo Nacey
Robert Orrett
Jo Gale
Stephanie Gold
Angela Cox
Jo Boucher
Jo Morris
Becky Sanders

Chief Executive
Director (Service Delivery)
Director (Strategy and Commissioning)
Section 151 Officer
Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager
Specialist (Members)
Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Specialist (Democratic Services)
Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)

121. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 March 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

122. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

There were no apologies for absence.

123. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

124. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

126. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reminded members that in May the Scrutiny committee members had met informally – to provide the committee with an opportunity to review practice guidance and consider how best to approach Scrutiny during the Covid-19 pandemic. Part of this work had resulted in a list of questions regarding the impact of Covid-19 to the community and the Council being forwarded to management. He noted that at last month's District Executive meeting there had been a comprehensive presentation by the Chief Executive that had answered many of the questions.

He also advised members that due to the ongoing pandemic situation that all non-critical Task and Finish work was suspended for the time being

127. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 7 May 2020 (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman reminded members that there had been few items for Scrutiny to comment on, and hence there were no updates to report.

128. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 June 2020 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 4 June 2020 and raised comments as detailed below. Responses to most questions and comments were provided at Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officers or Portfolio Holders, except those marked by an asterisk.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Council (Agenda item 6)

- Para 28 – precept payments – is there any risk that some parishes may not receive the second tranche of payments?
- Paras 53 to 55 – when was Scrutiny Committee likely to have sight of the new or revised plans and strategies referred to in paragraphs 53 to 55?
- There are several acronyms throughout the report which may not be known to the public.e.g. DFG and DHCLG.

- Could there be some clarity about the figures for homelessness, rough sleeping and temporary accommodation as believe the figures reported previously had been much lower.
- After District Executive could the report be sent to the two local MPs as feel it is important that they are aware of the impact of Covid-19 on the district council?
- Feel there should be some form of risk profile or matrix available with the report.
- Para 35 – there is reference to inter-authority borrowing, will that still be an option in the future, and if it's reduced what impact could there be on our plans and aspirations.?

Digital Strategy (Agenda item 7)

- Some members had concerns regarding security and resilience about any future system and where the information would be stored. What jurisdiction and liability would SSDC have if moving to cloud storage, and who would be liable for any breach of information?
- Some members noted there did not appear to be any measurable timeframes or dates within the strategy document
- Members noted that around section 7 there was some duplication of numbering.
- Diagram 10.3 – s
- Regarding the proposed governance, some members queried who would decide on priorities – the Executive or the Change Board?
- Some members noted that much of the strategy was dependent on broadband availability and supply, which they noted could be variable in rural areas.
- Will there be a lessons learned report following closure of the Transformation Programme?
- Page 75-76 refers to working with partners and integrating with others – how will this feed into the FOLGIS (Future of Local Government in Somerset) work?

South Somerset Families Programme – supporting struggling families, improving life chances for children and young people (Agenda item 8)

- *A member noted when the original Trouble Families Programme ran it was supported with staff volunteers from SSDC - would we be looking to do that again? If the programme was successful, would we look to extend the programme beyond 3 years?

Planning Validation Guide (Agenda item 9)

- The Chairman noted that many members, including those of Scrutiny Committee, had attended a workshop the previous week with the Lead Specialist (Planning) which had included a briefing about the draft Planning Validation Guide and Planning Enforcement Protocol – and some feedback had already been provided at that workshop.
- *A member noted at the workshop a number of comments had been made about retrospective planning, and he had understood that a paragraph would be added about retrospective planning, however he could not see that anything had been included in the proposed document.

Planning Enforcement Protocol (Agenda item 10)

- No comments.

Investment Assets Update Report (agenda item 11)

- Members acknowledged the difficult current situation and pandemic restrictions – was there any indication when the contractor may return to the Marlborough development.
- The risk matrix in the report is difficult to interpret. Many members thought a new format of risk matrix was going to be used for all council reports.
- Para 28 – is there any indication if the Travelodge investment would be delivered on time given the Covid-19 situation?
- Given the Environment Strategy, are there plans to do more schemes like the battery storage project?
- Para 19 – in future reports, for transparency, could there be an additional paragraph about BESS?

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

- No comments.
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129. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 9)

There were no updates on matters of interest.

130. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)

The Chairman noted that a councillor had made some enquiries about enforcement, and he suggested that perhaps the subject could be progressed initially by email with officers.

During a brief discussion some ideas for future reports were suggested including:

- A decision on dualling of the A303 was expected to be announced on 17 July – could there be an item on the agenda to discuss the impact of the outcome on residents of South Somerset.
- There seemed to be discrepancies regarding how many black bins some households had – was it something that needed to be reviewed or to review the formula regarding the allocation of bins.

The Specialist (Members) noted the suggestions made and also commented that:

- Regarding an item on the A303 – some further work would need to be discussed with the Leadership Management Team (LMT) and committee members before coming forward to Scrutiny Committee,
- She had asked all members if they had experienced any issues in their wards relating to Covid-19, only a few issues had been reported back that scrutiny could help with, and these would initially be followed up individually via email.
- The Council Tax Support Scheme Task and Finish Group - the Lead Specialist (Vulnerable Customers) who had been the officer leading the group had now left the authority, and so a replacement was awaited in order for the group to continue its work, probably with some urgency.

Members were content to note the Work Programme.

131. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next meeting of Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 30 June 2020, as a virtual meeting via Zoom.

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Chairman