

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held as a virtual meeting using Zoom meeting software **on Tuesday 30 June 2020.**

(10.30 am - 12.50 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Crispin Raikes (Chairman)

Robin Bastable (to 12.00pm)	Sue Osborne
Nicola Clark (to 12.45pm)	Jeny Snell
Brian Hamilton	Mike Stanton
Charlie Hull	Rob Stickland
Mike Lewis	Gerard Tucker
Paul Maxwell	



Also Present:

Sarah Dyke

Officers

Kirsty Larkins	Director (Strategy and Commissioning)
Vicki Dawson	Lead Specialist (Environmental Health)
James Divall	Income Opportunity Development Manager
Cara Naden	Environment Case Officer
Jo Gale	Specialist (Members)
Angela Cox	Specialist (Democratic Services)
Stephanie Gold	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Jo Boucher	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)

132. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

133. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Robin Pailthorpe.

134. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

135. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

A member of the public addressed members regarding his concerns about a particular planning application which was awaiting determination - a large building in Kingstone

parish for the construction of carnival floats. He raised a number of points, some of which included:

- That Scrutiny Committee should have a role in planning applications.
- He felt that the public had not been adequately consulted about the application and the applicant had not engaged with the local community.
- He was of the opinion that some councillors had already expressed their support for the application.
- The application should have an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Multiple concerns about the planning process.

The Chairman explained that members had noted the concerns raised, however, the Scrutiny were not in a position to comment or provide a response about a planning application. The Scrutiny Committee would forward the comments and concerns to the appropriate officers in the Development Management Team and also to members of the Area West Committee.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

137. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman made several announcements including:

- He and the Vice-Chairman had recently had a meeting with the Leader to discuss the role of Scrutiny, and were due to have a follow up meeting in the near future.
 - A reminder of a member briefing about the SCC One Somerset Business Case taking place on 13 July.
 - There would be an extra meeting of Scrutiny members on 14 July to discuss the SCC One Somerset Business case – likely to be informal meeting due to timeframes.
 - A reminder about training webinars being hosted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.
 - A welcome to Stephanie Gold who would be the new Specialist (Members) from 1st July 2020, and hence be supporting the Scrutiny Committee. He wished to convey thanks and best wishes, on behalf of the committee, to Jo Gale who had moved to a new role within SSDC.
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138. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 June 2020 (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman reminded members that most questions had been answered at the Scrutiny Committee hence there were no updates to report.

139. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 2 July 2020 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 2 July 2020 and raised comments as detailed below. Responses to most questions and comments were

provided at Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officers – except those marked by an asterisk:

SSDC Covid-19 Recovery Strategy (Agenda Item 6)

- Members welcomed the positivity about going forward with the recovery phase. However, some members felt the report did not clearly reference what would happen should there be a need to go back to the response phase if there was a spike in Covid cases locally.
- Page 17 – Some members sought reassurance that Environment would not only feature as a key area of recovery, but would also feed in to the other four key areas, in line with the Environment Strategy.
- Are there plans to learn from other districts about recovery ideas and options?
- The report refers to the Recovery Advisory Group (RAG) having member involvement but does not detail the membership – it was felt that more detail was required.
- Members queried how the monitoring of progress would be reported and the frequency of such reporting? Scrutiny recommend that there is quarterly detailed reporting, with possibly more frequent snapshots / thumbnails of progress in between. A request was made that Scrutiny Committee are provided with an opportunity to make suggestions for the performance monitoring dashboard.
- It was felt that there should be some member involvement with the Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG) – and perhaps at least a Portfolio Holder who is on the Recovery Advisory Group (RAG).
- Some members noted that job losses may mean recovery takes longer. What is being done to prioritise economy as there may be different opinions about priorities. What will be the emphasis area of recovery?
- Page 23 – Role of RAG – some members noted the role seemed to include some of the Scrutiny function. How will the Scrutiny Committee be involved? It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee were keen to be involved and help, and as all other Task and Finish Groups were currently suspended, there is potentially capacity for members to be involved with a Task and Finish type workshop.

SSDC Priority Project – Accelerating Housing Delivery Report (Agenda Item 7)

- *Some members noted that the Action Plan in the Three Dragons report an Options Report being written based on priority options – has the report been written yet, if not, was there an indication when it may come forward?
- *Will this District Executive report be circulated to the Area Committees for consideration and comment?
- *The recommendations of the report on page 34 – members noted that £350k was being requested in total. Members queried what the cost had been for the Three Dragons report and what the brief had been. How had the report come about and the need for such a report agreed?
- *It was opportunity to look at the way things are done in South Somerset. Was there an option to give a timeframe by which to be developed perhaps, or to lobby central government about being able to change council tax on sites after a defined timeframe if not developed etc.
- *Some members expressed concern that elements of the report may get superseded by central government policies and processes.
- *When would members have sight of a priority action plan? - More information is needed.

- *The report mentions the setting up of a Board – what will it do and who will be on it? – more information is needed.
- *Need assurance that the action plan will meet the needs of the areas.
- *Can any mechanism be put in place to prevent the council being ‘steam rolled’ as we have with the five year land supply.
- *Some members felt it would have been helpful for the report to have defined more clearly the role of the Councillor function.
- *Boris Johnson has announced a major planning reform and there is already a White Paper on the reform of the planning system, how will this impact or inform this work going forward?
- *One member commented that this presented a good opportunity to look at the way we do things, could we suggest to government that some form of Council Tax is charged to encourage swifter builds on sites?
- *Scrutiny suggest that the wording of recommendation 3 in the covering report is amended to include ‘and will be reported to Area Committees for consideration’.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charger Network Project (Agenda Item 8)

- Members sought clarity regarding the financial rate of return and when the investment would be paid back.
- With the likely increase in use of electric vehicles in the future, some members queried if two outlets at each location was enough?
- Members sought clarification that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) support would not be adversely affected by a no-deal Brexit.
- Paras 13 and 14 on page 135 – on street charging may be an issue space wise, but if on street charging is where South Somerset residents will gain then some members felt it should be given more priority.
- Some members queried how the income figure had been derived / calculated.
- Technology will likely change and evolve – some members sought reassurance that the framework include provision for upgrades.
- Some members noted there were varying price tariffs for charging vehicles. Where chargers were located in car parks was the income from charging similar to that if it was a pay and display parking space?
- Members felt communications and publicity about the charging points would be needed. A map indicating charging points would be useful, not only showing our locations but also those of third parties, as would be beneficial to those visiting the area.
- Members supported the recommendations.

Addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement in Respect of Consulting on Neighbourhood Plans (Item 9)

- *Some members queried how many Neighbourhood Plans would be impacted by this decision.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 10)

- *Members noted that had been some confusion about the FOLGIS item on the Forward Plan as shown in previous agendas. Members asked if there could be an interim update / report of when the SSDC Business Case would come forward as it did not feature on the Forward Plan.

140. Update on matters of interest and Task & Finish Groups (Agenda Item 9)

There were no updates on matters of interest.

The Chairman noted it was hoped some work would resume soon regarding the Task and Finish Group project plan.

Regarding the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group, the Vice-Chairman queried if there was a timescale for the work if there was a need to go out to public consultation. The Specialist (Members) clarified that there was a need to establish what could feasibly be done in the timeframes available. There was also a need to consider the economic impact and changes in circumstances due to Covid.

One councillor noted she had been contacted about activities at a local community facility as there had been some confusion relating to the Covid restrictions. She asked about the process for signposting such queries, as she felt there needed to be some clarity about who to contact locally. In response, the Specialist (Members), acknowledged there was no clear mechanism for such queries but she would investigate who could best help with the query and ask them to contact the group directly to offer some advice.

141. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)

The Specialist (Members) commented that during consideration of the District Executive reports that there had been several references to Communities of Practice (COP). She acknowledged that perhaps the wider committee may not have a full understanding of the purpose and function of COPs, and noted the new Specialist (Members) would look more in depth at how they work and perhaps discuss with the lead officers about them coming to Committee to explain the role of COPs. In response, the new Specialist (Members) advised that she would circulate the Terms of Reference for each COP to members for information.

Members were content to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

142. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next meeting of Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 4 August 2020, as a virtual meeting via Zoom.

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Chairman