

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held by video conference using Zoom meeting software on **Tuesday 1 December 2020**.

(10.30 am - 12.20 pm)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Crispin Raikes (Chairman)

Robin Bastable	Robin Pailthorpe
Brian Hamilton	Oliver Patrick
Mike Hewitson	Jeny Snell
Charlie Hull	Gerard Tucker
Mike Lewis	Linda Vijeh
Sue Osborne	



**Also Present:**

Jason Baker	Val Keitch
John Clark	Tony Lock
Sarah Dyke	

**Officers**

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Clare Pestell	Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation)
Kirsty Larkins	Director (Strategy and Commissioning)
Jo Nacey	Section 151 Officer
Robert Orrett	Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager
Jan Gamon	Programme Director, Stronger Somerset
Barry James	Interim Planning Lead Specialist
Leigh Rampton	Lead Specialist (Communities)
Lynda Pincombe	Specialist - Strategic Planning
Stephanie Gold	Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)

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### 197. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

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

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### 198. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nicola Clark and Paul Maxwell. Councillor Mike Hewitson was present as substitute for Councillor Nicola Clark.

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### 199. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest

## **200. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)**

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

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## **202. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

The Chairman provided two updates:

- He and the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) would be attending each Area Committee in the new year to give a short presentation about the role of Scrutiny and to seek comments about Scrutiny work planning.
  - He and several other members had recently attended a webinar by the LGIU (Local Government Information Unit) regarding questioning skills as a refresher. It was noted the webinar was being repeated in January if anyone else was interested.
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## **203. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5 November 2020 (Agenda Item 7)**

There were no updates for reports considered by District Executive at the November meeting.

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## **204. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3 December 2020 (Agenda Item 8)**

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 3 December 2020 and raised comments as detailed below. Responses to most questions and comments were provided at Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officers or Portfolio Holder – except those marked by an asterisk:

### **Stronger Somerset Final Proposal (Agenda Item 6)**

- Members sought reassurance that the delegation for making minor amendments would only be for typos etc within the document.
- Some members sought clarity about the proposals for childrens services, adult social care and highways regarding responsibilities and delivery across the two proposed authorities.
- \*Regarding the recent Ipsos MORI survey – a member queried if there had been any difference in responses for the proposed east / west authority areas?

### **2021/22 Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan Update (Agenda Item 7)**

- Table 2 on page 14 – the lines for Collection Fund Deficits for Business Rates and Council Tax show zero for years 2022 and beyond – members asked if an explanation could be provided as to why the figures were zero for future years.

- Table 1 on page 13 and table 2 on page 14 – a member queried some figures as some didn't appear to add up exactly (some by only a £1000), and hence sought clarification that the reason was due to rounding up of figures in a more detailed spreadsheet that had been summarised for this report?
- It was noted that the Council Tax figure in table 1 on page 13 for 2021/22 was 9813, but in table 2 on page 14 for the same year was given as 10,499 – a member queried the reason for the difference in figures.
- Business Rates Retention – members asked for a very simple explanation as why the figure was reducing.
- Members noted that the bullet point numbering in the report had been duplicated in several places (for correction in future reports).

#### **Update Report on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Council (Agenda Item 8)**

- No comments.

#### **Planning Reimagined – Outcomes from Members Working Group (Agenda Item 9)**

- Members, particularly those involved with the working group, wished to thank officers for their work and efforts with the working group.
- Members, suggested a brief update to Scrutiny Committee in about four months time would be useful.

#### **Investment Assets Update Report (Agenda Item 10)**

- No questions were raised, but some members expressed concern about the retail investment properties given the current economic status and recent collapse of some major high street names.

#### **South Somerset Families Programme – Supporting Families and Improving Life Chances – Project Update (Agenda Item 11)**

- No comments.

#### **The Future Management of the Council's Leisure Facilities (Agenda Item 12)**

- Members did not raise any questions specifically relating to the report but some comments were raised about community facilities, which the Specialist (Strategic Planning) responded to at the meeting.

#### **Annual Review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) (Agenda Item 13)**

- No comments.

#### **Property Purchase of Yeovil Town Football Club Ground (Agenda Item 14)**

- Mixed views and comments were raised at Scrutiny including:
  - owners purchased the club in 2019 when believe they would have known the club would be relegated. What funding are the owners providing? Have they looked elsewhere for funding?

- There are a collection of restrictive covenants – are we confident that all the necessary / required covenants relating to the site can be lifted? Are we confident that all covenants have, or will be identified and resolved?
- If we enter in to this arrangement, how do we justify ourselves to other sports clubs if they experience similar difficulties?
- Concern that this is setting a precedent.
- Due diligence for this is extremely important.
- Concern about long term future. Should the purchase be approved, if SSDC were to be replaced by a different local authority in the future, how would that affect things?
- A good idea and supportive of the principle.
- It seems the club want to retain their interest in the development rights. Why does the proposal include allowing the club to get the benefit of any planning uplift?
- A member sought clarity from officers that the proposal was considered to be a good investment opportunity.
- A thank you to officers for the detailed report.
- The registration as an Asset of Community Value – members sought clarity on detail. Could this delay things for the club? Are the intentions of the supporters group known? Should the group wish to put in an offer, would this cause a further longer delay for the club and increase their risks?
- Concern about how successful the club could be as at bottom of the league and there could be other additional pressures to come.
- Are the intentions and commitment to the club by the owners known? Concern that if the club were to fail that the public expectation may be that we could make the club rise like a 'phoenix'.
- The short term future is important – the next couple of seasons are important for the club to stabilise.

### **District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 15)**

- No comments.

*(Note – Scrutiny Committee did not go into confidential session)*

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

The Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) provided a brief verbal update on the progress of work of Task and Finish groups, including:

Council Tax Support – the report is being finalised and due to go to District Executive in January. A workshop for Scrutiny members was organised for 8 December to make comments on the draft report prior to formal consideration at Scrutiny Committee for endorsement to District Executive.

Productivity Analysis – meeting due to take place shortly.

Environment and Climate Strategies - an informal meeting due shortly to discuss how a Task and Finish group could become involved next year with the district Environment Strategy and the countywide climate strategy.

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

There were no updates on matters of interest.

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**207. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)**

The Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) advised there was little change to the work programme and it would be reviewed in the coming months following visits planned to each Area Committee as mentioned at Chairman's Announcements.

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**208. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 10.30am on Tuesday 5 January 2021, and likely to be held as a virtual meeting using Zoom.

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Chairman