

Scrutiny Committee

This report summarises the work of the Scrutiny Committee since 16 March 2017

The committee met on 4th April 2017 and considered the following items:

Approval of Local Development Scheme (2017-2020)

Scrutiny Committee asked the Senior Policy Planner and Portfolio Holder questions with regard to resourcing, risks, penalties and monitoring.

Members noted that equalities analysis work also needs to be undertaken and reminded officers to have regard to this when contracting consultants to do work.

Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations

Proposal to Establish a Commercial Income Generation Fund

Scrutiny Committee raised the following comments and questions:

- How was the 15 million figure derived?
- Why agree this now before the Council plan and Capital Programme has been agreed? Is there the capital available to be ring-fenced?
- If going into the commercial world then the democracy factor is likely to be a cause of delay. Some members were concerned that we won't be in a position to move swiftly enough.
- Understanding that there will be a need to look at internal processes and officer delegations, Scrutiny Committee would like to help support this work.
- Is there a need to separate out the two funds? Scrutiny Committee recommend District Executive consider the removal of this separation to prevent inflexibility in the future.
- The report lacked the necessary detail, members were only able to reach a position where they were able to support the recommendation as they were able to ask the Portfolio Holder and Leader several questions, this public report should have provided or signposted all relevant information.

Business Rates Relief – Spring Budget 2017 Measures

Scrutiny made no comments and supported the recommendations.

Implementing Charges for Pre-Application Development Control Advice

Scrutiny Committee asked the Development Manager for clarification around the term community uses with regard to exemptions and clarified how the fees had been set.

Members supported the recommendations in the report and recommend to District Executive that this arrangement was reviewed in a years' time in terms of recouping costs and the revaluation of the fees.

Community Right to Bid Half Year Report – October 2016 to March 2017

Scrutiny made no comments.

Task and Finish work

Disposal of Third Party Properties - Draft Report of the Task and Finish Group

In April 2016 Overview and Scrutiny Committee commenced a review into the process surrounding the disposal of third party properties (where consent was being sought from a Housing Association to dispose of a property that was formerly owned by the Council). This report detailed the process, findings and recommendations of the task and finish group and was endorsed by Scrutiny Committee.

Street Trading – The work has been completed, the final report will be made to the next Scrutiny meeting for endorsement before being forwarded to the Licensing Committee for consideration.

Council Tax Support – The Revenues and Benefits manager is currently collecting evidence from South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset Councils. When this information is received the group will build a picture of the level of savings that could potentially be made, the impact on recipients and the risks.

Community Council for Somerset – This work had been put on hold. Previously members had requested a presentation on the work of the Yeovil One Team, but because Village Agents were not across the whole district there would always be some disparity. A discussion had taken place with the SSDC Senior Leadership Team about this review and it had been deemed that it was no longer an urgent issue.

Rural Allocations Policy – The Disposal of Third Party properties had highlighted issues with the Rural Allocations Policy and some work now needs to be done to review the policy.

A proposal was made to Scrutiny Committee to undertake a Task and Finish review of the proposed Somerset & Devon Joint Committee and Productivity Plan (previously referred to as Devolution). The Committee agreed to make a decision once more information was known and the update report in July to Council had been received.

Sue Steele
Chairman of Scrutiny Committee