

Scrutiny Committee

This report summarises the work of the Scrutiny Committee since 17 August 2017.

The committee met on 5 September 2017 to consider:

- Technology Implementation Update from Technology Implementation Manager and Darren Cole (Consultant)
- The findings and report of the Non Domestic Rate (Business Rates) Revaluation Support Relief Policy Task and Finish Group
- Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4th August
- All current Task and Finish work to date and future priorities

Further information relating to each of these areas of work is detailed below:

Technology Implementation Update

Scrutiny Committee requested an update report to get a better understanding of the implementation process to date and going forward, including customer and residents input to the design. Also to seek re-assurance that SSDC was utilising the learning and experiences from other authorities who had been and were going through similar processes.

At the conclusion of discussion, members had no concerns and felt much better informed with regard to the technology aspect of transformation, including how it will improve member access to information. It was agreed that a future update report would be made to Scrutiny Committee when there are specific points of interest to inform members, whether good or bad, or milestones reached.

The findings and report of the Non Domestic Rate (Business Rates) Revaluation Support Relief Policy Task and Finish Group

The Task and Finish groups full report is included in this agenda and all members endorsed the recommendations

Reports on the District Executive Agenda for the 4th August, Scrutiny Committee provided the comments as listed below:

Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4th August

Corporate Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report 2017/18 – 1st Quarter

Para 8 - Scrutiny noted that there was still no reference to performance monitoring from a customer perspective. There is a need to know when changes are implemented if and how they are affecting the public.

It was acknowledged during the transition through Transformation it would be difficult to produce statistics at 'in between' stages. Members sought reassurance that there would be more Performance Indicators in the future, and that indicators should be easily understood.

It was felt the indicators need to be reviewed and perhaps using the Council Plan as a starting point. Outputs, especially regarding customer service, need to be monitored.

Members were pleased that baseline measures will be maintained to be able to monitor trends.

Westlands Entertainment and Conference Centre Refurbishment Project

Scrutiny sought clarification that Westlands is projected to be cost neutral or better, and queried the timeframes envisaged until the facility breaks even or makes a surplus.

It was noted this report was the first statement of actual overspend and members commented it would be useful to see a full reconciliation to indicate how the overspend affects the overall SSDC accounts.

Members sought clarity about whether the following were included in the project spend as detailed in para 41:

- Dealing with aspects of vandalism which had not been possible to claim under insurance
- Work to the first floor to enable office space to be let to a tenant.
- Work to the sports hall and fitness suite
- Artists Walkway

Members sought reassurance that the risk management is up to date

Members expressed disappointment that Bingo groups were still awaiting a licence to use Westlands.

Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan

Para 15 – the table refers to service prioritisation as TBC. Scrutiny queried that as there is a wish to not cut services, how are the savings going to be identified?

Referring to a recent LGA Enterprising Councils document, members noted that key learning points from other authorities in particular Sevenoaks that had gone through similar transformation processes, had been to talk and engage with the public. This didn't seem to have been done yet here, and it was queried if there was intention to consult with the public, and if so how and when?

Regarding an increase in fees and charges, members queried what would happen regarding fees where there is less opportunity to make changes due to legislation?

Scrutiny sought reassurance that Transformation was on target to deliver the projected savings.

Members raised concern that changes to car parking fees were being considered at a time when many 'pay and display' spaces in Yeovil seemed to be under-used during peak weekday lunch break hours.

District Executive Forward Plan

Members queried the report due to October regarding 'Consideration of Local Plan Review Issues and Options Document for Consultation'. Scrutiny members were unclear about the purpose of the report and requested that all members be kept informed about reports due to come forward regarding the Local Plan.

Task and Finish work

Council Tax Support - A new Task and Finish Group is scheduled to start in October, an invitation has been sent to all non-executive members to help inform proposals with the Finance and Legal Services Portfolio Holder

Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy – Awaiting feedback from Housing, no further updates.

Car Park Charges - Scrutiny Committee have agreed terms of reference for the review Councillors John Clark, Carol Goodall, David Norris, and David Bulmer have already expressed an interest in being part of the group, all members will have an opportunity to contribute suggestions and provide comments as part of the Task and Finish review groups work.

Locality Working - District Executive have indicated they would be interested in Scrutiny involvement with the development of the Locality aspect of the Future Model and there was an appetite from Scrutiny members. However, there are no timescales at the moment and involvement would be informed by the Ignite programme.