

Scrutiny Committee

This report summarises the work of the Scrutiny Committee since 21 September 2017.

The committee met on 3rd and 31st October 2017 to consider:

Scrutiny committee members considered the reports within the District agenda for 5 October 2017 and made the following comments:

The Issue and Use of Section 19 and Section 22 Permits for Road Passenger Transport in Great Britain – Implications for Community Transport Schemes Within SSDC (Agenda item 6)

- Members sought clarification about whether the two local MPs had been contacted about the matter,
- Members requested clarification of additional services to those mentioned in the report that could also be adversely affected.
- Scrutiny members endorsed the recommendations.

Floating Support for Vulnerable Individuals in South Somerset (Agenda item 7)

- Scrutiny made no comments.

South Somerset Authority Monitoring Report (September 2017) (Agenda item 8)

- Page 25 – members sought clarification that the points regarding employment would be included in the Local Plan Review.
- Members also felt that house price information would be very relevant. It was acknowledged this Monitoring Report would be an important ‘feed-in’ document to the Local Plan review.

Local Plan Review – Issues and Options Document for Consultation (Agenda item 9)

- Members requested that following be circulated to all members
 - the presentation from the recent member briefing
 - details of the programme for public consultation
 - the final agreed consultation document
 - the simplified accessible summary consultation document
 - copies of the individual settlement leaflets are sent to the district Councillor representing those areas
- Some members suggested it would be useful to have an additional appendix with all the Questions duplicated and collated in one section for ease of reference.
- Page 91, point 12 - regarding the change in the number of dwellings to 13,200, members queried how the figure compared to that in the existing adopted Local Plan, and how it would affect the status of our five year land supply.
- Scrutiny sought clarification that the higher delivery of housing in market towns and lower delivery in Yeovil and Chard, had been reflected in the consultation document.
- Some members queried some parish specific detail in the consultation document where outline planning consent had recently been granted. It was queried if this made the proposed consultation document already out of date?
- Members felt that the table on page 64 of the agenda – Figure 10.2 in the Monitoring Report should be included in the consultation document for clarity, as it detailed

residential completions and commitments against the adopted Local Plan requirements.

- Members felt many parishes would want to see clear information about the current position with the five year land supply detailed within the consultation document.
- Scrutiny were otherwise content that the recommendation go forward.

SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress Report (Agenda item 10)

- Members sought clarification that when staff left the authority they would no longer have access to Yammer.
- Scrutiny requested reassurance that the new website will be user friendly and have offered to assist from a grass route perspective to provide suggestions and carry out testing.
- Page 101 - Budget - Members queried the budget for 'Programme Office' and what it covered. It was also noted £21,721 had been spent under 'misc' which didn't appear to have been allocated and members queried if it would come from the contingency?
- Scrutiny queried if there were any additional risks associated with bringing forward phase 3.
- Scrutiny sought re-assurance with regard to the number of risks categorised as Medium at this stage of the project and asked if there should be any reason for concern.
- Members noted that Locality Working was not specifically mentioned anywhere in the report and queried if there was a reason for this? Scrutiny raised some concerns about how the aspect of Locality Working was progressing, and if all members would have the opportunity to feed into ideas about the future of Locality Working.
- Page 107 – Scrutiny noted it would be useful if future reports could indicate if the savings per quarter were above or below target.

Community Right to Bid Half Year report – April 2017 to September 2017 (Agenda item 11)

- Scrutiny made no comments.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

- Scrutiny made no comments.

Scrutiny committee members considered the reports within the District agenda for 2nd November 2017 and made the following comments:

Presentation by SPARK Somerset (Voluntary and Community Action) (Agenda item 6)

- Members sought re-assurance that SPARK were meeting targets and performing as expected, as they were financially supported by SSDC.

2017/18 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30th September 2017 (Agenda item 7)

- Members noted both budget reports seemed to be lacking context in places with addresses of some projects being omitted. E.g. Page 7, para 7 – the comment

doesn't refer to the notes being related to the Westlands project, Page 30, para 10 table – Millers site doesn't detail that this is in Crewkerne etc.

- Page 9, para 18 – members queried how relevant was the drop in collection rates, and was the reason for the drop known? Scrutiny also asked if we benchmark our collection rates with other authorities?
- Page 12 – New Homes Bonus – it was noted that changes were likely in the future and queried if officers knew the likely effect should those changes happen, or if they might have a major or minor impact. Some members queried if it was possible to scope for any likely scenarios.
- Page 14 – bottom line of table. Scrutiny queried if the canteen facility is subsidised?

2017/18 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 30th September 2017 (Agenda item 8)

- Page 30, para 9 - members queried whether the word 'income' should say expenditure instead, as otherwise the sentence did not seem to make sense?
- Appx B on page 43 – members commented it would be useful if the Leadership Board Proposals were SMART and had an indication of timeframes detailed.
- Middle of lower table on page 41 – Scrutiny sought clarification about when the funding allocation for 'Investment in Market Housing' had been agreed it would be useful if all future monitoring reports could have an additional column with the decision date and link to the report so you could refer back to the report and minutes

The Installation of a 14.8 kW Photovoltaic Array at Yeovil Innovation Centre (Agenda item 9)

- A member asked some technical questions about the project (issues around insurance, potential vandalism, and types of meters etc) , and Scrutiny were satisfied that the comments had been adequately addressed by the Portfolio Holder at the Scrutiny meeting.
- Members sought reassurance that there would be no business rates liability regarding the installation of the photovoltaic panels.
- Some members were concerned about the timeframes involved for the project, and if there were to be any slippage with the project installation if there would be a risk of failing to meet the deadlines to receive the specified feed-in tariff?
- Scrutiny queried the risk matrix, and noted the increased risks of proceeding with the project seemed unusual.

Increase in Councillors and Change of Name of Barwick Parish Council – Community Governance Review (CGR) (Agenda item 10)

- Members acknowledged the parish council wished to change its name and why. However members did note that the number of councillors requested seemed high for a parish of its size, and the reason for the increase in councillors seemed to not be based on population and representation.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 11)

- Scrutiny made no comments.

Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision: Disposal of 11-12 South Western terrace, Yeovil (Confidential) (Agenda item 14)

- Scrutiny made several comments with regard to the process in confidential session.

Task and Finish reviews

Council Tax Support Scheme 2018 –The Task and Finish group need to review some data in response to monitoring recommendations made in the last Scrutiny Task and Finish report for 2017/18 scheme, the report for the 2018 scheme should be presented at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting

Council Tax Support Scheme 2019 – The Task and Finish group had their first meeting and sought re-assurance with regard to the financial support/pressure to make savings and the potential risks or complications of making policy changes at a time when there will be significant change as a result of Transformation

Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy No updates since the last meeting

Transformation – Accessible Services This Task and Finish review will commence in January and will work with the Transformation team to identify and deliver Best Practice to provide accessible on-line information and services for all.

Car Parking Charges – This Task and Finish review will commence when resources permits, SSDC has lots of data to help inform the Task and Finish groups strategy for conducting the review.

Cllr Sue Steele
Chairman of Scrutiny Committee