

## **South Somerset District Council**

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

*(9.30 am – 11.42 am)*

**Present:**

**Members:** Rupert Cox (in the Chair)

John Vincent Chainey	Tom Parsley
Geoff Clarke	Keith Ronaldson
Peter Gubbins	Jean Smith
Hannah Lefeuvre	Sue Steele
Derek Nelson	

**Also Present:**

Tim Carroll	Leader of the Council
Peter Seib	Portfolio Holder – Econ Dev, Planning & Transport
Jo Roundell Greene	Portfolio Holder - Environment
John Richardson	

**Officers:**

Vega Sturgess	Corporate Director, Environment
Mark Pollock	Corporate Director, Economic Vitality
Simon Gale	Head of Development & Building Control
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Angela Cox	Committee Administrator

---

### **1. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)**

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2007 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

---

### **2. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Hann, Pat Martin and Alan Smith.

---

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

There were no declarations of interest.

---

### **4. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)**

There were no questions from members of the public.

---

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

There were no issues arising from previous meetings.

---

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

The Chairman thanked Members for re-electing him as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and said he hoped they would continue to hold lively debates and hold the District Executive to account.

---

## 7. Committee Introductions (Agenda Item 7)

Members present introduced themselves to the Committee and gave a brief insight into their interests within the Council.

---

## 8. Progress Reports on Scrutiny Commissions (Agenda Item 8)

The Scrutiny Manager referred to the Briefing Paper she had circulated the previous day and advised that although two Scrutiny Commissions were still ongoing, there had been little progress due to the local elections.

The Chairman reminded Members that there would be 3 briefing meetings held on 11<sup>th</sup> July for each of the 3 Scrutiny Commissions, to inform all non-executive Members on each Commission, what work would be coming up and how the Commissions would work.

The Corporate Director, Economic Vitality, asked for a member of the Scrutiny Committee to sit on the Project Monitoring Board for the Development Control Service, to replace Councillor Kim Turner. He explained that the Board met once a month, to closely scrutinise the improvement plan and progress made within the Development Control service, as they were currently a Standards Service and the Board consisted of the Portfolio Holder, the Head of Development and Building Control, the Performance, Improvement and Operations Manager and himself.

Councillor Tom Parsley offered to represent the Scrutiny Committee on the Project Monitoring Board and Members were in agreement with this.

---

## 9. Review of the Development Control Scheme of Delegation (Agenda Item 9)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Peter Seib as the new Portfolio Holder for Economic Development Planning and Transport, the Corporate Director, Economic Vitality, and, the Head of Development and Building Control. He advised that the current Scheme of Delegation had been operating for approximately one year and now was the time to review it and put forward any suggested amendments to District Executive.

The Head of Development and Building Control advised that the Scheme had run with virtually no problems for 12 months and he felt this was due to the way it had

been implemented. He had canvassed the views of Councillors in April 2007, whose comments were listed in the report and had received virtually no criticism of the Scheme from Parish Councils in the last 12 months. The two main issues raised by Members were:-

- The consistency of Area Chairmen in allowing applications to be brought to Committee.
- That Ward Members must obtain the Chairman's agreement to refer an application to Committee.

The Head of Development and Building Control advised that in his opinion, the Area Chairmen were consistent across the district and he did not propose to make any changes at the present time. With regard to the second issue, of the 314 applications referred to Ward Members in the past 12 months, only 28 of these had been presented to the Area Chairman to refer to Committee; of these 28, there were only 5 cases where the Area Chairman had disagreed with the Ward Member or Planning Officer. He did not feel this was particularly high and he asked for Members comments on this.

The Portfolio Holder advised of his aspiration to improve the IT links to Members to enable them to easily access planning files in the future. He also mentioned that he hoped to make the Members signing-off form e-mailable to assist planning officers in their performance statistics. He predicted that this should be achievable within two to three months.

In response to a question, the Head of Development and Building Control replied that Members in town wards were routinely sent information on planning applications in adjacent town wards, in case it affected anything in their ward.

Several Members expressed concern that an Area Chairman could potentially refuse a Ward Member's request to have a planning application referred to Committee. The Head of Development and Building Control offered to research the applications which Area Chairmen had refused to allow to be determined at Committee and their reasons for refusing and present a report to the Scrutiny Committee for discussion in 6 months time. The Scrutiny Manager asked Members to record their experiences and forward them to the Head of Development and Building Control to assist his report.

The Head of Development and Building Control further agreed to produce a briefing paper on the progress of key sites across the district and the implications of the Government's White Paper on the revised requirements for planning permission for Members information.

Members also requested that e-mail communication to them from the planning office be headed up with the application number and address in future to assist Members to identify all messages received relating to one planning application.

Members further commented that they were occasionally asked for their observations on an application within 24 hours, not the specified 7 days. The Portfolio Holder replied that sometimes receiving Members comments on an application quickly could mean the difference between determining an application within the permitted timescale or not, which impacted upon the departments statistics. He asked Members to bear with the officers and co-operate as much as possible.

The Head of Development and Building Control advised that he was currently reviewing the referral of planning application to Regulation Committee and his

research had encountered some unforeseen problems, therefore, he did not expect to present his findings to Scrutiny Committee until Autumn 2007.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Scrutiny Committee recommends the District Executive adopt the revised Scheme of Delegation as presented.
  2. That minor changes are made in the way information be passed to Members from the Development Control unit.
  3. That the Head of Development and Building Control present a report on applications which Area Chairmen had refused to allow to be determined at Committee to the Scrutiny Committee for discussion in 6 months time.
  4. That the Head of Development and Building Control provide a briefing paper on the progress of key sites across the district and the implications of the recent Government White Paper for Members information.

*Simon Gale, Head of Development & Building Control - (01935) 462071  
e-mail: simon.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk*

---

## **10. Scrutiny Commission CO<sub>2</sub> Carbon Emissions (Agenda Item 10)**

The Scrutiny Manager advised that the Scrutiny Commission into reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions had been formed as a result of a direct request from Councillor Geoff Clarke. Several external advisers had attended the Commission meetings and she stressed that the report before Members was only an interim report of the Commission, whose recommendation had been to apply to the Carbon Trust for guidance in taking the CO<sub>2</sub> carbon emissions policy forward.

The Corporate Director, Environment, commended the interim report. She said that recent visits from the ECOS Trust and the Environment Inspectors had both said that SSDC were doing more than most Councils in this area. The Head of Property Services was currently working on a Carbon Strategy, which should be in place by the end of the year. She also advised that she had formed an officer working group, called the Green Team, who met quarterly to maintain the progress of Corporate Objectives. She further advised that 65% of SSDC's energy was already purchased from green sources.

The Portfolio Holder, Environment, commended the application to the Carbon Trust. She said their input would be a valuable tool in progressing the Council's Corporate Objective 19 to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> carbon emissions. She also mentioned that the development control service were to trial a sustainable development protocol with a local developer, as an example to build into their future planning documents. In addition, SSDC would be applying for a wind turbine to be put in place at Ham Hill Education Centre.

During discussion Members made the following points:-

- The Wincanton Sports Centre should be positively encouraged to consider installing photovoltaics on their roof as a method of generating energy.
- The Green Team should investigate the possibility of rainwater harvesting from the roof of Brympton Way offices.

- More publicity should be given to SSDC's green successes
- SSDC should lead by example on exemplar projects to positively influence the public.

The Scrutiny Manager concluded that the report of the Carbon Trust would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee when completed and she thanked the members of the Commission for their valuable contributions.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Scrutiny Committee endorse the interim report of the Overview Commission
  2. That members of the Commission are involved as appropriate in the work of the Carbon Trust, potentially in a Steering Group capacity.
  3. That any policies or consultation documents relating to climate change be circulated to Scrutiny Committee members to keep them informed of the Council's progress in this important area.
  4. That the outcome of the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme be reported to the Scrutiny Committee when completed.

*Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager – (01935) 462148  
e-mail: emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk*

---

### 11. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

Members were content to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:** That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2006/07 be NOTED.

*Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager - (01935) 462148  
e-mail: emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk*

---

### 12. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12)

Members were content to note the Executive Forward Plan.

**RESOLVED:** That the Executive Forward Plan be NOTED.

*Bob Gillis, Democratic Services Manager – (01935) 462563  
e-mail: bob.gillis@southsomerset.gov.uk*

---

### 13. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would take place on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2007 at 9.30a.m. in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.**

.....  
**Chairman**