

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 14th August 2007** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(9.30 am – 11.35 am)

Present:

Members: Rupert Cox (in the Chair)

John Calvert	Tom Parsley
John Vincent Chainey	Keith Ronaldson
Geoff Clarke	Alan Smith
Hannah Lefeuvre (until 11.10am)	Jean Smith
Pat Martin	

Also Present:

Tim Carroll
Paull Robathan

Officers:

Helen Rutter	Head of Area Development - East
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Mark Pollock	Corporate Director – Economic Vitality
Angela Oxenbury	Committee Administrator

28. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 10th July 2007 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

29. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Peter Gubbins and Sue Steele.

30. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

31. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public.

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

Members noted that investigative work had been undertaken on a future review of the process and procedures in preparing Section 106 Agreements and this would be included in the agenda for either September or October Committee.

The Corporate Director, Economic Vitality, reported that progress was being made on the Market Towns Vision and it was proposed to bring this to November Committee.

33. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

Members were advised that a decision on public conveniences made by the District Executive at its August meeting had been called in at the request of 10 members. It was proposed that Scrutiny Committee would consider the decision at its September meeting.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Sue Steele for chairing the Scrutiny Workshop held to discuss the Somerset Waste Partnership and for presenting the report to Full Council.

34. Progress Reports on Scrutiny Commissions (Agenda Item 7)

Members noted the following:

- The Octagon Review Group had reported on a useful visit to the Octagon.
 - Members of the Customer Services Commission were to visit the Contact Centre immediately after the Committee meeting.
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35. Local Strategic Partnership South Somerset Together – Annual Review (Agenda Item 8)

The Head of Area Development, East, introduced the Annual Review of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and informed members that the past year had been dominated by the development of a long-term Sustainable Community Strategy that was to be introduced in the next few months.

The Chairman said the reason for the report was to ensure that the Committee was comfortable with its scrutiny role of the LSP and to ensure that the partnership delivered in the four areas highlighted in the report. The Chairman questioned the balance of the membership of the LSP, including the predominance of SSDC Executive members.

Councillor Paull Robathan, Chair of the LSP, responded that he had been appointed as an independent chairman and the four Area Chairs were in membership because of their links with local communities and responsibility for market towns.

During the Committee's consideration of the report, members noted the following:

- A review of voluntary and community sector membership had been undertaken and it was proposed to review the business sector with a view to increasing membership of medium sized organisations.
- The LSP was currently looking at enforcement services, including the Police and Police Community Support Officers, the Environment Agency and the Council's own enforcement service.
- Funding of the LSP from the District and County second homes income was made up of the difference between the 50% rate of council tax previously charged for such properties and the current 90%.
- The LSP's priority list had been established at a Strategy setting meeting.

- The partners, including the Primary Care Trust, provided officer time and funding for projects.
- SSDC hosted the LSP but it was not accountable to the Council. Accountability was provided through the Scrutiny process.
- Area Chairs should be asked to report regularly to their Area Committees on the activities of the LSP.
- The review of the Council's corporate plan in early 2008 would reflect the outcomes of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- The Leisure and Tourism industry was not directly represented on the LSP but had been asked to provide input from time to time.
- Reports to Scrutiny could include the health check that had been developed to decide whether partners were suitable to deliver the strategy.
- A proportion of the Head of Area Development's time (notionally 1 day a week) was allocated to the LSP with a full-time co-ordinator and support of other officers as necessary. The co-ordinator's salary was paid by the LSP and admin support, heat and light were provided in kind by SSDC.
- The LSP's accounts were currently monitored by Area East Committee but could become part of Scrutiny Committee's annual monitoring.
- The role of Councillor Robathan as Chairman and a member of the District Executive was accepted by members but it was felt that his independence should be made clearer to the public.
- The decision to invest second homes income in the LSP was made by Full Council each year.

A member asked if SSDC members on the LSP should declare an interest when Full Council considered the budget which would include funding from second homes income for the LSP. The Democratic Services Manager subsequently advised that members may have an interest if the issue of LSP funding was specifically discussed. Advice would be given before the budget setting Council meeting.

In response to a member's question on the relationship of the LSP with the County Council, the Head of Area Development, East, said Somerset County Council had indicated they did not wish to receive a report for their Scrutiny Committee as they wished to concentrate on the County Strategic Partnership.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) that more detailed work should be carried out by SSDC to quantify how much SSDC officer time is spent supporting the work of the LSP. In terms of securing value for money for SSDC this information should be included in future update reports to Scrutiny Committee.
 - (2) that a more effective relationship continues to be developed between Scrutiny and the LSP to ensure accountability and transparency in line with new Government legislation. Initial work should be carried out by the Scrutiny Manager and the Head of Area Development, East, with reports to members as appropriate.
 - (3) that each Area Chairman submits a quarterly report to their area committee under the agenda item Reports from Members on Outside Organisations, outlining three clear LSP outcomes. This will help increase awareness and understanding amongst elected members.

- (4) that future LSP update reports to Scrutiny should contain the findings of the partnership health check. This will contribute to strengthening the relationship between Scrutiny and the LSP and enhance accountability. Annual update reports should also contain a copy of the last year's LSP accounts.

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36. Proposals for Scrutiny Reviews (Agenda Item 9)

The Scrutiny Manager reported that in line with the Scrutiny arrangements, Councillor John Richardson had proposed that an Overview Commission should be established to look into the issue of non-car travel – especially cycling.

The Scrutiny Manager advised that previous experience had raised the importance of ensuring that all Scrutiny reviews must have a clear focus. It was recommended that at this stage it would be appropriate to convene a meeting with the relevant County Council officers as well as appropriate SSDC Officers

The Corporate Director, Economic Vitality, said there were resource implications from the wide range of issues in the report which related to transport, planning gain, sport and leisure and future proposals for the Council's own green travel plan. He suggested inviting a senior County Highways officer and the Head of Economic Development, Planning and Transport and the Transport Strategy Officer to the initial meeting.

RESOLVED: that the Scrutiny Manager convenes a meeting of appropriate County and District officers and SSDC members to establish whether to review the role of SSDC in promoting non-car travel and especially cycling.

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37. Scrutiny Work Programme 2007/08 (Agenda Item 10)

The following updates were noted:

Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

Call-In of the District Executive decision on public conveniences to be added in September 2007.

Implications for Community Call for Action to be added in September 2007.

Progress on the Market Towns Vision and Rural Vision to be added in November.

Yeovil Vision to be added in November 2007.

Review of Development Control Area Based Decision Making to be added in November 2007.

Community Well Being Commission

Affordable Housing - Councillor Geoff Clarke to be added to the membership of this Commission.

RESOLVED: that the Scrutiny Work Programme 2007/08 be noted with the updates as above.

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38. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 11)

A member queried the removal of Staff Disciplinary Issues from the Forward Plan. The Scrutiny Manager would follow this up with Human Resources.

With regard to the Medium Term Financial Plan to be considered by District Executive in October, it was noted that training for new members would be undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) on 13th September.

RESOLVED: that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

*Bob Gillis, Democratic Services Manager – (01935) 462563
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39. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would take place on **Tuesday 11th September 2007 at 9.30a.m. in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.**

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Chairman