

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008** in Committee Rooms 3 & 4, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00am – 12.10pm)

### **Present:**

**Members:** Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer

John Calvert

John Vincent Chainey

Tony Lock

Pat Martin (until 10.55am)

Derek Nelson

Tom Parsley

Alan Smith (until 11.00am)

Andrew Turpin (until 12.05pm)

### **Also Present:**

Tony Fife

Robin Munday

John Crossley

### **Officers:**

Rina Singh

Alice Knight

Donna Parham

Lyn Lockyer

Emily McGuinness

Jo Morris

Corporate Director (Communities)

Voluntary Sector Development Officer

Head of Service – Financial Services

Member Development Officer

Scrutiny & Acting Democratic Services Manager

Committee Administrator

### **Others:**

David Slack

Alan Wilson

Director of Primary Care Development

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2008 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Geoff Clarke, John Hann, Keith Ronaldson, Hannah Lefeuvre, Tim Carroll and Jo Roundell-Greene.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

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

There were no issues arising from previous meetings.

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

The Chairman advised that she and Councillors Dave Bulmer and Tom Parsley had recently attended the Scrutiny Conference in London. The day had been very interesting and it was useful to engage with other authorities about their scrutiny arrangements. The main issues for the future included engaging with the wider community, joint scrutiny and the role of politics in the scrutiny process.

Members were informed that Councillor Rupert Cox had been unsuccessful in gaining the award for Scrutiny Chairman of the Year. It was an excellent achievement to be short-listed in the top 3 out of 80 authorities. Birmingham City Council had been successful in gaining the award.

Councillors Tony Lock and Andrew Turpin were welcomed as new members of the Scrutiny Committee. The Member Development Officer was present at the meeting to assess the need for any future member training requirements.

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#### **7. Progress Reports on Scrutiny Commissions (Agenda Item 7)**

This item was taken under Agenda Item 11 - Scrutiny Work Programme.

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#### **8. Improving Access to Primary Care Services in Somerset (Agenda Item 8)**

The Chairman introduced David Slack, Director of Primary Care Development.

During his presentation, members were informed of the following:

- The Primary Care Trust (PCT) was holding a series of meetings involving patients, GPs and Stakeholders on the proposals to develop a new GP Led Health Centre in Somerset;
- Following the recent Lord Darzi report, there were no plans for a Polyclinic to be located in Somerset;
- There were no plans to change the pattern or distribution of existing GP surgeries;
- The current initiative for extending opening hours at GP surgeries. 16 surgeries in Somerset were currently participating in the scheme. The PCT would like as many GPs to participate as possible;
- The PCT were writing to GPs in response to the concerns raised by the British Medical Association over the potential threat to existing surgeries and the continuity of care particularly for the elderly;
- The schemes taking place in Somerset to redevelop 5 surgeries at Milborne Port, Somerton and Ilminster. The plans were part of a longer term framework and funding

- had been identified for further surgeries to be developed;
- The Yeovil East and Centre Wards had been identified as areas of high social and deprivation need. Further work to target these areas would form part of a wider set of plans;
- The PCT were asking for feedback on the types of services that should be provided by the new GP Led Health Centre;
- The new Centre would offer both walk in and booked appointments allowing easier access to services for people who worked during the day;
- There would be an open tendering process taking place in the Autumn in which bids would be invited from GPs and private companies;
- A decision had not been made on where the Centre would be located but it was likely it would be in one of the three urban areas.

In response to Members questions, David Slack advised that:

- The new GP Led Health Centre would be in addition to the NHS Direct Service;
- The tendering process would involve looking for people with experience of primary care. It was important to have credible suppliers. GPs were being asked to put forward proposals;
- The South Petherton Hospital redevelopment was part of a range of improvements being undertaken across Somerset;
- The proposal was about commissioning new services and not about new premises;
- £1 million had been set aside for revenue costs;
- Patients would have a choice over whether to join the new Centre;
- The driving force behind the new proposals was part of a national drive to improve access to PCT services. Local drivers included an increase in population, the need to address areas with high health and social care need and the current lack of services available;
- It was also recognised that people who worked were often more likely to develop chronic illnesses;
- The Centre would help address the problems of out of hours provision;
- There would be future issues about providing the service in other areas of Somerset. It was recognised that this was a huge challenge for existing GP practices;
- The Scheme was part of government policy and would go ahead regardless of negative feedback;
- The PCT Board would be considering all the comments and feedback received and would be making a decision at its meeting on 10th September.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Concern was expressed that the Centre would be Taunton based and that Yeovil would loose out on accessing the services;
- Concern was expressed over the affect the new GP Led Centre would have on existing GP surgeries;
- It was felt that GPs were being disadvantaged by the tendering process;
- The current well run surgeries would be left disadvantaged and would loose experienced staff;
- The need for public awareness of the Centre;
- The Centre would only cater for a few and not the wider population of Somerset;
- The need for good transport links and access routes to the Centre;
- The funding should be used to improve existing services.

The Chairman concluded that members of the Scrutiny Committee felt deeply concerned and were extremely uneasy about the proposal and were not convinced that the new Centre would not affect existing services.

The Council's formal response would also include input from the Health and Well-being Directorate. It was agreed that the Council's response to the proposal would be circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee for information.

**RESOLVED:** That the comments and views as detailed above be incorporated into the Council's response to the consultation document 'Have Your Say'.

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## **9. Frontline Councillors Grant Scheme (Agenda Item 9)**

Councillor Tony Fife advised that 90% of councillors who had responded to the questionnaire strongly supported the Frontline Councillor Community Scheme (FCCS). He referred to the member comments raised that the funds should be available through the Area Development Team and argued that members were in a far better position in knowing their own area than officers.

The Head of Finance advised that £75,000 capital funding to continue the FCCS had been approved, however the £75,000 revenue funding for the scheme had been scored against other priorities and was not approved for 2008/09. If members wished to continue with the scheme a bid would have to be made for revenue and capital funding in the 2009/10 budget process.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:

- The scheme was excellent and should be continued;
- It was up to the individual member to know its own area;
- The scheme needed to be reviewed properly as part of the budget process;
- A robust report on the administration of the scheme was needed.

The Corporate Director (Communities) advised that only one side of the evaluation had been completed and that further evaluation was required on what value the scheme was giving to the community. A comprehensive evaluation of the scheme would allow members to make a fully informed decision for 2009/10 based on robust information.

The Head of Finance explained the timetable for the revenue and capital budget setting process. She also advised on the current costs of administering the scheme and the need for improving issues around governance and monitoring to make the scheme more streamlined. Once these issues had been addressed the transaction costs of the scheme would be reduced. In future, it was hoped to build up a consistent scheme across the areas.

As part of the previous budget setting process, the Scrutiny Committee had identified the scheme as a saving, however, following their discussions on the success of the scheme, members were in agreement to recommend District Executive to submit a revenue and capital bid for the scheme to continue in 2009/10 based upon a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot scheme.

**RESOLVED:** 1) That the report be noted; and

- 2) That District Executive be recommended to suspend the Frontline Councillors Grant Scheme for 2008/09 and to submit a revenue and capital bid for £150,000 to continue the scheme in 2009/10 based on the results of the 2007/08 pilot scheme.

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*Donna Parham, Head of Finance – (01935) 462225*

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## **10. Annual Scrutiny Work Programme 2008/09 (Agenda Item 10)**

The Scrutiny and Acting Democratic Services Manager asked Members to re-visit the items currently included in the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/09 and consider any additional items to be discussed at future meetings.

Councillor Andrew Turpin put forward a proposal for the Scrutiny Committee to investigate how the free travel service for children was working in the Kent County Council area, particularly in terms of reduction in poverty and oil consumption. He agreed to undertake this research and report back to a future meeting with suggestions for further investigation.

Councillor Andrew Turpin also asked for the Scrutiny Committee to review the extension of the over 60's concessionary travel scheme.

The Scrutiny and Acting Democratic Services Manager reported that the financial implications of the concessionary travel scheme would not be known until after a year of operation and it would therefore be more beneficial to delay a review until the end of the year.

During discussion, Members also suggested the following topics for future inclusion in the 2008/09 Scrutiny Work Programme:-

- Tourism
- Emergency Planning and response to the recent flooding
- Economic Development

It was suggested that the item on Emergency Planning and response to the recent flooding should be considered at the July meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held in Crewkerne and that representatives from the local community, Police and Fire Authorities be invited to attend.

Members were assured that the minutes of the Sports Zone briefing meetings would be submitted to future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2008/09 be noted with the updates as above.

*Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny & Acting Democratic Services Manager – (01935) 462148*

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

The Scrutiny and Acting Democratic Services Manager advised Members that:-

- Two non-executive members from each authority were being asked to join a joint scrutiny activity for Pioneer Somerset to consider the project initiation document;
- Two members were required to sit on the review of the Somerset Waste Board and the process of the kerbside pilot scheme. SSDC would be providing administration support for the review;
- The Housing Commission would be chaired by Tom Parsley and that a meeting would be arranged before the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2008/09 be noted.
  - 2) That Councillors John Calvert and Andrew Turpin be appointed to the joint scrutiny activity for the Pioneer Somerset review;
  - 3) That Councillors Sue Steele and Tony Lock be appointed to sit on the review of the Somerset Waste Partnership.

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

Members were content to note the report.

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

*Ian Clarke, Head of Legal & Democratic Services – (01935) 462184  
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## 13. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would take place on **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008 at 10.00a.m.** Venue to be confirmed.

Members of the Committee are invited to attend at 9.30a.m. to scope questions on the reports in the Agenda.

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**Chairman**