

Scrutiny Committee – 5th January 2010

1. Minutes

South Somerset District Council

Draft minutes of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 1st December 2009** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 1.15 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	John Richardson (until 11.50 a.m.)
John Calvert	Keith Ronaldson
Geoff Clarke	Jo Roundell Greene
Tony Lock (until 11.50 a.m.)	Alan Smith
Pat Martin	Martin Wale
Roy Mills (until 12.30 p.m.)	

Also Present:

Councillor Tim Carroll

Officers:

Lyn Lockyer	-	Member Development Officer
Jo Gale	-	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	-	Committee Administrator

82. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3rd November 2009, copies of which had been circulated were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

83. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Goodall and Lesley Boucher.

84. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

85. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

86. Issues arising from Previous Meetings (Agenda Item 5)

Wind Turbine at Yeovil Innovation Centre

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that Keith Wheaton Green, Climate Change Officer had confirmed that the maintenance of the wind turbine took about 2 hours per year and the charge was £450.00. The turbine was installed with a 1 year warranty on 11th June 2009. It was expected to last 20-25 years; although the blades and generator could then be replaced as there is no wear and tear on the mast. The Council has benefited from avoided import of electricity and from April 2010 the Council would also benefit from a generation tariff and any export, this was expected to be small.

One member raised concerns about the wind turbine still being non operational. Members requested a report to be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to include a breakdown of when the turbine has been operational and why the Council was getting commissioning problems. The Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus), the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Property, the Climate Change Officer and the Procurement and Risk Manager were requested to attend the meeting.

Restructure

The Scrutiny Manager confirmed that the strategic management budgets had decreased following the restructure.

87. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman:

- Welcomed Councillor Martin Wale who was replacing Councillor Derek Nelson on the Scrutiny Committee. She thanked Derek Nelson for all his work and contribution during his time as a member of the Scrutiny Committee.
- Informed members that the LSP Chairman, Lead Officer and Coordinator had met with the Scrutiny Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Manager to identify ways in which the LSP and Scrutiny could work closer together on shared priorities and agreed an Action Plan. Transport had been identified as an area that Scrutiny would assist the LSP with. To improve integration with the LSP, the Chairman or the Vice Chairman (Jo Roundell Greene) would be attending meetings of the LSP. The Chairman reported on the meeting of the LSP that she had attended on Friday 27th November.

The Scrutiny Manager reported that there were some key areas that needed to be addressed through the LSP Self Assessment and Action Plan. One of the actions was to improve integration with the LSP and that the Chairman/Vice Chairman would feedback to the Scrutiny Committee on the meetings of the LSP they had attended. She hoped that through the Choice Based Lettings Review, the LSP partners would understand more about the Scrutiny and Overview function. The Scrutiny Manager agreed to provide members with a copy of the Self Assessment and Action Plan. It was noted that a folder containing information on the LSP and the Corporate Plan would be available in each Area Office for members to access.

- Referred to the training event held on 11th November, which focussed upon the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. It was noted that the Action Plan would pick up any areas not covered by the training. The Scrutiny Manager agreed to circulate the training material to members of the Committee.
 - The Vice Chairman, Councillor Jo Roundell Greene, reported that she had recently attended a Scrutiny Flooding Conference, which she said was an excellent event. It was noted that Andrew Turner, SCC, had asked SSDC Scrutiny to feed into the County review on flooding. It was acknowledged that SSDC were already doing a lot of work on flood awareness and would not be looking to reduce its services and would only take an overarching view.
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88. Verbal Update on Task and Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 7)

Cultural Strategy

Councillor Dave Bulmer, Chair of the Review, reported that he was holding a meeting that afternoon to discuss the aims and objectives of the review.

Choice Based Lettings

Councillor Jo Roundell Greene, Chair of the Review, reported that meetings of the five different groups had all taken place. The next stage was to pull together all the work and go out to consultation. She thanked members for their time and effort spent on the review.

In response to a comment from the Leader of the Council over linkages with other districts not being as fast as first thought, Councillor Jo Roundell Greene confirmed that they had all been invited, had attended the training and it was up to each authority as to how much they engage and that some authorities were only interested in being consulted. The next meeting would be held on 15th December. The Scrutiny Manager said that due to the good work already achieved she was confident that the Group could deliver a good review with positive recommendations.

89. Verbal Update on Issues Raised by the Scrutiny Committee at the District Executive Meeting held on 5th November 2009 (Agenda Item 8)

Pioneer Somerset

It was confirmed that Somerset County Council had withdrawn their funding and would not be taking an active role in the Initiative. A report was due to be submitted to Full Council on 10th December 2009.

Recycling Bring Bank Rationalisation

The comments of the Scrutiny Committee had been reported to the District Executive. The recommendations contained within the report were agreed.

90. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3rd December 2009 (Agenda Item 9)

Comments to be taken to District Executive on 3rd December 2009

Ropewalk Update Report

- Scrutiny members felt that scaffolding should be erected to secure the building from collapse as soon as possible particularly bearing in mind the recent windy weather conditions.

Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

- The letter was clear to read and understand, which was helpful to everyone.
- Scrutiny members were very encouraged with the report. They endorsed that the Council should be commended for achieving a strong set of scores – the Council was doing a good job.
- With regard to the proposed audit fees of £105,000 (Page 8) – this seems a lot of money – Scrutiny would be looking at audit fees for the Somerset Districts and bordering authorities.

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 2nd Quarter

- It would be useful for Scrutiny members to have a column added in showing the number of planning applications received for both major and minor applications. This would make the % figures more meaningful.
- LI 009 - It would be useful for Scrutiny members to have additional columns detailing the number of people that have left and the number of people that responded.

Issues and Options Report: Report on the Core Strategy Consultation Responses Received

- It would be helpful for Scrutiny members to have the attendance figures for each of the workshops held.
- Scrutiny members raised the importance of providing consultation material in a public friendly format which should be in simple language and easy to understand. It was felt that members of the public were not completely aware of the implications.

Allocation of Local Authorities Business Growth Initiative Funding to Support Yeovil Innovation Centre

- There was a need for additional signage giving directions to the Innovation Centre.

Request for funding to Remove Asbestos Contaminated Building Material at the Former Poultry Units, Water Street, Martock

- How many quotes did the District Council obtain?
- Is there proof that the owner is in financial difficulty?
- Concerns were raised that this case may set a precedent.
- Scrutiny members felt strongly that the costs should be recovered and the possibility of taking a charge on the land pursued.

- What policy is in place to govern this decision/Should a policy or procedure be developed to ensure any future cases are efficiently managed and a consistent approach is taken?
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91. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)

The Scrutiny Manager referred to the 'Raising the Bar in Overview and Scrutiny' Training event held in June 2009 and said that this was a timely opportunity to review the work of the Scrutiny Committee including an evaluation of future topics.

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members of the following topics that had been put forward by members as future issues to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

- SSSC Web Pages
- Post Restructure Report
- SSSC Partnerships
- Post Octagon Review Follow Up

Members divided into groups and each group was asked to score one of the above topics, complete a report request form and feedback their responses to the Committee. The Scrutiny Manager would evaluate the information and arrange for the items to come forward to future meetings.

During the discussion on the effectiveness of the Scrutiny Committee, the following points were noted:

- Members felt that Scrutiny was more effective now than in June. This had greatly improved since Scrutiny meetings had moved prior to District Executive meetings. It was felt that District Executive were looking at Scrutiny in a more positive light and the comments were well received;
- Scrutiny members expected the Portfolio Holder and Officers to attend for their particular item and that Officers would need to have a good reason as to why they were not able to attend;
- It was felt that a formal training session for officers on Scrutiny was not required. It was suggested that the Scrutiny Manager could inform and raise awareness of scrutiny through attending team meetings;
- Members supported the idea of having a key member at each Area Committee meeting to capture the scrutiny work of the Area Committees. The Scrutiny Manager would take this forward with the Area Development Managers and the Leader of the Council.

Scrutiny members were asked to complete a personal evaluation form and return it to the Scrutiny Manager. This would help to identify the strengths, achievements and challenges of the Committee to assist with development of the Work Programme.

Members noted that the report on Wincanton Sports Centre had been deferred to the January meeting due to the Council still awaiting a report from the British Research Establishment into the causes of the scree failure. Members were asked to clarify the issues that they wished to be included in the report.

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the Equalities Strategy report had been delayed. She suggested that because the January agenda was already full that the best way forward would be to set up a Task and Finish Review group to look at the Strategy. This would give members appropriate time to consider the Strategy and put forward comments prior to it being considered by District Executive in February.

Members noted that the Capital Programme had been deferred to the January meeting and could not be altered due to the financial cycle.

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that the CAA/One Place report was being released on 10th December and would be available on the Audit Commission website. This would be an item for the January meeting.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the four scored items (SSDC Web Pages, Post Restructure Report, SSDC Partnership and Post Octagon Review Follow Up) be included in the Scrutiny Work Programme with dates to be confirmed;
 - (2) That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted as outlined in the agenda.

Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager – (01935 462077)
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92. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 11)

- RESOLVED:** That the Executive Forward Plan be noted as outlined in the agenda.

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93. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 5th January 2010 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

Members of the Committee are invited to attend at 9.30am to scope questions on the report in the agenda.

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 Chairman
