

## South Somerset District Council

**Draft Minutes** of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2010** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer  
John Calvert  
John C Chainey  
Geoff Clarke  
Carol Goodall  
Tony Lock

Pat Martin  
Roy Mills  
Keith Ronaldson  
Jo Roundell Greene  
Alan Smith  
Martin Wale

**Also Present:**

Councillors Robin Munday, Tom Parsley and Lesley Boucher.

**Officers:**

Gary Russ	Procurement and Risk Manager
Bruce Soord	Spatial Systems Manager
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

### 132. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes from the meetings held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010 and 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

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

### 136. Issues Arising from Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 5)

With regard to the Issues and Options Report: Report on the Core Strategy Consultation Responses Received which Scrutiny considered as part of the District Executive agenda in December, the Scrutiny Manager reported that the Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to look at the draft report in April prior to the formal consultation process.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee agreed to take forward the lack of signposting at the Innovation Centre with the Assistant Director (Economy).

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

The Chairman reported that Full Council had taken on board the Scrutiny Committee's Working in Partnership with East Devon recommendations. She thanked members for their contributions.

The Chairman of Scrutiny Committee would be attending an in depth Treasury Management training session on 27<sup>th</sup> May along with members of the Audit Committee. Other members would be given the opportunity to attend a more general session.

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### 138. Verbal Update on Task and Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 7)

#### Choice Based Lettings

The Scrutiny Manager reported that West Somerset District Council was no longer able to commit officer support to the Review and were also unable to confirm if members would attend the meetings. Members were reminded that part of the funding conditions was that it would be a countywide project. The Scrutiny Manager would contact REIP and she hoped that the project would be able to continue. She would also pick up the Statistics and Benchmarking Theme Group.

It was reported that all the other groups had been working well and that they were getting to the stage of starting the consultation process.

#### Cultural Strategy

Councillor Dave Bulmer reported that the Review Group had met twice in the last month. The Assistant Director for Health and Well-being was invited to attend the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February to answer member questions. Some of these questions involved matters regarding grants and funding, formal partnerships that fall under the cultural umbrella, the terminology and themes of the Somerset Cultural Strategy and also of the Arts Strategy.

On the basis of these questions it was agreed that the Review Group would invite the Policy and Development Manager for Arts and Creative Industries at Somerset County Council to attend a further meeting. This meeting took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> February.

The Task and Finish Group compiled an extensive list of some 29 questions. These questions ranged from resource commitment, governance, delivery and outcomes, details of specific action plans, and what the community want and need. The Policy and Development Manager agreed to provide written responses to these questions. He also thanked the Review Group for the work that it was doing from an objective point of view,

and requested that the Group continue with this as its contributions were constructive and positive which would ultimately enable the Somerset Cultural Strategy to be successful when it was launched in the months ahead.

Members also agreed to undertake a closer look at the Action Plans within the Strategy.

The Review Group were conscious of the remit they were asked to explore in making recommendations to the District Executive regarding SSDC endorsing the Somerset Cultural Strategy and therefore felt they needed more time to complete the work.

### 139. Corporate Procurement (Agenda Item 8)

The Procurement and Risk Manager introduced the report, which updated members on the arrangements in place for organising and managing procurement at the Council.

In response to a member question regarding the implications of working in partnership with East Devon District Council, the Procurement and Risk Manager explained that the Council had a significant amount of spend in the Devon area and that there was potential to achieve a number of quick wins in some areas and many ways in which they could collaborate.

In response to member comments and questions, the Risk and Procurement Manager informed members of the following:

- With regard to 30% of the office supplies contract being moved to green/environmental products, it was noted that in some cases, recycled products could be more difficult to use e.g. paper because of the quality. Therefore the Council sought to ensure customers were happy from a best value point of view and not just price;
- Feedback with users of products was undertaken to ensure their acceptability for use;
- With regard to the current Strategy being out of date and many of the actions being completed, members were informed that a new Procurement Strategy had been drafted and was awaiting approval;
- With regard to managing risk and systems in place being robust, members were informed that risk formed a major part of the risk policy but was also referred to in the Procurement Strategy;
- There were feedback arrangements in place for Corporate Contracts to ensure that goods were up to standard;
- Quality and best value issues were addressed by the Procurement Working Group;
- The importance of seeking a balance between efficiency and cost savings;
- In any organisation as large and complex as a local authority, there needed to be a balance between corporate procurement and the freedom given to officers and that this was not always easy to achieve;
- Reduced Co 2 emissions from office supplies related to reducing the contractors road miles by reducing SSDC deliveries to one day per week;
- The approved contractors list was a nationally accredited list called Construction Line compiled by the Department of Transport and Industries, suppliers are required to go through a pre-qualification process that looks at areas such as Finance, Equalities, Environment, Insurance and Health and Safety. The Construction Line list is checked and updated by Construction Line on a daily basis.

Members were informed that the Procurement Working Group had originally been attended by Heads of Service but had been reviewed following the restructure and that 4<sup>th</sup> tier managers, from where the majority of spending activity took place, now attended the Group. Meetings were held every four weeks, involved 8 officers and were well attended and engagement was excellent.

The Procurement and Risk Manager informed members that the new Procurement Strategy would be available within the coming weeks. It was agreed that the new Strategy would be added as an item on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010 meeting.

- RESOLVED:**
- (i) That the report and arrangements in place for organising and managing procurement at the Council be noted;
  - (ii) That the new Procurement Strategy be considered by Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

*Gary Russ, Procurement and Risk Manager*  
*Gary.russ@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462076*

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#### 140. **SSDC Website (Agenda Item 9)**

The Spatial Systems Manager referred members to the agenda report, which had been written in response to the Scrutiny Committee's report request.

Members received a demonstration on the new SSDC website. During the presentation, members noted the following:

- The website was being updated as it contained a lot of poor content and was not easily accessible. SSDC had had the same site for five years;
- A decision had been made to keep the resign in-house, however this was a larger task than first thought;
- The new website had been designed using best practice, specifically using the BBC website as a reference;
- The display options would be accessible to all people with disabilities and allowed people to navigate with the keyboard and also be given the option of displaying no images;
- The front page had been redesigned with the intention of less calls being made to the call centre allowing customers to 'Pay for It', 'Apply for It' or 'Report it';
- The improvements to the A-Z search which would also include our partner services;
- The option to key in your postcode which would bring up content relevant to where you live e.g. name of Councillors, Waste and Recycling days;
- Improvements were being made for accessing planning information. To improve the quality of image the file needed to be downloaded at full size;
- There were multiply ways to access the information;
- The website had been tested on all browsers;
- It was not essential to register to use the site;
- April was being set aside for consultation;
- Consultation with members was key;
- The website had been designed with some parameters and was in line with current government guidance;

Members requested an update on the new SSDC website every six months. It was felt that it would be useful if members could make a note of the estimated time spent on the new website and whether it had saved them time compared to using the old website.

Members noted that planning would not be on-line until October/November time as this was a major piece of work and also related to the lean programme.

Members were informed that the deadline for completing the new website was 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010. The EU Directive required all forms to be on line by 19<sup>th</sup> March.

It was noted that the new front page was bigger but had been tested with dial up connection and worked without any problems.

One member felt that it would be useful for the new website to provide a quick link to the Council's Strategies as this was an area that members often needed to refer to. In response, the Strategic Director (Place and Performance) said that some strategies were not relevant to the public and it would be better for members to access them on the Council's Intranet where they were all currently located. She agreed that the Spatial Systems Manager would investigate and report back to members whether members were able to access the SSDC Intranet from home.

In response to a member question, it was noted that there would be a link dedicated to mapping with an overlay facility.

Members felt that it was encouraging to see the new website being redesigned in-house, which they considered to be a huge step forward. Members thought that the new website layout was excellent and appeared to be much more user friendly.

- RESOLVED:**
- (i) That the report and presentation be noted; and
  - (ii) That an update on the SSDC website be considered by the Scrutiny Committee in six months time.

*Bruce Soord, Spatial Systems Manager  
bruce.soord@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462638*

**141. Verbal Update on Issues Raised by the Scrutiny Committee at the District Executive meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010 (Agenda Item 10)**

The Scrutiny Chairman confirmed that the comments raised by the Scrutiny Committee had been taken forward with the District Executive.

**142. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010 (Agenda Item 11)**

The Scrutiny Chairman agreed to take forward the following comments to the District Executive meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

**Roll Out of Sort It Plus Enhanced Kerbside Recycling Service**

Scrutiny members felt that the report was not clear. The Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) attended the meeting to explain the financial implications in further detail.

Members were informed that publicity and advertising costs would come from within existing SSDC and SWP resources.

Members were assured that the new vehicles would be able to access all narrow access properties and in an event where this is not possible a different form of collection will be arranged (with the exception of those residents who were unable to take part in Sort It).

### **Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2010/11**

Scrutiny Members sought clarification over the role of Scrutiny as the revised code recommends a new scrutiny role and states a preference for an Audit Committee to provide this as part of their governance remit.

### **Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2009/10**

Members queried how the figure for NI192 – Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting was calculated and whether the figure was 42.17% of the total recycled?

### **Members' Allowances 2009/10 – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel**

With regard to page 45, Point 14 – Members felt that all positions were flexible and that consideration should be given to the position only and personality should not be taken into account.

### **Revised delivery structures for Community Safety in Somerset**

Scrutiny members expressed concern over the high percentage of cuts particularly bearing in mind that this was a high priority in the Place Survey and felt that it should be reviewed as a priority.

Members questioned whether the cuts were on top of the reduction in PCSOs?

Members also queried why Community Priorities was scored so low on the Risk Matrix?

### **Carbon Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**

Clarification was sought over the logic of the Risk Matrix.

Appendix page 6 - Our past and current carbon dioxide emissions – it was felt that carbon emissions should be complied from all our buildings and not just the largest ones. It was suggested that the measure could then be looked at per employee.

## **143. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)**

Members noted the following updates to the Scrutiny Work Programme:

- An update on the Wind Turbine at the Yeovil Innovation Centre to be added to the Work Programme for 30<sup>th</sup> March meeting.
- An update on CDRP to be added to the Work Programme for 30<sup>th</sup> March.
- The Strategic Improvement and Development Plan would now be considered at the 11<sup>th</sup> May meeting instead of 30<sup>th</sup> March.

- An item on the new Corporate Procurement Strategy to be added to the Work Programme for 29<sup>th</sup> June.
- The scoping session for the use of consultants report to be considered at 11<sup>th</sup> May meeting.
- Website Review to be added to the Work Programme for 30<sup>th</sup> November meeting.
- An item on the annual review of savings achieved from working with East Devon to be added to the Work Programme for 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010 meeting.

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that a SSDC Partnerships Task and Finish Review would be established in June to look at the new proposed scoring mechanism.

**RESOLVED:** That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted as outlined in the agenda with the updates above.

*Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager – (01935 462077)  
e-mail: joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk*

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#### **144. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 13)**

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

*Angie Cox, Democratic Services Manager – (01935 462148)  
e-mail: angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk*

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#### **145. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 14)**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 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