

Scrutiny Committee – 2nd March 2010

1. Minutes

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on Tuesday 2nd February 2010 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 1.30 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

David Bulmer
Geoff Clarke
Carol Goodall
Tony Lock

Pat Martin
Keith Ronaldson
Jo Roundell Green
Martin Wale

Also Present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Peter Seib, Tom Parsley, Robin Munday and Sylvia Seal.

Officers:

Phil Dolan	Chief Executive
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Jo Morgan	Community Cohesion Officer
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Keith Wheaton-Green	Climate Change Officer
Gary Russ	Procurement and Risk Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

111. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 5th January 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

112. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Calvert and Alan Smith.

113. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Jo Roundell Greene declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 – Wind Turbine at Yeovil Innovation Centre – Progress Report, as she was Portfolio Holder for Environment and Property at the time when the wind turbine was procured.

114. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

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

115. Issues Arising from Previous Meetings (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Geoff Clarke referred to the information he had received from the Finance Department regarding the use of consultants and requested that an item be included in the Scrutiny Work Programme, as he felt that the figures required further explanation. The Scrutiny Manager said that she would programme in a scoping session for the April meeting in order for a report request template to be completed.

116. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reported that she had visited East Devon District Council the previous day as part of the Working in Partnership Task and Finish Review.

She also reported that she had recently attended a Choice Based Lettings meeting involving all the other districts in Somerset.

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

Working in Partnership

Councillor Rupert Cox, Chairman of the Working in Partnership Task and Finish Review Group gave an update on the work of the Group. A copy of the update is attached to these minutes for information.

Members noted that a Special Scrutiny Committee meeting was being held on Tuesday 9th February 2010 at 3.00pm in the Main Committee Room to consider the recommendations of the Working in Partnership Task and Finish Review. All members would be informed about the meeting.

Cultural Strategy

Councillor Dave Bulmer, Chairman of the Review, reported that the Group had outlined a number of questions and that these would be discussed with the Assistant Director (Health and Well-Being) at their next meeting on 12th February.

Choice Based Lettings

Councillor Jo Roundell Greene, Chairman of the Review, reported that following the last meeting the other districts were now on board. The Scrutiny Manager reported that the Review Group was now officially a Joint Review Committee and each district was taking responsibility for the following areas:

Sedgemoor	Policy
West Somerset	Statistics and benchmarking
South Somerset	Lead role

It was hoped that Taunton Deane would pick up web & publication but it was not yet known as their Scrutiny Officer was currently off sick. The SSDC Scrutiny Manager would pick it up in her absence.

The recommendations would go forward to the CBL Project Board in June.

118. Post Restructure (Agenda Item 8)

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and commented that although savings were less than anticipated there were promising signs in terms of impact on performance with a more cohesive approach being undertaken.

The Chief Executive commented that following the restructure morale within the Council appeared to remain high and that the majority of staff saw no impact and that most managers saw it as an opportunity to move on. It was noted that some areas such as ICT development had benefited from new resources despite the reduction in costs. He stated that the restructure had achieved the savings proposed at Full Council in July 2009.

Scrutiny members would have the opportunity to consider the full 2009/10 performance outturn data during the summer of 2010. A staff survey would be undertaken in the summer and the results would be reported to Scrutiny.

Members commented that morale was likely to change as a result of the next phase of restructuring through working in partnership with East Devon and felt that a review in the Summer was too early.

The Chief Executive commented that the information gained through the staff survey and performance outturn data would only be in relation to this restructure.

The Leader of the Council commented that the Council had gone as far as possible in isolation in reducing management costs and that the Council needed to respond to increasing demands and therefore constant change was inevitable.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*Phil Dolan, Chief Executive – (01935 462101)
e-mail: phil.dolan@southsomerset.gov.uk*

119. Revenue Budget 2010/11 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Revised Capital Programme (Agenda Item 9)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Support Services introduced the report, which advised members of the proposed 2010/11 Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan and revised Capital Programme that would be considered by District Executive followed by Full Council on 18th February.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Support Services highlighted the following points:

- SSDC needed to achieve a balanced budget;
- The estimate for pay inflation was being budgeted at 1%. If this were to go above 1% further savings would need to be achieved;

- The growth bid of £173,000 for Sort It+. The Scheme was dependant on all district councils joining. The Business Plan was due to be considered by District Executive in March;
- The efficiency savings for 2010/11 and 2011/12. Further years were unknown;
- The possible cut in government grant. Projections were being calculated based upon a 5,10 &15 percent reduction in formula grant.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) said that it had been really useful for Scrutiny members to comment on the budget reports. She referred to the recommendations in the report including the Sort It+ Scheme, the Sports Zone reserve being delayed and the inclusion of the Birchfield Park Scheme, all of which were supported by Scrutiny members.

In response to a member question regarding Sort It+, the Leader of the Council commented that the scheme could only go ahead if all district councils were to join and that the deal could only be accepted on the figures offered.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) responded to a number of questions put forward by members. The following points were noted:

- District Executive set the limit for contingency each year. The outturn report was considered by District Executive and they could still make an allocation in February/March;
- With regard to the Workforce Planning Strategy, the Council was well on the way to meeting the target of 100 posts. 40 posts had already been achieved;
- Work on the review of the property portfolio would be undertaken by the Asset Management Group and would also involve a lot of input from the Area Development Managers and members;
- The Second Homes Income had increased by £3,500. The decision for this money to go to the LSP could be re-visited, however the LSP was a major success and its performance was worthwhile. It was the most proactive LSP in Somerset;
- The figures for growth bids were different each year as some things happen every other year;
- CPE was still going ahead and a new simplified model was being worked upon and would be presented to the Portfolio Holders shortly followed by a report to District Executive. A start date of April 2011 was still hopeful;
- CAMEO Reserve related to admissions at the Crematorium;
- An update on the bid to RIEP for consultancy support would be given at the District Executive meeting on 4th February;
- The date for programme review matches the VFM Strategy. The Assistant Director (Finance and Support Services) would look to future proof the dates;
- The percentage error at SSDC changed annually. Last year the full grant of £100,000 was received but not receiving the grant was always taken into account;
- Area South had been out of balances for sometime.

Scrutiny members were content with the recommendations, position and process as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That the current position be noted.

*Donna Parham, Assistant Director – Finance and Corporate Services – (01935 462320)
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Exclusion of the Public

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the Committee resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, i.e. "Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and "Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings".

120. Confidential Report - Wind Turbine at Yeovil Innovation Centre – Progress Report (Agenda Item 10)

The Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) updated members on the latest position with regard to the wind turbine at the Yeovil Innovation Centre. She reported that the manufacturer had confirmed that the turbine heads would be uplifted for upgrade. The timescale from uplift to re-commission would be within 4 to 5 weeks and therefore the April target was now looking more achievable.

- RESOLVED:** (1) That the report be noted; and
(2) That a further progress report be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in April.

*Vega Sturgess, Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) – (01935 462200)
e-mail: vega.sturgess@southsomerset.gov.uk*

121. Scrutiny Single Equality Scheme Task and Finish Review Conclusions (Agenda Item 11)

Councillor Sue Steele introduced the report, which outlined the recommendations of the Task and Finish Review on the Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan.

Members commented that the Single Equality Scheme document considered by the Task and Finish Review appeared to be a different version to the one included in the District Executive agenda. In response the Community Cohesion Officer commented that due to some compliance issues the layout of the document had been amended but the text had remained the same.

It was noted that the recommendation relating to the performance measure task 1.4 had already been altered in the document to reflect the views of the Task and Finish Review.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Task and Finish Review to go forward to District Executive for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the following recommendations be endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee to be submitted to the District Executive for consideration at its meeting on 4th February 2010:

The Action Plan is monitored using the same traffic light system as the corporate quarterly performance monitoring.

Where the performance measures in the Action Plan are percentages and based on small numbers, so liable to fluctuate, specific figures and comments should be given to provide clarification.

In the Action Plan where performance measures are not specific, a specific figure or gauge should be identified to ensure performance could be measured and compared across different periods.

The performance measure for task 1.4 has already been altered to reflect the views of the Task and Finish Group. Two suggested proposals to utilise the Area Committees to identify common issues are:

- A chart of different potential issues should be available for members to tick when they have experienced it through their constituents in that month.
- The Area Vice Chair takes on the role of capturing common issues/concerns that fall within set criteria and informs Jo Morgan, Community Cohesion Officer.

Local Indicators should be compiled to demonstrate the good work that SSDC is doing above the National Indicators and capture outcomes for the community. Monitoring of these indicators would ensure the standard, quality of service and commitment continues.

The Scrutiny Committee review the Action Plan in six months time to assist and contribute to further development.

*Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager – (01935 462077)
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122. Update from the Local Strategic Partnership (South Somerset Together) Meeting held on 22nd January 2010 (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Chairman reported on the meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership (South Somerset Together) she had attended on 22nd January. Members noted the following:

- South Somerset Together had been selected as one of three finalists in the Community Partnerships Award in the Best Local Strategic Partnership category. The results would be announced at an award ceremony on 4th February.
- The presentation from Augusta Westland Ltd had highlighted that they were unable to get enough apprentices at the right calibre.

123. Verbal Update on Issues Raised by the Scrutiny Committee at the District Executive meeting held on 7th January 2010 (Agenda Item 13)

The Vice Chairman reported that as a result of the Scrutiny Committee comments the bid for improvements to Birchfield Park would be reconfigured and resubmitted before the budget was finally set for 2010/11.

The Vice Chairman referred members to the District Executive minutes from the meeting held on 7th January, which included the responses made to the comments of the Scrutiny Committee.

124. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4th February 2010 (Agenda Item 14)

The Scrutiny Chairman agreed to take forward the following comments to the District Executive meeting on 4th February 2010.

Somerset Waste Partnership – Business Plan

With reference to page 23 of the SWP Business Plan, Members referred to 5.7.3 Excess Waste Charging, paragraph 2, which states:

Another option is to charge householders (through a pre-paid sack) for side waste presented. This might be attractive to residents as it avoids having to make such a trip to the HWRC. The idea was looked at in 2008 by a sub-group of the Board who concluded, on balance, not to pursue the idea for the time being.

Members queried whether they were making this a proposal and if so they were concerned that only those that can afford it would benefit. This also did not link with the Enforcement Policy (iii on page 24). It was also felt that this would encourage people to throw out more waste.

In referring to Page 12 of the SWP Business Plan, members raised concerns over the commitment from other authorities.

The Council's Corporate Plan 'Our Targets Insert'

It was noted that there were a number of joint targets i.e. page 22, 3.25 Contribute to the LAA target to reduce the under 18 conception rate by 50% - Identify staff resource to contribute to NHS Somerset action plan development & deliver one initiative by May 2010. Members queried whether the joint ones were achievable in the current climate.

125. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 15)

Members noted the following updates to the Scrutiny Work Programme:

- The Wincanton Community Sports Centre report had been deferred to the 2nd March possibly 30th March meeting;
- An update on the Recession Strategy would be included in the Work Programme for May;
- A report on the Council's website would be included in the Work Programme for May;

- A scoping session for the report on the use of consultants would be added to the Work Programme for 30th March meeting;
- With regard to the report on SSDC Partnership, the Third Sector and Partnership Manager to be invited to attend a future meeting;
- It was noted that Scrutiny were legally obliged to review the CDRP (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership) and that there were proposals for a countywide review.

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*

126. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 16)

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

*Angie Cox, Democratic Services Manager – (01935 462148)
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127. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 17)

Members noted that the next ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 2nd 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