

Scrutiny Committee – 1st June 2010

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 11th May** 2010 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 12.15 p.m.)

Present:

Members:

Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Pat Martin
John Calvert	Roy Mills
John Vincent-Chaine	Jo Roundell-Greene
Geoff Clarke	Alan Smith
Carol Goodall (from 11.40 a.m.)	

Also Present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Tom Parsley and Sylvia Seal

Officers:

Mark Williams	Chief Executive
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Alasdair Bell	Environmental Health Manager
Sue Eaton	Performance Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

146. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th March 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

147. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Lock, John Richardson, Keith Ronaldson and Martin Wale.

148. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Jo Roundell-Greene declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 – Update report on the Wind Turbine at Yeovil Innovation Centre, as at the time decisions were taken on this item by the District Executive, she was the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste.

149. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

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

150. Issues Arising from Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 5)

With reference to the Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 3rd Quarter 2009/10, the Scrutiny Manager reported that the information requested by Scrutiny members at the last meeting on the types of major planning applications and the levels of negotiation had been circulated to scrutiny members.

With regard to the Issues and Options Report: Report on the Core Strategy Consultation Responses Received, which Scrutiny considered in December, the Scrutiny Manager reported that Town and Parish Council representatives had now been consulted and she had received the report. The public consultation process would be taken to the Area Committees and District Executive. In view of this, it was felt that it was not beneficial for it to be considered by Scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Manager reported that CDRP Draft Strategic Assessment had been released and she would circulate a copy to members.

A report outlining the service responses to the issues identified in the Wincanton Sports Centre – Lessons from the Swimming Pool Failure report would be submitted to the 29th June meeting.

151. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman announced that she would attend the Somerset County Council Scrutiny Task Group "stakeholder event" on 29th June 2010 to represent SSDC to contribute and reflect on various current plans for flood risk management.

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

Cultural Strategy

Councillor Dave Bulmer reported that the Task and Finish Group had met on 30th March to review the Action Plans within the Cultural Strategy. A further meeting was due to be held that afternoon.

Choice Based Lettings

Councillor Jo Roundell-Greene reported that all the Districts were now on board and a successful meeting was held in Bridgwater. They were nearly in a position to start preparing the recommendations and final report.

153. Verbal Update on the Joint Integration Committee (Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Jo Roundell-Greene reported that the first meeting of the Joint Integration Committee had been held in Chard and that Councillor Tim Carroll had been elected as Chairman.

Members raised concerns regarding the lack of progress regarding Joint Scrutiny with East Devon District Council and highlighted that it was imperative that the project time scales allowed for appropriate Scrutiny throughout the process.

It was agreed that representatives of the East Devon and South Somerset Scrutiny Committees would meet to discuss Joint Scrutiny prior to the Joint Integration Committee meeting Scheduled to take place on 17th June 2010.

154. Strategic Development and Improvement Plan (Agenda Item 9)

The Corporate Director (Communities) introduced the report. She explained that 80% of actions were showing green and were therefore complete. 20% of actions were either behind target or at risk of missing their target date. She explained that since submitting the report the status of action R10 - Continue to identify the savings needed to close budget gaps had changed its status from yellow to green.

In response to a member question, the Corporate Director (Communities) agreed to provide a glossary to accompany the Strategic Improvement and Development Plan in future.

During discussion, members suggested that the target date for the Councillors development plans is postponed until after the District Council re-elections in May 2011. The Leader of the Council confirmed that this point had been made to the Audit Commission and the status of the action would remain red. A lot of the preparatory work would be carried out and would therefore satisfy the Audit Commission.

Members also suggested that the frequency of collection and analysis of staff satisfaction should be increased to six monthly rather than annually particularly bearing in mind the changing times ahead and the need to monitor staff morale more closely. Members felt that it was very important to know how this would be taken forward and requested that the issue be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee in two months time.

Members noted that the status of the action to improve staff awareness of the Council's anti-fraud and whistle blowing policies should be ongoing.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the report be noted;
 - (2) That the Corporate Director (Communities) report back to the Scrutiny Committee in two months time on how the collection and analysis of staff satisfaction would be taken forward.

*Rina Singh, Corporate Director – Communities – (01935) 462010
e-mail: rina.singh@southsomerset.gov.uk*

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".

155. Update on the Wind Turbine at Yeovil Innovation Centre (Agenda Item 10)

The Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) reported that the risk assessment had now been completed and Property Services were involved in the monitoring. The wind turbine had been switched on and was working well.

Members requested a six monthly update report on the energy figures.

RESOLVED: That six monthly progress reports be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee to include an update on the energy output figures.

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

156. Verbal Update on Issues Raised by the Scrutiny Committee at the District Executive meeting held on 1st April 2010 (Agenda Item 11)

Councillor Sue Steele reported that the comments raised by the Scrutiny Committee had been taken forward to the District Executive meeting held on 1st April 2010. She particularly mentioned the following:

Gypsy Park Home Progress Report

CCTV would be looked at and costs permitting installed at both sites.

Decisions on future site management had been separated from the project at the moment.

Disposal of Toilets at West Street, Ilminster with planning permission

Members were informed that the disposal included the disabled toilet.

157. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 13th May 2010 (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Chairman agreed to take forward the following comments to the District Executive meeting on 13th May 2010:

Housing and Planning Delivery Grant Award and Area Based New Burden Grant Award

Scrutiny members felt that the report was unclear and lacked detail. They requested further information about who is part of the partnership and the amount that each partner would be contributing?

On page 4 of the report, it referred to a sum of £1,000 being required to supplement the original budget for the combined County-wide Gypsy and Traveller Assessment. Are all partners giving this sum of money or is it just South Somerset?

With reference to the paragraph on Eco Town and housing and planning delivery grant on page 6 of the report, members felt that it was extremely difficult to understand and the whole paragraph required further explanation.

There appears to be some wording missing from the paragraph under Carbon emission implications and adapting to climate change implications on page 8 of the report.

On page 4 paragraph 2 is not clear, please can an explanation of how this fits in with Strategic Housing be provided at DX

Recommendations of Joint Integration Committee of 8 April 2010

Scrutiny members sought assurances that there will be appropriate Joint Scrutiny arrangements and that an initial meeting between Scrutiny representatives from both SSDC and EDDC will be organised prior to the next JIC meeting. Adequate time must be given to allow for proper scrutiny of any proposals.

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010-12

Alasdair Bell attended the Scrutiny Committee meeting to provide further explanation on the report.

In response to questions, members were informed that two competitive quotes were required and that loans were only payed out when the Council was satisfied with the work and that there was close control on the quality of work.

Members required further explanation on the criteria as outlined on page 23 of the report and in particular *No. 5 - In the case of 2 above, provided the applicants are vulnerable they need not have an equity stake in the property. In such cases the Council may underwrite the loan.*

Alasdair commented that this had been included to give the Council the ability to give grants to gypsies and travellers living on a registered site. Members felt that the wording should be amended to include under exceptional circumstances.

Replacement of Existing Air Cooling Equipment in the Brympton Way Data Centre

Scrutiny members requested monitoring of the running costs once the system has been implemented.

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 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).

158. Scoping Session on the SSDC Consultant Fees report (Agenda Item 13)

Members considered the information provided by the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services), which outlined the professional fees paid to consultants for a six month period.

Members felt that a further report was not required on this subject, however it was suggested when reports are submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in future, where appropriate consultant costs are fully outlined in the report.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That a further report on SSDC Consultant fees was not required;
 - (2) That when reports are submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in future, where appropriate consultant costs are fully outlined in the report.

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

159. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 14)

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the only change to the Scrutiny Work Programme was the deletion of the Annual Management letter for the May meeting. The Audit Commission timescales had changed and members had already seen the report. The next report from the Audit Commission was the Use of Resources report which was expected in September/October time.

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

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

160. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 15)

The Scrutiny Manager agreed to check whether the SSDC Voluntary Sector Strategy due to be considered by the District Executive in June would also be considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

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

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

161. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 16)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 1st June 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