

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 31st August 2010** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. - 11.40 a.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer
John Calvert
Geoff Clarke
Carol Goodall
Roy Mills

Keith Ronaldson
Angie Singleton
Alan Smith
Martin Wale

Also Present:

Councillors Sylvia Seal, Jo Roundell Greene and Tom Parsley

Officers:

Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Steve Joel	Assistant Director (Health & Well-being)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

49. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd August 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Lock, John Richardson and Pat Martin.

51. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

52. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

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

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

Figures Relating to the Number of Working Age People on Out of Work Benefits

At the last Scrutiny Committee meeting members had highlighted concerns regarding young people not in employment or training, although it was appreciated that it was not an SSDC responsibility. The matter was also mentioned at the District Executive. The Economic Development Manager has provided the latest figures, which have been distributed to members.

Cllr. Geoff Clarke referred to training for young people and mentioned that some of the problems were based around not being able to get young people to take part as well as difficulties with people living in rural areas not being able to get to work due to lack of transport. Members were informed that the Local Strategic Partnership (South Somerset Together) was looking at this issue.

Staff Survey

Members were informed that the report on the findings of the staff survey would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in October in order to allow the Chief Executive to attend.

54. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman made a presentation to Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager who was going on maternity leave. The Chairman was joined by members in thanking Jo for all her hard work and support to the Committee.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) updated the Committee on the budget situation. She mentioned a number of issues including the following:-

- Savings of £2.4 million still need to be found for 2011/12;
- Most of the inescapable commitments have now been received. The Task and Finish Group would be meeting on 22nd September to consider the bids;
- The Government has announced that the Audit Commission will cease to exist by April 2012. The Audit Commission would still be auditing this year and next year's accounts;
- Reference was made to the consultation paper regarding "Local referendums to veto excessive council tax increase" which had been circulated to all members. The District Executive would be asked to consider a draft response;
- Consultation papers have now been distributed for the Revenue Support Grant settlement for next year. The biggest impact for South Somerset will be concessionary fares transferring to Somerset County Council;
- The Joint Integration Committee on 9th September will be considering the shared services business cases for the first eight work streams. The documents were very much working progress at this stage and there was still lots of work to pull together;

- A consultation paper has been received on Revenue Support Top-Slice for Improvement Services to Local Authorities;
 - A consultation paper has been received regarding the governments New Homes Bonus Scheme;
 - Within the next couple of weeks, Members will be asked to prioritise their priority areas for services provided within the discretionary budget.
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55. Verbal Update on Task and Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 7)

Choice Based Lettings

Cllr. Carol Goodall reported that the consultation process was now complete and that 258 questionnaires had been returned. All the data would be fed into Survey Monkey and then analysed. September would be spent drafting the report ready for presentation to the Homefinder Board on 27th September.

Adverse Weather

Cllr. Sue Steele reported that members of the Adverse Weather Task and Finish Group had been sent copies of a new draft Winter Maintenance Policy and their comments would be incorporated into the subsequent report to District Executive.

Partnerships

The first meeting of the Partnerships Task and Finish Group would be held on 16th September at 10.00am with further meetings arranged on a monthly basis. Eight members have expressed an interest to serve on the Group.

Inescapable Bids

Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager reported that a meeting would be held on 22nd September at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room. Councillors Geoff Clarke and Martin Wale indicated their interest to serve on the Group.

Capital Strategy

Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager reported that a meeting would be held on 24th September at 10.00am in the Corporate Meeting Room.

Joint Integration Committee

The next meeting of the Joint Integration Committee would be held on 9th September in Chard.

Joint Scrutiny Panel

The next meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Panel would be held on 23rd September at 10.00am in Honiton.

Visit to Adur and Worthing

It was noted that the visit to Adur and Worthing, who were 6 years into their partnership, was taking place on Friday 10th September.

Members were asked to forward any issues from the presentation recently given by Kevin Hicks of Bromsgrove District Council to either Cllr. Sue Steele or Emily McGuinness. A copy of the presentation has been distributed to all members.

56. Somerset Cultural Strategy Task and Finish Review Conclusions (Agenda Item 8)

Cllr. Dave Bulmer introduced the report, which presented members with the recommendations of the Somerset Cultural Strategy Task and Finish Review.

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) and the Portfolio Holder (Leisure and Culture) were in attendance to answer members' questions and comments.

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) explained that Somerset County Council's (SCC) Cultural Team started work on preparing the Cultural Strategy some two and a half years ago. They had pulled together various stakeholders across Somerset and as part of the process asked the District Council to take the Cultural Strategy through Scrutiny. It was noted that the key themes were linked to Somerset County Council priorities. He explained that the website version had been developed so it can easily be updated and kept relevant.

Cllr. Dave Bulmer advised members that the website had not yet been launched to the public. He reported that the Task and Finish Review Group had concluded that the concept of the Somerset Cultural Strategy was an excellent idea. He referred members to the 13 recommendations within the report, which the Scrutiny Committee were being asked to endorse.

In response to members' questions and comments, the following points were noted:

- The project was SCC driven. It sets out the vision for culture in Somerset and there were no additional financial contributions required. It was acknowledged that the Strategy could help with attracting funding from external bodies;
- It was acknowledged that in view of the changing times there were uncertainties as to how culture would fit in at SCC over the coming year;
- Funding for the project was for over 3 years and was due to finish at the end of the current financial year;
- With reference to ensuring that South Somerset gets the best return from the Strategy, it was felt that this would depend on how SSDC works with SCC to ensure South Somerset does not lose out and to seize every opportunity available;
- The Task and Finish Group were conscious that SSDC could lose out in the long-term if they decided not to endorse the Strategy;
- The Assistant Director (Health & Well-being) advised that a good time to review the Strategy would be in about a year's time.

Following discussion, members endorsed the recommendations of the Task & Finish Review Group as outlined in the agenda report to go forward to the Somerset Cultural Partnership for comment and assurance that they will be addressed and included in the

final Somerset Cultural Strategy prior to Scrutiny Committee recommending endorsement of the Strategy.

Members congratulated members of the Task and Finish Group and the Scrutiny Manager for all their hard work in producing such an excellent piece of work.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the recommendations of the Somerset Cultural Strategy Task and Finish Review Group be endorsed as outlined on pages 17 and 18 of the agenda report;
 - (2) That a report on the Somerset Cultural Strategy including the Task and Finish Review findings be presented to the October District Executive by the Assistant Director Health and Well-Being;
 - (3) That the District Executive be asked to note that the recommendations of the Somerset Cultural Strategy Task and Finish Review will be presented to SCC's Somerset Cultural Partnership for comment and assurance that they will be addressed and included in the final Somerset Cultural Strategy;
 - (4) That Somerset Cultural Partnership's response to the recommendations be presented to the January meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

*(Steve Joel, Assistant Director (Health & Well-being) - 01935 462278)
(e-mail:steve.joel@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

57. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5th August 2010 (Agenda Item 9)

The Chairman reported that there were no issues identified at the last Scrutiny Committee meeting to be raised at the District Executive meeting on 5th August 2010.

58. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 2nd September 2010 (Agenda Item 10)

Members referred to the reports that were to be submitted to the District Executive on 2nd September and made the following comments:

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report - 1st Quarter 2010/11

What impact will life after the Audit Commission have on the quarterly performance and monitoring reports - will we still need to collect this set of data, will there be a reduction in the amount of performance data needed and will there be any financial implications?

South Somerset Core Strategy Incorporating Preferred Options: Approval of Draft for Consultation

Members sought reassurances over whether the process is future proof - i.e. is the will the policy and processes laid out in the report stand up potential policy changes from central government, as far as we are able to tell at the moment?

Members referred to page 14 of the agenda report bullet 3 which states:

At one Area Committee Members wished to call Primary Service Centres (Policy B settlements in the now revoked RSS parlance) and Local Service Centres (Policy C settlements in RSS parlance) market towns and small country towns respectively (Policy SS1 and elsewhere)

Clarification was therefore sought over the wording of market towns and service centres with regard to the final recommendation proposal on page 46 of appendix 2.

59. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

Reference was made to the agenda report, which informed members of the Scrutiny Work Programme. Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager updated members as follows:

- The update from the LSP on Sustainable Transport due to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee on 31st August had been deferred until 4th January 2011. This is due to LSP - South Somerset Together staff resource issues.
- The report on Dog Control Orders will be considered on 5th October 2010 to allow officers to provide further evidence for their recommendations.
- There will be a report from Ian Clarke, Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services) on the response to the recent staff survey on 5th October 2010 agenda.
- The Annual report from the LSP would be included on the agenda for the November meeting.
- Scrutiny Committee would consider the Open Spaces Strategy as part of the November District Executive agenda.
- The following items were added to the Scrutiny Work Programme:
Civil Parking Enforcement Update - 2nd November 2010
S106 agreements - 2nd November 2010
Sort It Plus Update - 4th January 2010

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted subject to the following updates being taken into account.

*(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager - 01935 462566)
(emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

60. Executive Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)

The Committee noted the details of the District Executive Forward Plan as attached to the agenda for the meeting to be held on 2nd September 2010.

The District Executive would consider a report on the Somerset Cultural Strategy Task and Finish Review Conclusions in October.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

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

61. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 5th October 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 reports in the agenda.

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Chairman