

South Somerset District Council

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

(10.00 a.m. – 12 noon)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer
John Calvert
Carol Goodall
Tony Lock

Pat Martin
Roy Mills
Keith Ronaldson
Angie Singleton

Also Present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Jo Roundell Greene, Tom Parsley, Robin Munday and Tony Fife

Officers:

Keith Wheaton-Green	Climate Change Officer
Sue Eaton	Performance Manager
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Dave Norris	Development Control Manager
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

81. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

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

82. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Geoff Clarke, Alan Smith, John Richardson and Martin Wale.

83. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

84. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

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

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

Civil Parking Enforcement

The Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) updated members on the current situation. A fuller picture would be known once Somerset County Council had clarified their position in view of the recent budget cuts. A report would then be submitted to either the December or January District Executive meeting for consideration. Scrutiny Committee members requested to be kept informed of the situation.

In response to a member question, it was noted that the Car Parking Strategy was due to be reviewed in 2012 although the Portfolio Holder had confirmed that work to review the Strategy would begin earlier than scheduled.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Cllr Tim Carroll reminded members that a variety of bids had been submitted from the South West. Two of these bids had been successful which were the West of England bid and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly bid. Those bids that were not successful have been invited to reconfigure their proposals. The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Organisational Development said that there was an onerous on SSDC to submit a bid otherwise the Council could lose out on funding.

86. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman made no announcements.

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

Partnerships

Becky Sanders, Scrutiny Manager reported that the Review Group had met on two occasions. The Review Group was progressing well and the next meeting would be held on 25th November. The Group had listened to approximately a third of the Partnerships.

Cultural Strategy

Cllr Dave Bulmer referred to the Somerset County Council budget cuts and questioned where this would leave the Somerset Cultural Strategy. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Task and Review Group would write to the Chairman of SCC Scrutiny Committee to seek assurances over whether this area of work would be affected by the budget cuts.

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

Cllr Tim Carroll updated members on the current position of the Joint Integration Committee (JIC) following the e-mail he had circulated to members regarding the cancellation of the JIC. It was noted that the JIC was cancelled in consultation with and agreement from East Devon District Council. It was being proposed that the introduction of the shared senior management be paused so significant further savings can be made before returning to the joint management discussions next year.

Members noted that a report on Joint working with East Devon District Council would be submitted to Scrutiny Committee, District Executive and Full Council in December.

During discussion, one member raised concerns over the process followed. It was agreed that a member briefing session would be held for all members on 9th December at 10.00am in the Council Chamber with a focus on clarifying the current position and identifying lessons, which will improve the process when it is re-started in the future.

89. Finance Update (Agenda Item 9)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) referred members to the update on the Medium Term Financial Plan, which had been sent out with the District Executive agenda for 4th November 2010. She mentioned a number of issues including the following:

- There were still some unknown issues relating to concessionary fares;
- The New Homes Bonus was based upon built homes not permissions granted;
- Further work was continuing on the savings plan;
- Capital bids would be considered by District Executive in December;
- The targeted savings through the Lean Programme would be achieved by the end of the financial year.

It was agreed that a member briefing session would be held on 9th December at 11.00am in the Council Chamber to give members an opportunity to question the Portfolio Holders about future budget proposals.

Members considered the recommendations in the report in relation to car parking and season ticket charges. In response to comments and questions, members were informed of the following:

- The Council had to take a marketing approach towards car parking charges and also look at its competitors;
- There would be a huge financial risk to the Council if car park charges were to be decreased;
- The Council's car parking charges were set below its neighbouring authorities;
- A blanket approach to increasing charges had not been taken and in some car parks there were no increases proposed. Each individual car park had been looked at in detail;
- It was not effective to install change machines in car parks;
- The Council were not in a position to be able to enforce half hour parking slots;
- Parking charges were scaled in relation to the size of the settlement;
- The issue of Sunday charging was an issue still to be considered after April.

Scrutiny members endorsed the recommendations contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan report in relation to revised car parking and season ticket charges.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the report be noted; and
 - (2) That the recommendations contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan report in relation to the revised car parking and season ticket changes be endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee.

- (3) That a briefing session be held on 9th December at 11.00am in the Council Chamber to give members an opportunity to question the Portfolio Holders about future budget proposals.

*(Donna Parham, Assistant Director - Finance & Corporate Services)
(donna.Parham@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462225)*

90. Section 106 Planning Obligations (Agenda Item 10)

The Development Manager explained that 2 years ago an Audit Review was undertaken which identified a number of issues over the monitoring of Section 106 agreements and that as a result Development Management had taken over ownership of the process and created a dedicated Section 106 Monitoring Officer post.

Members were informed that a new computer system had been installed to monitor and manage Section 106 agreements and that the Audit Committee had endorsed the actions taken in respect of the monitoring of Section 106 planning obligations.

It was anticipated that a full record of all data relating to Section 106 agreements should be in place by the end of March 2011 and that quarterly monitoring reports (including a list of outstanding S106 agreements) would be submitted to Area Committees starting with Area East in December. Both financial and non-financial obligations would be monitored through the process.

Member supported the actions taken in respect of the monitoring of Section 106 planning obligations.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

*(Dave Norris, Development Manager)
(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462382)*

91. Strategic Development and Improvement Plan (Agenda Item 11)

The Leader of the Council introduced the performance monitoring report for the Strategic Improvement and Development Plan as at 31st August 2010.

The Performance Manager reported that 65% of actions were complete with four actions behind target. She referred to the demise of the Audit Commission and explained that the actions within the Plan were no longer relevant and that future reports to the Scrutiny Committee should be put on hold and considered again when further guidance from the government was known.

One member referred to page 21 of the report and the postponed action relating to Strengthening links between financial and performance reports and questioned how this would be monitored. The Strategic Director (Place and Performance) explained that this was a developmental issue and involved looking at individual services and that this would be progressed when further guidance was known. She estimated that work was likely to start in April. The member commented that it was essential to have the information and know what the costs are.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the report be noted; and
 - (2) That in view of the demise of the Audit Commission future reports to the Scrutiny Committee be put on hold until further guidance from the government is known.

*(Rina Singh, Strategic Director - Place & Performance)
(rina.singh@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462010)*

92. Update on the Wind Turbine at Yeovil Innovation Centre (Agenda Item 12)

The Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) introduced the report and explained that the Scrutiny Committee had requested an update on the electricity generated by the wind turbine, which had been provided in the report.

Members noted that the wind turbine was not generating as much electricity as originally estimated and that new improved blades would not be fitted until after October 2011. It was difficult to make any analysis on the effectiveness of the turbine using the current data as it related to a short period and there hadn't been a particularly windy period.

Councillor Tony Lock commented that if the Council were to undertake a similar project in the future that the Council should seek advice from various sources wherever possible. He questioned why the Council did not seek assurances from other companies within the area at procurement stage.

The Climate Change Officer said that at the time there was only one turbine on the accredited list that met the condition of the grant and that this would not have been achieved if it had chosen another machine.

One member questioned whether it was possible to have a wind speed monitor located close to the site. In response, the Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) commented that it was possible to install a device but it would result in a capital bid being submitted to District Executive.

The Portfolio Holder commented that there were a number of lessons to be learnt from the project and that this had been acknowledged and that the most appropriate way forward was to work with the suppliers to try and get a satisfactory machine in operation.

One member referred to the wind turbine as being an exemplar project and questioned what would be the Council's exit strategy. In response, the Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) commented that this was an Innovation Centre project in agreement with the RDA and that it was never intended to generate huge amounts of electricity. Any decision concerning an exit strategy would be a matter for the Innovation Centre Board. It was noted that the Council had only put a small amount of money into the project and that if the Council were to exit the project, it would have to pay back the capital costs. It was not costing the Council any money to keep the turbine in operation.

Members were informed that the Council would be breaking its contract with the manufacturer if they were to seek advice from another company.

The Scrutiny Committee supported the Portfolio Holder's suggestion of initiating discussions with the manufacturer over their intended course of action over the next 12 months and reported back to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the report be noted and;
 - (2) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee following discussions with the wind turbine manufacturer over their intended course of action over the next 12 months.

(Keith Wheaton Green, Climate Change Officer)
(keith.wheaton-green@southsomerset.gov.uk)

93. Verbal Update on reports considered by District Executive on 7th October 2010 (Agenda Item 13)

The comments of the Joint Scrutiny Panel endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee would be taken forward to the next JIC meeting for full consideration. This was no longer relevant as future JIC meetings had been cancelled.

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

The following comments would be taken forward to District Executive on 4th November 2010.

Update on Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/12 to 2015/16

Scrutiny members endorsed the recommendations contained within the report in relation to revised car parking and season ticket charges.

Scrutiny members agreed to hold a Special Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9th December with Portfolio Holders to discuss the wider budget proposals.

Yeovil Innovation Centre – The Way Forward

Members asked for this report to be deferred to enable Scrutiny Committee members to consider outcomes of a meeting that was due to be held on the afternoon of 2nd November.

Community Safety – Delivery Options for South Somerset District Council 20011/12

Scrutiny Committee members endorsed the recommendations contained within the report.

95. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 15)

Reference was made to the agenda report, which informed members of the Scrutiny Work Programme. The Scrutiny Manager updated members on the items due to be considered at the meeting on 30th November as follows:

- LSP Annual Report – Saveria Moss, LSP Co-ordinator
- Call In of Portfolio Holder decision “to confirm that there is currently no need to create any designated areas under Article 4 within the District as those requiring planning permission to convert dwelling homes into Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Open Spaces Strategy – Steve Joel, Assistant Director (Health and Well-being)
- Reports on the Redundancy Policy and Joint Working with East Devon District Council would be considered as part of the District Executive reports.

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

(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager)
(Emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462566)

96. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 16)

With reference to the report to December District Executive on the New Executive Arrangements, it was noted that 12 responses had been received to the public consultation exercise. The Council was proposing to continue to operate the Leader and Cabinet Executive model.

The Scrutiny Manager commented that she was proposing to arrange a Somerset joint scrutiny meeting to consider the Joint Municipal Waste Minimisation Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Forward Plan be noted as outlined in the District Executive agenda for 4th November.

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

97. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 17)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 30th November 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