

Scrutiny Committee – 4th January 2011

1. Minutes

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of the meeting held on **Tuesday 30th November 2010** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

John Calvert	John Richardson
Geoff Clarke	Keith Ronaldson
Carol Goodall	Alan Smith
Pat Martin	Martin Wale
Roy Mills (until 12 noon)	

Also Present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Jo Roundell Greene, Ric Pallister, Sylvia Seal and Peter Seib

Officers:

Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities) and Area Development Manager (East)
Saveria Moss	LSP Coordinator
Mike Holliday	HR Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

Also Present:

Paull Robathan, Chairman of the LSP

98. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

99. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dave Bulmer, Tony Lock and Angie Singleton.

100. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor John Calvert declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 13 – Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4th November 2010 with reference to Transfer of Sport & Leisure Facilities – Selection of Preferred Bidder, as he was a representative on the Wincanton Community Sports Centre Board. He left the room for the duration of the item.

101. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

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

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

Call in of Portfolio Holder Decision taken by Councillor Ric Pallister on 1st October 2010 – Update on changes to Planning Legislation affecting Houses in Multiple Occupation

The Chair informed members that this item would not now be considered at this meeting. The Portfolio Holder decision as published was in fact a decision not to initiate an Article 4 designation. The Portfolio Holder has since agreed to wait and see what evidence comes forward from work currently being commissioned by Area South and will then revisit this issue if necessary.

Yeovil Innovation Centre – The Way Forward

It was noted that the report deferred at the November District Executive meeting was likely to be considered at the January meeting.

Wind Turbine

It was noted that at the present time the turbine was in operation and that a further report would be brought forward to members at an appropriate time.

Joint Municipal Waste Minimisation Strategy

Members noted that a date for a Somerset Joint Scrutiny meeting had not yet been arranged.

103. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman and Vice Chairman would be attending a South West Councils Scrutiny Network meeting on 10th December 2010 in Weston Super Mare to give a presentation on the County Partnership and the findings of the Choice Based Lettings Review. It was noted that the Review would be used as a tool on the Centre for Public Scrutiny Website.

Members were informed that the Chairman would be attending a Somerset County Council Budget Scrutiny Exercise meeting to be held at County Hall on 14th December. The meeting would discuss SCC proposed cuts to the Library Service and Adult Social

Care. Carol Goodall agreed to attend the meeting as the Lib Dem representative. A representative from the Independent Group was also invited to attend.

All members were encouraged to attend the Special Scrutiny Session on 9th December to consider Lessons Learnt from the East Devon Partnership Experience and Budget Proposals.

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

Partnerships

Cllr Martin Wale reported that the Review was progressing well and that all the partnerships were being put into various categories using a specific template. The next meeting would be held on 16th December.

105. Local Strategic Partnership: South Somerset Together – Annual Review (Agenda Item 8)

Paull Robathan, Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) introduced the item. He referred to the issue of changing times ahead and despite some authorities retreating from Strategic Partnerships and SCC withdrawing all future funding there were some areas of work that needed to continue through a partnership approach such as Community Safety Action Panels (Crime & Disorder Reduction Panel). Reference was made to South Somerset being the only district putting a lot of strength behind its Partnership. As a result of a recent meeting held between the districts, most authorities were now going back on their previous decision to abandon their partnerships and have decided to keep them in operation.

Reference was made to the Government setting up the new health agenda and that LSP's had been specifically mentioned in overseeing wellbeing.

Members were informed that senior partners of the LSP considered the Partnership to be really important and felt meetings needed to step up to a more strategic level and be shorter and more focussed. The LSP would be holding additional meetings, the first one of which is to be 10th December 2010.

Helen Rutter, Assistant Director (Communities), Head of Service for Area Development (Area East) and Lead Officer for the LSP reported that the LSP had been focussing on the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy (which the Council has a statutory responsibility for) and that the majority of Partners were committed to its delivery. She outlined some of the activities of the LSP over the last year and particularly mentioned the following:

- The LSP had played an active role in South Somerset's process for developing the four proposals submitted to the Local Government Association under the Sustainable Communities Act, three of these proposals are being moved forward;
 - The LSP had supported a range of activities including: a voluntary and community sector database, refurbishing the Milford Hall so as to act as a new community centre "hub" for local services and the funding for a project Officer to deliver programmes, work around voluntary and community transport, green business project, tree mapping and community woodlands pack, affordable housing sites methodology;
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- The LSP was recognised as an excellent partnership and had achieved best Local Strategic Partnership in the country for 2010 in the Community Partnership Awards;
- In the difficult times ahead, the LSP would be looking to focus on narrower and more specific issues.

The Chairman thanked Paull Robathan, Helen Rutter and Saveria Moss for attending the meeting.

Councillor Ric Pallister referred to the Supporting People budget cuts affecting a number of services including district councils, PCT, Mental Health and the Probation Service and it was likely that some organisations would be unable to continue providing their services. The need to work with partners through the LSP was greater than ever in these uncertain and changing times.

The Leader of the Council referred to the value of the LSP and that it was a vital partnership particularly in view of the change agenda.

In response to a question regarding budgetary constraints and monitoring outcomes, the Chairman of the LSP referred to the annual report having a strong reference to all budgets. The LSP regularly evaluates all its budgets and programmes, and has a very good trail of where money is received from and used.

Comments were made about the majority of projects/partners being Yeovil focussed. In response, members were informed that the LSP has a cross section of membership and some of these organisations' headquarters just happen to be based in Yeovil. One of the key projects this year was Yeovil based but overall the partnership delivered programmes across the district and is not just Yeovil specific. The Milford project was a pilot in the Yeovil area but it was hoped that it could be replicated in other parts of the district.

One member questioned whether any of the projects would still happen if there was no LSP and could the second homes income be used elsewhere and to better use? She also referred to members not being aware of the work of the LSP. In response, the Chairman of the LSP commented that the biggest achievement of the LSP was getting all principals of major organisations to know each other and work together in partnership. None of the projects would have got off the ground without the LSP and if it was removed it was likely to result in conflict and duplication of work. Other District LSPs in Somerset were envious of South Somerset having an LSP Co-ordinator and the ability of coordinating and completing programmes and projects.

In response to a member question, the Assistant Director (Communities) and Head of Service for Area Development (Area East) informed members that the second homes income was used to fund the LSP Co-ordinator and the costs of running the Partnership. She explained about the role of the LSP in pump-priming projects to bring in external funding and mentioned the Milford Hall Project as an example. The LSP was the mechanism for making things happen, but sometimes it could be too invisible.

One member referred to the LSP loosing half of its core funding and whether it would be able to survive. In response, members were informed that withdrawal of funding would leave a shortfall but Partners were fully committed to continuing with the partnership during these difficult and uncertain times. The success of the LSP could be measured by the number of partners attending meetings, participating in programmes and that they have said that they get more value from it than they gave the partnership.

The Leader of the Council commented that the function of the LSP was not always totally visible but the added value was immense. He referred to cohesion between all the major organisations in the area creating a greater understanding between partners and that if this did not happen at a district level it would be difficult to re-create.

Rather than holding a members' workshop as suggested by one member, the Chairman of the LSP commented that it would be more useful for members to attend the LSP AGM and see and hear from its Partners.

One member commented that she was unaware of the work of the LSP until being informed at the meeting and suggested that an induction session on the role of the LSP be given for new members starting in May 2011.

Members were informed that the Leader and the four Area Chairs were members of LSP Board, as it was felt important that the Area Committees are aware of their work. All members were urged to attend one of the LSP's future meetings. It was suggested that meetings of the LSP be published in the weekly index circulated to members.

The LSP Chairman commented that he was happy to produce documentation stating what the LSP has achieved and what it is looking to do in the next 12 months to include the quantifiable achievements of the Partnership.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the progress of the Local Strategic Partnership in delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2026) and its achievement of Best Local Strategic Partnership in the country for 2010 in the Community Partnership Awards be noted;
 - (2) That the LSP produce a document outlining the quantifiable achievements of the Partnership; and
 - (3) That a session on the role of the LSP be included in the induction programme for new members following the elections in 2011.

(Saveria Moss, LSP Coordinator)
(saveria.moss@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01963 435004)

106. Finance Update (Agenda Item 9)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) updated members on the current position of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the impact of recent government announcements and consultation papers. Members noted the following:

- The greatest risks remain that the savings from the Revenue Support Grant will be front-loaded and of the impact of the transfer of concessionary fares to the County Council could have an impact of adding £1/2 million to the savings target. It is expected that the RSG announcement will be delayed until 9th December;
- Universal Credits – the white paper had been published outlining that “Universal Credits” will be administered by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP). This will mean that housing benefits will gradually transfer to the DWP starting in 2013 and fully by 2017;
- Officers have been trying to assess the impact of the cuts that Somerset County Council have put forward on SSDC services;

- Planning Fees – a consultation has been released for the possibility of local setting of planning fees based on full cost recovery;
- A letter had been sent to parish and town councils outlining the issues regarding the County's cuts and whether the town and parish councils may want to cover any areas.

With regard to the transfer of concessionary fares, Members were informed that the Council was lobbying through the government and local MP's.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

Donna Parham, Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)
(donna.parham@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462225)

107. Changes to SSDC Redundancy Policy (Agenda Item 10)

The HR Manager presented the report and outlined the recommendations. He informed members that if District Executive were to agree the changes there would be no further reviews to the multiplier until after 1st January 2013.

Members were informed that both Unison and GMB had been invited to attend the meeting and that both have approved the changes to the policy and had no issues to bring to member's attention.

In response to a member question, it was noted that the Policy included recognition of long service.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations contained within the report outlining changes to the current Redundancy and Severance Pay Policy be supported by the Scrutiny Committee.

Mike Holliday, HR Manager
(mike.holliday@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462161)

108. The Future of Working with East Devon District Council (Agenda Item 11)

Members were reminded that this issue would be discussed at the Special Scrutiny Session. Comments raised at the meeting would be forwarded to the Full Council meeting on 9th December.

Mark Williams, Chief Executive
(m.williams@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462101)

109. Verbal Update on Reports considered by District Executive on 4th November 2010 (Agenda Item 12)

There were no updates to report.

110. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 2nd December 2010 (Agenda Item 13)

Transfer of Sport & Leisure Facilities – Selection of Preferred Bidder

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, Councillor John Calvert left the room.

The Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being) informed members that the report would no longer be considered at the District Executive meeting on 2nd December, as further work was required on completing the financial appraisal. A Special District Executive meeting would be scheduled on 9th December to consider the report to allow the strict timescales of ensuring a successful transfer of sport and leisure facilities commences on 1st April 2011.

Members were updated on the stages of the evaluation process and noted that the next stage was to select the preferred bidder.

It was agreed to hold a special Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9th December at 1.00pm to consider the report.

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 2nd 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?

On several occasions, the Scrutiny Committee have been told that some performance indicators are inappropriate and can unduly influence our activity, the demise of the Audit Commission should therefore be an excellent opportunity to ensure that future performance measures are more relevant for local service delivery. The Scrutiny Committee would like to know what work is planned to devise more appropriate local performance indicators and the timescale for this work.

New Executive Arrangements (December 2010)

Members felt that if a similar consultation exercise were carried out in future it should only be residents of South Somerset that can respond.

Regeneration of Yeovil Town Centre

Members felt that it would have been useful for a map of the site to be included in the agenda report for those members who are not familiar with the area.

Area North Accommodation Review

Members supported an amendment to recommendation 3a to read as follows:

Authorise the Area Development Manager North to secure and maintain suitable temporary arrangement, pending the outcome of these temporary arrangements and a fuller investigation of all potential partners.

Maintain the current interim arrangements for Area North staff (front office service from Langport LIC, and the remainder of Area North staff working from a base at Petters Way

and the Somerton Community Office), pending a fuller evaluation of the potential to share an SCC library.

111. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 14)

Reference was made to the agenda report, which informed members of the Scrutiny Work Programme. The Scrutiny Manager updated members on items to be added to the Work Programme as follows:

- Staff Volunteering Scheme Policy – it had been suggested that the Scrutiny Committee considers establishing a Task & Finish Group to create an SSDC Staff Volunteering Scheme/Policy. A report and scoping exercise will be included in the February Scrutiny agenda.
- The Open Spaces Strategy was likely to be considered at the January meeting.

Members agreed to still consider the annual review of savings achieved from working with East Devon District Council as a monitoring item at the February meeting.

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)

112. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 15)

Members noted that District Executive and Full Council were due to consider reports on Our Targets Insert to the Corporate Plan and the Review of the Car Park Strategy. It was felt that Scrutiny should also consider these reports.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Forward Plan be noted as outlined in the District Executive agenda for 2nd December 2010.

113. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 16)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 4th January 2011 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