

## South Somerset District Council

**Draft minutes** of the meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil

*(10.00 a.m. – 1.15 p.m.)*

### **Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer  
John Calvert  
Geoff Clarke  
Carol Goodall  
Tony Lock  
Pat Martin

Roy Mills (until 12.45 p.m.)  
Keith Ronaldson  
Angie Singleton  
Alan Smith  
Martin Wale

### **Also Present:**

Councillors Ric Pallister, Lesley Boucher, Jo Roundell Greene, Tom Parsley, Tony Fife and Sylvia Seal.

### **Officers:**

Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus)
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Bruce Soord	Spatial Systems Manager
Jo Morgan	Community Cohesion Officer
Sue Eaton	Performance Manager
Alice Knight	Third Sector and Partnerships Manager
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities) and Area Development Manager (East)
Kim Close	Area Development Manager - South
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

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### **146. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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### **147. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr John Richardson.

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### **148. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

Councillor Alan Smith declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSSC Partnerships, as a member of Yeovil Town Council.

Councillor Tony Lock declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSDC Partnerships, as a member of Yeovil Town Council and Mendip and South Somerset Community Safety Partnership.

Councillor Pat Martin declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSDC Partnerships, as a member of Yeovil Town Council and Yeovil Town Centre Partnership.

Councillor Angie Singleton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSDC Partnerships, as a member of Crewkerne Aqua Centre, Market Towns Investment Group and the Area Community Safety Action Panel.

Councillor Dave Bulmer declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSDC Partnerships, as a member of the Market Towns Investment Group, Chard Town Council and Chard Regeneration Scheme (Chard Vision).

Councillor Carol Goodall declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSDC Partnerships, as a member of the Market Towns Investment Group.

Councillor Martin Wale declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSDC Partnerships, as a member of Chard Regeneration Scheme (Chard Vision).

Councillor Sue Steele declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSDC Partnerships, as a member of the Area Community Safety Action Panel.

Councillor Geoff Clarke declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 – SSDC Partnerships, as a member of Crewkerne Aqua Centre.

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#### **149. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)**

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

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#### **150. Issues Arising from Previous Meetings (Agenda Item 5)**

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

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#### **151. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

The Chairman announced that the call-in of the Somerset Waste Board Decision would be heard on 7<sup>th</sup> March at 2.30pm in Bridgwater. The meeting would be a Joint Scrutiny briefing of members from across the County. The meeting would not be open to the public but members were welcome to attend. Each authority had been asked to nominate 2 members to attend. It was agreed that Councillors Sue Steele and Angie Singleton would attend on behalf of SSDC.

The Chairman reported that the Audit Committee had requested a report from the South West Audit Partnership with regard to the issue of Severance Pay and the recent media coverage. Members of the Scrutiny Committee are welcome to attend the Audit Committee meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March to participate in the discussion.

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

Members considered the report from the Employee Volunteering Scheme Task and Finish Review and agreed with the recommendation that it is not appropriate to proceed with an Employee Volunteering Scheme at this time for the reasons outlined in the report.

**RESOLVED:** That it is not appropriate to proceed with an Employee Volunteering Scheme at this time for the reasons outlined in the report.

*(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager)*

*(emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462566)*

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## 153. SSDC Website Review (Agenda Item 8)

The Chairman welcomed Bruce Soord, Spatial Systems Manager to the meeting.

Members received a demonstration on the SSDC website. The Spatial Systems Manager was using a net book to give an indication of the speed of the website without using a broadband connection.

During the demonstration, members noted the following:

- There were some severe slowdowns for people using the website in the evening (approx 9.00pm). The Spatial Systems Manager was in the process of addressing the problem with ICT. During the day there did not appear to be any speed problems;
- Images on the homepage can make the website slower. To improve this issue the google map will be replaced with an image to make the homepage less bulky.
- The Strategic Director (Place & Performance) commented that she had accessed the website aboard through a mobile network and it had worked very well and that the problems appeared to be with broadband;
- The management of the website was undertaken in-house. It had previously been outsourced but was much better managed in-house;
- One member expressed problems with Outlook express not responding on his computer. The Spatial Systems Manager agreed to raise this issue with ICT;
- One member commented that she was unable to make multiple bookings on the Octagon website. In response, the Spatial Systems Manager said that the website was still run using the old design and that he was speaking with Steve Joel, Assistant Director (Health & Well-being) about making improvements to the site;
- The statistics show that a high proportion of people access planning. As part of lean, a number of enhancements have been made to the website. There was now a window on the homepage that enables people to carry out a planning search straight away;
- There was an improved results page for planning which enabled users to change the order of results;
  - Members were able to register for the planning weekly list;
  - One member commented that there were sometimes delays with planning applications being available on the web. (Members receive notification of a planning application in their ward by e-mail and informed that they should be available on the website within 24 hours of receiving the email). In response, the Spatial Systems Manager said that sometimes there could be delays in planning

admin because of the scanning backlog, however it had been better since changes to the planning pages had been implemented;

- Members were given a summary of the enhancements introduced as part of lean such as the mapping page where users can link to property information and the property history report;
- Members were informed that there had been 800 renewals for green waste bins on-line;
- One member commented that it would be useful to have a map on the website showing ward information. The Spatial Systems Manager said that he could look to incorporate the ward information into the map on the homepage;
- One member commented that he was very impressed with the on-line temporary event notice application facility. Another member felt that it would be useful to make members aware of this facility through issuing a press release;
- One member felt that the presentation would be useful to all members as part of the new member induction programme.

The Strategic Director (Place & Performance) noted that by taking the management of the website in-house a saving of £80,000 had been made and the work undertaken was a credit to the Spatial Systems Team.

The Chairman thanked the Spatial Systems Manager for attending the meeting.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the update report on the SSDC Website Review be noted;
  - (2) That the comments raised by members during the website demonstration be noted and taken forward by the Spatial Systems Manager.

*(Bruce Soord, Spatial Systems Manager)*  
*(bruce.soord@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462638)*

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## **154. Single Equality Scheme Progress Report (Agenda Item 9)**

The Community Cohesion Officer introduced the report, which outlined progress on the implementation of the Single Equalities Scheme Action Plan and the implications of the Equality Act 2010.

With regard to the implications of the new Equality Act, members noted that it will change how information is presented in the future and the new equality objectives will need to be set by April 2012.

During consideration of the item, members raised a number of issues concerning the contents of the report. Members made a request for a key to be included on future reports explaining the status colour of each of the key tasks and for a publication date to be included on the action plan.

In response to a member query concerning the financial implications of the report, Members were informed that there were no additional costs associated with the report. The training referred to in the Action Plan had been provided at no cost to the authority. The Strategic Director (Place & Performance) explained that the Council had a duty to train its staff on equality issues and that this was also part of developing good staff and was identified as a separate cost. The Community Cohesion Officer provides the majority of equalities training to staff.

Reference was made to page 16 of the report and in particular Key Task No SES1.04 and the performance measure of Area Vice Chairs to capture common equality or diversity issues and to feed them through to the Community Cohesion Officer. Cllr Pat Martin, speaking as Vice Chairman of Area South, commented that she was unaware of this action and suggested that it be included as part of the new member induction programme. The Community Cohesion Officer commented that this action would also be taken forward by her attending the Area Committee meetings.

The Community Cohesion Officer agreed to provide members with the definitive list of protected characteristics as referred to on page 13 of the report.

During discussion, members recommended that a Task and Finish Group be established to work with officers in ensuring SSDC is compliant with the new requirements under the Equality Act. It was agreed that the Community Cohesion Officer would contact the Scrutiny Manager to advise when would be the most appropriate time in order to fit in with her work programme.

In response to a member comment, the Community Cohesion Officer explained about the work undertaken by the Community Link Worker with the Polish and Portuguese communities. These nationalities had been identified as being the largest number in the local community needing support. There were also systems in place to support and provide translation to people who speak different languages e.g. Language Line. For leaflets circulated about equality, there are always a couple of sentences included in other languages.

One member queried the need to include the paragraph in reports relating to Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications. In response, the Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) said that the Government still require the council to comment about its green issues and carbon emissions. It was also an issue that members should be aware of in order to stop costs escalating.

Members noted that the report showed that good progress is being made in delivering and achieving the Councils equality aims through key tasks in the action plan.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That progress of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan be noted.
  - (2) That the Community Cohesion Officer contact the Scrutiny Manager at an appropriate time to establish a Task and Finish Group to ensure that SSDC is compliant with the new requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

*(Jo Morgan, Community Cohesion Officer)*  
*(jo.morgan@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462297)*

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## 155. Update on Sort It Plus Service (Agenda Item 10)

The Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) introduced the report, which updated members on the roll out of Sort It Plus Service across South Somerset. Members were informed that the first phase of the service was rolled out to a third of the district in October. The second phase was starting imminently with all eligible households in the district being on the service by the end of March 2011. Members noted that the service had also been rolled out in the Mendip area. The staff responsible for delivering

the boxes had done an excellent job with the project timescales being on target and also within budget.

Members were informed that the Government issues a fine for every tonne of waste that is sent to landfill and therefore the collection of recyclable materials was cheaper to the council taxpayer than sending it to landfill.

The Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) commented that communication to residents has been essential in the roll out of the service. Only one letter of complaint had been received out of 72,000 households within the district. The information being delivered to residents reminds them of what can be recycled and there is also a video available to watch on the Somerset Waste Partnership website.

During consideration of the report, Members made the following comments:

- It was pleasing to see information regarding the timescale of the roll out on the Council's website;
- The letter circulated to parish and town councils from the Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) had been referred to at a recent parish council meeting demonstrating that communication and publicity of the roll out was working well;
- Cllr Tony Lock commented that his ward was within Phase one of the roll out which had gone extremely well with no problems. He hoped that this would be the case for the remainder of the district.

In response to a member question concerning the bring banks located at Lyde Road in Yeovil, the Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) reported that they had been kept in operation for longer than anticipated but had now been removed.

Members noted that there was information available on the Somerset Waste Partnership about where waste is recycled including a copy of the end use register.

**RESOLVED:** That the progress made to date on the roll out of the Sort It Plus Service and the plans for Phase 2 of the roll out be noted.

*(Vega Sturgess, Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus)  
(vega.sturgess@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462200)*

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### **156. Verbal Update on reports considered by District Executive on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2011 (Agenda Item 11)**

There were no Scrutiny comments taken forward to District Executive on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2011.

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### **157. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 (Agenda Item 12)**

Members considered the reports contained in the District Executive agenda for 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011.

The Chairman agreed to take the following comments forward to District Executive.

## Revised Delivery Structures for Community Safety in Somerset

Members discussed the importance of retaining the Local Action Panels. The Panels work well and allow local issues to be responded to in a timely way and at a very local level.

## Open Space Strategy

With reference to appendix G and H - What is the definition of a green corridor and a natural open space?

## Councillor Induction Programme

Members suggested the following amendments to the Councillor Induction Programme:

- planning training to be compulsory for all members
- the tour of Brympton Way to be earlier on in the programme. Tours could be given following some of the early sessions
- IT training and issuing of laptops to be earlier on in the programme

## 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 Paragraph 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Act, i.e. "Information relating to the financial business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

## Loan to Crewkerne Town Council

On page 55 of the report should the wording under 'The Loan Request Detail' read interest only rather than interest free?

Further clarification needed on Crewkerne Town Council's commitment to repayment of the loan.

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## 158. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

The item on Community Transport due to be considered on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011 was no longer required at the current time. Members noted that in response to Members commented raised at the February Area North Committee on the impact of the reduction in bus subsidies and services as announced by First Bus and Somerset County Council, the Area Development Manager (North) would be providing further information to the Area North Committee in due course.

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

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



### 159. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 14)

The Committee noted the details of the District Executive Forward Plan as attached to the agenda for the meeting to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011.

**RESOLVED:** That the Executive Forward Plan be noted as outlined in the District Executive agenda for 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011.

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

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### 160. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 15)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 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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The Chairman changed the order of the agenda. The following item was considered prior to Agenda Item 12 - Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011

### 161. Exclusion of the Press and 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 items in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Act, i.e. "Information relating to the financial business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)."

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### 162. SSDC Partnerships (Agenda Item 16)

The Chairman thanked members of the Task and Finish Review Group, Becky Sanders, Scrutiny Manager and Alice Knight, Third Sector & Partnerships Manager for all their hard work on the review.

Councillor Martin Wale introduced the report, which outlined the findings of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group responsible for reviewing and rationalising SSDC partnerships. He explained that the main purpose of the review was to establish whether each of the partnerships identified should remain on the SSDC Partnerships Register.

Following a lengthy discussion with regard to a number of the Partnerships, Members went through the Partnership recommendations on a one by one basis and agreed each of the recommendations as outlined in the report.

**RESOLVED:** (1) That the recommendations of the SSDC Partnerships Task and Finish Review Group be supported by the Scrutiny Committee as outlined in the agenda report;



- (2) That the recommendations be presented to the April District Executive meeting.

*(Alice Knight, Third Sector & Partnerships Manager)*  
*(alice.knight@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01963 435061)*

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Chairman