

Scrutiny Committee – 1st March 2011

1. Minutes

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of the meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 1st February 2011** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil

(10.00 a.m. – 12.05 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer
Carol Goodall
Pat Martin
John Richardson

Keith Ronaldson
Angie Singleton
Alan Smith
Martin Wale

Also Present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Ric Pallister, Sylvia Seal, Robin Munday, Tom Parsley and Nigel Mermagen

Officers:

Mark Williams	Chief Executive
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus)
Steve Joel	Assistant Director (Health and Well-Being)
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

130. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th January 2011, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

131. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Geoff Clarke and Tony Lock.

132. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Tim Carroll declared an interest in Agenda Item 13 – Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3rd February in respect of item 11 – Transfer of Sport and Leisure Facilities – Selection Preferred Bidder, as he was an observer on the Wincanton Community Sports Centre Board.

133. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

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

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

Open Spaces Strategy

Members noted that following the comments made by Scrutiny, the Open Spaces Strategy report had been deferred by District Executive and would be considered by Scrutiny Committee as part of the District Executive Papers at a later date.

135. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reported that she had received a letter from the Homefinder Review Board thanking Scrutiny and in particular Cllr Carol Goodall for all the hard work undertaken on the Choice Based Letting Review. The Group had taken on many of the recommendations, which will have a significant and positive effect in meeting the needs of the community.

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

Partnerships

Cllr Martin Wale, Chairman of the Task and Finish Review reported that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 3rd February. The Group had finished reviewing and categorising each of the partnerships. The final report would be considered by Scrutiny in March.

137. Site Management Issues – Park Homes Project (Agenda Item 8)

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) and the Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing and Spatial Planning were in attendance for this item. It was noted that when the decision to go ahead with the Park Homes Project was agreed by members last year, it was agreed that the issue of site management would be brought back to members at a later date. This was an opportunity for Scrutiny members to discuss with the lead officer and Portfolio Holder the policy for managing the Park Homes sites and any general issues that have been encountered to date.

Members were informed of the following points:

- The project was completed at the Ilton and Tintinhull sites and all residents had been accommodated;
 - The transformation in quality of environment has been phenomenal;
 - The Homeless and Welfare Team were still responsible for managing the sites;
 - The current position of SCC owned gypsy sites;
 - At the current time there will be no change in the site management arrangements;
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- The Council had recently selected five Housing Associations as main partners. As part of the process they had been asked for their views on the management of gypsy sites and how they saw their role as community leaders.

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) and the Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing and Spatial Planning responded to members' questions and comments.

The following points were noted:

- The management of sites would never be perfect and the sites would always remain fragile;
- There was a real sense of ownership on the sites which had never existed previously;
- If management of the sites were to be transferred to a RSL, the cost to the Council was not expected to be any more than at the present time;
- A feasibility exercise had not yet been undertaken and was not scheduled for the near future;
- The management of the sites was improving gradually, however, there was still some work to do but. There was significant improvement compared to 18 months ago;
- The sites were cleaner, there was less vandalism, rent and water rates were being paid by residents;
- The PSCO had a good relationship with the residents and regularly visits the sites;
- There was now flexibility to place families quickly;
- It was hoped that full cost recovery would be achieved;
- There were site management policies and procedures in place which could be provided to members;
- Residents were required to sign a licence rent agreement before they receive the keys;
- The majority of residents were permanent;
- If residents don't adhere to the rent agreement, the Council would go through the normal eviction procedures;
- Residents on the Tintinhull site were taking a stronger sense of ownership and discussing the possibility of a residents association where as previously they were not prepared to engage.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) and the Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing and Spatial Planning for attending the meeting.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the update on site management issues and the progress made by the Homeless and Welfare Team be noted;
 2. That the Scrutiny Committee receives 12 monthly updates on the site management of the Gypsy Park Homes at Ilton and Tintinhull.

(Steve Joel, Strategic Director (Health & Well-Being))
(steve.joel@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462278)

138. Budget Setting Reports (Agenda Item 9)

Members considered the following reports as outlined in the District Executive agenda for 3rd February 2011:

- 2010/11 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December 2010
- 2010/11 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December 2010
- Revenue Budget 2011/12 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Revised Capital Programme

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Legal Services commented that the formation of the budget had been an ongoing process throughout 2010. It was a very transparent budget and bearing in mind the current climate was very successful.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) detailed the amendments to the Government grant level recalculations received earlier that week. The report would be updated for Full Council on 17th February 2011. It was noted that overall the budget hadn't changed to that presented. She drew members' attention to the risks associated with the budget as detailed in paragraph 44 of the agenda report.

Members noted that balances of £96,600 would be used in 2011/12 and that this was nothing untoward bearing in mind the current circumstances.

One member questioned whether the Community Play Bus could be saved from the budget cuts, as the service was considered invaluable in the rural areas. In response, the Leader of the Council commented that the Council was exploring possibilities of the Community Bus being taken on by another organisation and the service delivered in a different way.

In response to a member question regarding the LSP budget of £82,000, it was noted that this figure included the cost of the 2nd homes money (£48,000) and contributions from Somerset County Council and other organisations for project work.

One member felt that the document was very clear, however members of the public may not understand some of the terminology and that this needed to be addressed in the future. The Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) commented that the suggested changes could be linked in with the Corporate Plan.

Members received further details about each of the new inescapable commitments listed on page 22 of the budget booklet 2011/12.

Members noted that there would be regular budget updates so that members can monitor the achievement of savings.

Scrutiny members were content with the recommendations, position and process as outlined in the budget setting reports.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations contained within the following reports as outlined in the District Executive agenda for 3rd February 2011 be supported by the Scrutiny Committee:

- 2010/11 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December 2010
- 2010/11 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December 2010
- Revenue Budget 2011/12 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Revised Capital Programme

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

139. Partnership Working – Savings (Agenda Item 10)

In response to the Scrutiny Committee's request, Members received a report from the Chief Executive outlining savings achieved to date through partnership working.

It was noted that members would be asked to revisit the issue of partnership working and decide upon any further proposals after the District Council elections in May 2011.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the report be noted;
 2. That the Scrutiny Committee be kept informed of any developments on joint working that may arise between now and the District Council elections in May 2011.

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

140. Verbal Update from the Local Strategic Partnership (South Somerset Together) meeting held on 21st January 2011 (Agenda Item 11)

The Chairman updated members on the meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership (South Somerset Together) she had recently attended on 21st January 2011.

141. Verbal Update on Reports considered by District Executive on 6th January 2011 (Agenda Item 12)

District Executive agreed to continue to subscribe to South West Councils and the Chair of Scrutiny requested that the Leader lobbied South West Councils to continue to provide the SW Scrutiny Network and that this would be funded as part of the subscription fee.

District Executive agreed with the recommendations of Scrutiny regarding CPE and the extension of the Waste Collection contract.

142. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3rd February 2011 (Agenda Item 13)

Members considered the reports contained in the District Executive agenda for 3rd February 2011.

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 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).

Transfer of Sport and Leisure Facilities – Selection of Preferred Bidder

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) introduced the report and outlined the evaluation criteria and process, a summary of the bids and the reasons for recommending the preferred bidder.

During the ensuing discussion, the Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) answered members' questions on points of detail. Members noted the following:

- The financial, technical and human resources available through the preferred bidder delivered the lowest risk solution to SSDC;
- The Council was still waiting for confirmation over the new lease for St Michael's Hall. Should formal consent not be agreed, the Hall would be removed from the transfer. This would have no impact on the financial implications.
- Repairs and maintenance would come under the responsibility of SSDC;
- Formal quarterly monitoring would be undertaken. There would be an annual review process that would be reported to District Executive;
- A condition survey was undertaken by Property Services and was provided to both bidders. A 10-year plan would also be finalised and attached to the contract;
- The timescales were achievable with the transfer to take place from midnight on 31st March;
- The contractor was required to take out appropriate insurance to cover the risk of closure of the facility;
- The car park was not part of the transfer. Arrangements were in place for free parking for annual memberships and staff and this would remain the same.

Members supported the selection of the preferred bidder as outlined in the report for the future management of Goldenstones Pools and Leisure Centre and St Michaels Hall.

Legal Dispute

There were no particular issues/comments raised by Scrutiny to go forward to District Executive.

143. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 14)

Reference was made to the agenda report, which informed members of the Scrutiny Work Programme. Members noted the items for consideration at the March meeting as follows:

- Website Review – it was noted that a number of comments had been received from members. Bruce Soord, Spatial Systems Manager would attend the meeting and have the website up and running on screen.
- Community Transport – it was noted that a report was due to be considered by Area North in February. The Scrutiny Manager would assess whether a report was still required following the outcome of this meeting.
- Update on Sort It Plus
- Single Equality Scheme Progress report – members requested the report to include the implications of the new Equality Act.

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)

144. Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 15)

The Committee noted the details of the District Executive Forward Plan as attached to the agenda for the meeting to be held on 3rd February 2011.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Forward Plan be noted as outlined in the District Executive agenda for 3rd February 2011.

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

145. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 16)

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