

Scrutiny Committee – 2nd August 2011

1. Minutes

South Somerset District Council

Draft minutes of the meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 5th July 2011** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 11.10 a.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer
John Calvert
Pauline Lock
Tony Lock
Paul Maxwell

Graham Oakes
Wes Read
Martin Wale
Colin Winder

Also Present:

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

Officers:

Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Sue Eaton	Performance Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Jo Morris	Committee Administrator

12. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 31st May 2011 were approved as a correct record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

13. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cathy Bakewell, Carol Goodall, Tim Inglefield and Linda Vijeh.

14. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

15. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

17. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reported that she and Cllr Carol Goodall had attended the Centre for Public Scrutiny Good Scrutiny Awards in London and that Cllr Carol Goodall had deservedly won the Non-Executive Member of the Year category in recognition of the work towards a review of the way people in Somerset find and apply for social housing. Formal thanks were also expressed to Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager for her work and commitment towards the project.

18. Verbal Update on Reports Considered by District Executive on 2nd June 2011 (Agenda Item 7)

Cllr Dave Bulmer reported back on the meeting of the District Executive held on 2nd June 2011. Members noted the following:

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report

Several members had expressed their concern at the increase in fly tipping across the district, following the changes in opening hours of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. The Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) agreed to provide a report on the situation.

Revision of the Performance Indicators and the Corporate Plan

The Strategic Director (Place and Performance) had confirmed that work had already commenced on a revision of the Performance Indicators and the Corporate Plan would follow the annual budget process and be revised then.

2010/11 Revenue Outturn Report

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) had circulated a sheet detailing SSDC's Treasury Management performance, as compared to other local authorities, which compared SSDC very favourably.

Yeovil Town Centre Management

District Executive agreed option 3 as endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee.

19. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 7th July 2011 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports contained in the District Executive agenda for 7th July 2011.

Portfolio Statements and Annual Performance 2010/11

The Performance Manager introduced the report and drew Members' attention to the performance of activities within the Corporate Plan; the actions achieved within the Portfolio Statements and the National Indicator comparisons. She advised that some performance indicators had been withdrawn and that an overall straight comparison of data with the previous year was therefore not appropriate.

Members sought clarification as to whether there were any definite plans and a timetable for a review of the Corporate Plan and the process for deciding the Council's priorities and at what point would non-Executive members get involved in the process. The Strategic Director (Place & Performance) confirmed that discussions were taking place with Managers and Portfolio Holders on the revision of the Performance Indicators and that she would be in a position to bring forward a report as soon as members have agreed on the Council's priorities as indicators can only be set after there is clarity on the Council's priorities. The Council's priorities would be set as part of the zero based budget exercise and that once the priorities were set work would begin on the Corporate Plan. The timescales would follow the annual budget process.

Public Fundraising Regulatory Association (PFRA) – Site Management

Members endorsed the recommendations outlined in the report and felt that the agreement was working well.

Recycling Centre Changes – An update on Usage and any Impacts on District Services

The Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) explained that this item included the papers that had been considered by the Somerset Waste Board on 22nd June and also a report on the South Somerset perspective.

The Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) updated the report and advised that the number of reported incidences of fly tipping in June 2011 was 134 and that the average monthly number of fly tips in South Somerset for April to June 2011 was 129.7.

It was hoped that the figure for green waste fly tipping would decline once more people are made aware of the changes to the opening hours.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Economic Development explained the reasons behind the reduction in opening hours and referred to the budget cuts imposed by SCC and that the Somerset Waste Board would be looking at the opening hours again in the future.

Members commented on the importance of monitoring fly tip levels. It was felt that it was too early to tell whether fly tipping was likely to be a persistent problem and that the report in September would give a better idea of the situation. One member commented that the report didn't stress that private users no longer visit the recycling centres so

often because of the Sort It Plus Collections and that this should be considered a success.

With reference to the cost sharing agreement, it was noted that proposals on the precise mechanism would be brought to the Somerset Waste Board meeting in September.

The Scrutiny Manager explained that she had been working with colleagues from the other Somerset Districts and County towards setting up Joint Scrutiny arrangements for the Somerset Waste Board.

2010/11 Treasury Management Activity Report

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) introduced the report and explained that Treasury Management was reported at Audit Committee and Council and that District Executive had requested the report for noting.

Members sought assurances on the Euro Sterling Bonds invested within the Royal Bank of Scotland are not over exposed to the risks associated with the situations in Greece and Scotland. In response, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) explained that the percentage exposed to Greece was minimal and therefore not considered to be a high risk.

Cllr Tim Carroll, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning said that the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) and her team should be congratulated on their work. He referred to the return in the short-term being good and that the advice the Council was currently receiving is very good and there was no reason to consider any changes.

Members commented on the high reliance on Euro bonds and whether this was a wise investment. Members were informed that all investments were in sterling, bonds were triple A rated, highly liquid, and that on currently purchased bonds the return was linked to a percentage the base rate.

In response to a question regarding interest rates, members were informed that predictions had changed in May which suggested the first increase would not be until December 2011 and that when the Council invests Officers always take the most up to date advice on the day.

Update and Options Report for Burlingham's Barn

Members noted that this report had been withdrawn from the District Executive agenda.

20. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 9)

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

Lean Programme – The Strategic Director (Place & Performance) would be attending the 2nd August meeting to give a presentation on how the lean programme functions and its place in the organisation.

Strategic Leisure Provision – The Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being) would be attending on 4th October to give a presentation outlining the policies and processes used to decide and allocate S106 funds for ‘strategic sport’.

Social Housing – identifying and minimising the impact of fraudulent social housing allocation – It was agreed to set up a preliminary investigation group to research whether it was appropriate to carry out a full review on this issue. Councillor John Calvert agreed to chair the group.

A special meeting reviewing Portfolio Holder Saving Plans would be held on Thursday 15th December.

The Scrutiny Manager would be asking members to join the Task and Finish Commissions for Inescapable Commitments and Capital Scoring methodology. The meetings were scheduled to take place in September and October.

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

(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager)
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21. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 10)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 2nd August 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