

Scrutiny Committee – 30th August 2011

1. Minutes

South Somerset District Council

Draft minutes of the meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on Tuesday 2nd August 2011 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 12.35 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Cathy Bakewell
David Bulmer
John Calvert

Carol Goodall
Tony Lock
Graham Oakes

Wes Read
Colin Winder
Martin Wale

Also Present:

Councillors: Tim Carroll, Henry Hobhouse, Ric Pallister, Jo Roundell Greene and Sylvia Seal

Officers:

Mark Williams
Rina Singh
Vega Sturgess
Laurence Willis
Donna Parham
Andy Foyne
Alasdair Bell
Colin McDonald
Sue Eaton
Adron Duckworth
Keith Wheaton-Green
Emily McGuinness
Becky Sanders

Chief Executive Officer
Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Assistant Director (Environment)
Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Spatial Policy Manager
Environmental Health Manager
Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Performance Manager
Conservation Manager
Climate Change Officer
Scrutiny Manager
Committee Administrator

22. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marcus Fysh, Tim Inglefield, Pauline Lock and Paul Maxwell.

24. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

25. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

27. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

A presentation was made to Becky Sanders, Committee Administrator who had been covering Jo Gale's maternity leave. The Chairman was joined by members in thanking her for the work on the partnerships review and support to the Committee.

The Chairman reminded members that the report on the efficiency review of South Somerset Together (Local Strategic Partnership) would be made to District Executive in October.

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that there would be a Scrutiny work programming session immediately following the next Scrutiny Committee on 30 August. Dates would be circulated regarding Task and Finish groups for social housing fraud, the capital strategy and inescapable bids.

28. Verbal Update on reports considered by District Executive on 7th July (Agenda Item 7)

It was reported that the District Executive had taken on board all the comments raised by Scrutiny members at the last meeting.

29. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4th August 2011 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports contained in the District Executive agenda for 4 August 2011.

Update on Ropewalk, West Coker

Members made no comments on this report.

Affordable Housing Development Programme

The Corporate Strategic Housing Manager introduced the report and commented that it was similar to what had gone to the Area Committees. He drew members attention to the

one item for decision, the re-allocation of funds from the Hastoe Scheme at Tatworth and Forton to create a rural exception scheme fund. It was explained by the Leader/Portfolio Holder that the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) were unlikely to fund rural schemes in the future and the proposal to re-allocate the money would help bridge the gap for rural exception schemes.

Members endorsed the recommendations outlined in the report.

Amendments to the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010-12 Loans Policy

The Assistant Director (Environment) introduced the report as shown in the agenda.

Members sought clarification on the interest rates stated in the covering report as they differed from those indicated in the appendix. The Assistant Director (Environment) confirmed that the current rates were 4% as indicated in the report as they had recently changed, and that the wording in the appendix would be updated. In response to further questions, the Leader/Portfolio Holder explained that property could not be used as security when giving loans to Gypsies and Travellers but land could. The risk to SSDC as guarantor, would be capped for unsecured loans, and he commented that any risk to SSDC would be low.

Members also sought assurances that SSDC would only be waiving the criteria on equity and not other factors such as disposable income. In response, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) clarified that to date, there had been no defaults on any loans arranged by Wessex Home Improvement Loans. Loans would not be agreed until the applicant's ability to repay the loan had been checked.

Carbon Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy – the Installation of Photovoltaic Panels at Brympton Way

The Portfolio Holder (Property and Climate Change) introduced the report and explained that there was a need to install the panels before April 2012 in order to benefit from the current Feed in Tariff scheme.

Members sought clarification on the roofs where the panels would be sited and how this would impact on future maintenance of the roofs. They also queried the warranty period on the panels and associated equipment and whether replacement of failed equipment after the warranty period had been factored into the costs. In response, the Portfolio Holder (Property and Climate Change) commented that the panels were likely to be situated on the main roof of the building, and above the Council Chamber. The Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) confirmed that Property Services had been involved with the proposal and were satisfied that the roof could be maintained under the panels and that a prudent assessment of the on-going need for replacement equipment was in the project proposal.

Members endorsed the recommendations.

Capital Budget Monitoring Report

The Portfolio Holder (Finance, Legal and Spatial Planning) introduced the report. Members were asked by the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) to consider recommendation (h) of the report concerning Martock Parish Hall. In response, members recommended that the finance allocated to Martock Parish Hall should be returned to the balances and an application made at a later date if appropriate.

Members were pleased to note that Section 106 receipts had been added to the monitoring reports.

Revenue Budget Monitoring

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) introduced the report and drew members attention to the section on delivery of efficiencies. She commented that the information included some of the major efficiency savings, and was not necessarily an indication of progress of delivery but showed impact upon the budget of reduced income.

Members expressed concern regarding the variance for financial services regarding the target for terms and conditions. They sought clarification about whether any further work was planned on securing further savings through changes to terms and conditions.

Members endorsed the recommendations.

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

Burlingham's Barn (Confidential)

Scrutiny supported the recommendations contained in the report.

30. Presentation – Lean at South Somerset (Agenda Item 9)

The Strategic Director (Place and Performance) gave a presentation giving an overview of the Lean process including:

- The background, what Lean Thinking is and the primary purpose was to drive out waste and bring about more efficiencies.
- Processes within services were looked at in detail in order to make efficiencies – in order to provide either the same or more for less to residents. This meant that service standards remained the same. Performance monitoring was undertaken to ensure this happened i.e. more, same or better performance was being delivered for less money.
- The steps taken in the Lean process at SSDC including the staff involved at each stage.
- Examples of old process and new process, after lean, in Housing Benefits.
- Examples of achievements to date including savings and performance.
- The programme and timeframe of services being 'leaned' over the next three years.

In response to comments from members, the Strategic Director (Place and Performance) informed members that:

- When all services had been 'leaned' it was likely that if the organisation wanted to look again at services previously leaned, then a similar process would be repeated to seek further efficiencies.

- Lean was primarily about efficiencies. The work resulted in savings, but may not always be the case as depends on the service.
- It was acknowledged that in some cases small or short-term increases in resources might enable a greater output, as had been happening recently in Revenues and Benefits.
- Delivery of the Lean programme was dependent on timing and needed to be in tandem with budget exercises.
- With regard to discretionary services, Lean would be applied after members decided what priorities needed to be delivered.

Members recognised it was a management tool, and thanked the Strategic Director (Place and Performance) for the informative presentation and giving them a better understanding of the process.

31. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that the report on the efficiency review of South Somerset Together (Local Strategic Partnership) would be made to District Executive in October. Members asked to have sight of the draft report for the next Scrutiny meeting on 30 August for comment.

Members were informed that due to a change in legislation, the Single Equality Scheme would need to be re-written to include new Equality Objectives and the Committee would wait to be advised by the Equalities Officer about an appropriate date for a report to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted as outlined in the agenda with the updates above.

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

32. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 30 August 2011 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil and would be followed by a Work Programming session

Members of the Committee are invited to attend at 9.30am to scope questions on the reports in the agenda.

.....
 Chairman