

Scrutiny Committee – 4th October 2011

1. Minutes

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 30th August 2011** in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 12.25 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Cathy Bakewell
Dave Bulmer
John Calvert
Carol Goodall

Tim Inglefield
Pauline Lock
Tony Lock
Paul Maxwell

Graham Oakes
Wes Read
Martin Wale
Colin Winder

Also Present:

Councillors Ric Pallister, Tim Carroll and Henry Hobhouse

Officers:

Mark Williams
Rina Singh
Helen Rutter

Saveria Moss
Sue Eaton
Diane Layzell
Emily McGuinness
Jo Morris

Chief Executive
Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Assistant Director (Communities) and Area East
Development Manager
LSP Co-ordinator
Performance Manager
Senior Land & Property Officer
Scrutiny Manager
Committee Administrator

33. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd August 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Marcus Fysh.

35. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

36. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

38. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members of the following Scrutiny Task and Finish Commissions:

- Social Housing Fraud - 15th September 2011 at 2.00pm in the Main Committee Room
 - Inescapable Bids - 22nd September 2011 at 2.00pm in Committee Room 3
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39. Local Strategic Partnership: South Somerset Together (SST) – Comprehensive Review (Agenda Item 7)

The Assistant Director (Communities) and Area East Development Manager gave a presentation outlining the main findings emerging from the comprehensive review of South Somerset Together, which was formally requested by the District Executive in April. The review has examined qualitative and quantitative information about both South Somerset Together and other Strategic Partnerships.

A copy of the presentation slides were circulated to members at the meeting and are attached to these minutes for information.

The Officers, in response to questions raised, made a number of comments including the following:-

- The questionnaire had been circulated to 28 members of the board with a response received from 18 members (13 board members, 5 substitutes for board members, 8 from the voluntary sector, 9 from public sector groups and 1 response from the private sector);
- With reference to substitutes, members were informed that the substitutes attending meetings were always the same people and who often attended sub group meetings. Commitment from partners was not considered to be an issue;
- Members were reminded that the report was being presented in advance of further work being undertaken. For the previous financial year, the core costs of the LSP was £52,000 with £48,000 coming from SSDC budgets;
- Reference was made to the need to have the right people on the Board who are able to influence and have command over resources of their organisation;
- The function of the LSP would be decided prior to any delivery model being worked up and agreed by the Board
- It was acknowledged that the SST website required updating and would be looked at through the Area Review in order to make it more streamlined.

Several members supported the way forward and felt that it made sense to have a more simplified structure and that the partners should take on more of a lead in order for Local

Strategic Partnership to be more cost effective. It was also felt that Partners should bring resources equal to those provided by SSDC.

Members noted that the next step in the process was for the research to be presented to the SST Strategy Group followed by the Board for their comments. Further detailed work would need to be undertaken in relation to the reduction in costs and these would not be fully known until a new model is in place and that savings of £20,000 was the best estimation at the present time. A final report outlining the findings of the review would be presented to District Executive in October. The Strategic Director (Place & Performance) confirmed that the final report would address all the concerns raised by Scrutiny as listed above.

*(Helen Rutter, Assistant Director (Communities) and Area East Development Manager)
(helen.rutter@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 435012)*

40. Verbal Update on reports considered by District Executive on 4th August 2011 (Agenda Item 8)

The Chairman updated members on the District Executive meeting held on 4th August 2011 in response to the comments raised by the Scrutiny Committee. Members noted the following:

Affordable Housing Development Programme

The District Executive endorsed the recommendations in the report.

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

The interest rates are 4% as stated in the report.

Photovoltaic Panels at Brympton Way

The solar panels would be situated on the top roof of the building. The inverters were guaranteed for five years. The scheme would require planning permission.

Capital Budget Monitoring

The Executive had agreed that the allocation to Martock Parish Hall project be returned to capital reserves as suggested by the Scrutiny Committee.

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

The Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change updated members on the current situation in respect of Burlingham's Barn.

41. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1st September 2011 (Agenda Item 9)

Members considered the reports contained in the District Executive agenda for 1st September 2011.

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 1st Quarter 2011/12

The Performance Manager introduced the performance monitoring report covering the period to the end of the first quarter of 2011/12 (1st April – 30th June 2011). She commented on those areas highlighted under 'performance exceptions' where performance is below target levels. These were NI192 – Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting and LI004 – Number of incidents of antisocial behaviour reported to SSDC. Reference was also made to the number of complaints received.

One member sought clarification over the sum that can be charged back to the Somerset Waste Partnership for the removal of fly tipping, as in previous reports the figure had been unclear.

The Strategic Director (Place & Performance) commented that a more realistic target could be set once a new set of indicators were brought forward following the budget setting process and the Council's priorities being agreed.

One member questioned whether there was an increase in rubbish being put out after the normal collection day. It was noted that this would be recorded as a separate figure under 'missed bins' and was not included under the anti social behaviour figures.

One member commented that he was surprised that the increase in fly tipping had not caused complaints to increase. In response, the Strategic Director (Place & Performance) commented that the removal of fly tipping would be recorded as a request for service rather than a complaint. It would only become a complaint if it had not been removed.

In response to a member question, it was noted that the figure for anti social behaviour was an LAA target and had been agreed by the Police. The indicator was split into ten areas and anything that falls within the ten areas is recorded.

One member noted that the increased number of fly tips is being tackled via our street cleaning teams and questioned whether other organisations such as the Police could become more proactive in helping the situation. It was noted that the situation was monitored using the Colbert system and that action could only be taken if there were repeated offences in the same location.

One member requested information on where the hotspots are for fly tipping.

The Strategic Director (Place & Performance) agreed to forward members comments and questions to the Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) who would be able to provide a fuller response.

Update Report on the South Somerset District Council and East Devon District Council Partnership

The Chief Executive introduced the report, which updated Members on recent discussions between the two new Leaders of South Somerset District Council (SSDC)

and East Devon District Council (EDDC) regarding the future alliance between the two Councils.

During consideration of the report, members raised the following issues:

- With reference to point no. 2 under background, members requested further information on what was meant by the term ... on a more evolutionary basis than a planned approach;
- Members questioned how the Council will make the savings that the East Devon Partnership was meant to achieve?
- Members requested to know how the budget setting at East Devon was progressing?
- One member felt that it was hard to justify the relationship developed between SSDC and EDDC and that SSDC could achieve the same outcomes if separate from EDDC;
- Members expressed concern that the report stated that there are no financial implications other than those already identified in the report.

The Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, in response to questions raised, made a number of comments including the following:-

- When the Council left Pioneer Somerset, it was agreed that there would be no barrier to achieving savings and that the Council would not work exclusively with one authority and that opportunities would be explored with other partners as they arose;
- The Leader would report the outcomes of his meeting with the Leader of East Devon District Council to District Executive;
- Following their restructure, East Devon District Council has agreed that there would be no changes at Senior Management Levels 2 & 3 for two years;
- SSDC would continue with its lean programme and continue to seek savings from other partners;
- There was added value in having a joint Chief Executive who was able to look at opportunities across both Councils;
- When both Councils had fully progressed the lean / Systems Thinking agenda they will be in a position to see if any further savings can be achieved by joint working.

District Executive Forward Plan

Members questioned when the Car Parking Strategy would be considered by District Executive and whether it will be affected by Civil Parking Enforcement. It was noted that Cllrs Tony Lock and Cathy Bakewell would be considering a report on Civil Parking Enforcement and On-Street Pay Parking as members of Somerset County Council's Scrutiny Committee. They were asked to take forward a question regarding the erection of parking meters in conservation areas.

With reference to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation, members were keen for a workshop to be held to improve member understanding of this important issue.

Members requested further information on the Employer's Pension Discretions Review report due to be considered by District Executive in November.

With reference to the report on the District Council's Network, members were informed that the cost of joining the Network was £150 per annum.

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that she was looking to establish a more co-ordinated link with Somerset County Council Scrutiny, through formal feedback and

comparing work programmes, particularly bearing in mind imminent introduction of Health and Well-being Boards. She said that any members were welcome to attend Somerset County Council Scrutiny Committee meetings.

Exclusion of the Public

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Commercial Property Disposals

The Senior Land & Property Officer introduced the report that recommended the disposal of two commercial properties that no longer hold any strategic needs to SSDC to retain their freehold.

Members noted that the figures contained within the Asset Sale Appraisal Forms were incorrect and requested that they be updated for District Executive.

Members endorsed the recommendations in the report.

42. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)

Reference was made to the agenda report, which informed members of the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme. The Scrutiny Manager informed members that she would bring a report on the proposals for joint scrutiny arrangements for the Somerset Waste Board to the 4th October meeting.

Members requested an update report from Lesley Boucher, the Council's representative on the Board of Governors for Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust on the Health and Well-being Partnership.

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)

43. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 4th October 2011 at 10.00 a.m. in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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

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 Chairman

LSP Review – Findings

Headline Summary

Scrutiny Committee
30 August 2011

Helen Rutter
Assistant Director Communities
Lead Officer for the LSP

1. Analysis of Strategic Partnership Working

- 18 Partnerships across the country
- Wider discussion groups
- LGID recent literature

18 Partnerships Interviewed

Districts

St Albans; North Dorset; Breckland; Dacorum;
Hertsmere; Norwich; Wealden; Newcastle Under Lyme;
West Norfolk; West Suffolk; Taunton Deane

Counties

Kent; Buckinghamshire; Cumbria

Unitaries

Wiltshire; Southampton; Blackburn with Darwen;
Rotherham

District LSPs – Headlines

Structure, culture and leadership

- Simpler governance/pledges - mutual trust/benefit
- Undergone (planning) restructure: new, simple, high-level, strategic think tank and “deal making” group with broader assembly meeting typically twice yearly
- Strong leadership critical - various arrangements
- A flow of partners bringing issues to be solved

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Headlines

Costs

- Greatly reduced core costs – coordinating function by LA funded staff member absorbed by host authority
- Many have Second Homes income or (one off) PRG funds from County Council – used to lever in external funds and create capacity via short-term project staffing
- Greater ownership – Lead Agency responsible for resourcing, driving/reporting performance for priority work supported by Partnership staff and steering group (T&FG)

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Headlines

Focus

- Drastic pruning of priority areas (from dozens in SCS to typically 3-6)
- Focus around “Total Place” type initiatives – delivering cheaper/better services (issue if County not engaged)
- Example: Substantial staff delivering commissioned work
- Broader Engagement, don’t duplicate established local arrangements – typically Council resourced

2. SST Self Analysis

Statement of Intent

18 partners responded to questionnaire



Self Analysis – Main Points

- Keep a multi-agency South Somerset Partnership
- More strategic focus - simplify, on key issues
- Catalyst for change and better collaboration
- Agree that SSDC should not be sole funder – all should contribute in cash or kind
- More commitment needed from key partners, but how to be equitable and sustainable?

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Self Analysis – Main Points

- Much simpler structure wanted - clear roles, accountability and process for who joins which bit
- Avoid any duplication with other partnerships
- Favour "cabinet and assembly" model
- Like the flexibility of Task & Finish groups
- Want less and more relevant paperwork
- Seek to re-engage with SCC
- Improve links & understanding of role with communities/ parishes

3. Efficiency Analysis

- Cheaper, more cost effective model by adopting a simpler, streamlined structure and avoiding overlap
- Less SSDC staff support needed eg reporting, fewer groups, less performance monitoring
- Partners to play bigger role ie: more shared work and accountability
- Potential saving to SSDC @ £20,000



Next Steps

- Discuss with SST Strategy Group/ Board
- Discuss with SSDC Management Board
- Key choices for SST - keep and fund dedicated post and independent chairman or share leadership and mainstream support?
- Report to DX October 2011

