

South Somerset District Council

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

(10.00 a.m. – 11.35 a.m.)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Cathy Bakewell
Dave Bulmer
John Calvert
Marcus Fysh
Carol Goodall

Tim Inglefield
Tony Lock
Wes Read
Colin Winder
Martin Wale

Also Present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Peter Seib, Henry Hobhouse, John Dyke and Jo Roundell Greene

Officers:

Donna Parham
Rina Singh
Jo Gale
Emily McGuinness
Jo Morris

Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Scrutiny Manager
Scrutiny Manager
Committee Administrator

59. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 4th October 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Lock, Paul Maxwell and Graham Oakes.

61. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

62. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

64. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman announced that she would be taking Agenda Item 11 – Reports to be considered by District Executive as the next agenda item.

The Chairman reminded members to attend the Questioning Skills training being held on Tuesday 22nd November 2011 at 11am – 4pm in the Council Chamber.

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

Councillor John Calvert, Chairman of the Social Housing Fraud Task and Finish Review gave a brief update from the first meeting held on 27th October 2011.

66. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 8)

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

(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager)

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

(Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager)

(joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077)

67. Somerset Waste Board – Forward Plan (Agenda Item 9)

Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager informed members that the first meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Panel would be held on 9th December at County Hall, Taunton.

RESOLVED: That the Somerset Waste Board Forward Plan be noted as outlined in the agenda.

68. Verbal Update on reports considered by District Executive on 6th October 2011 (Agenda Item 10)

Members noted the minutes from the District Executive meeting held on 6th October 2011 as outlined in the agenda. The minutes included the comments raised by members of the Scrutiny Committee.

69. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3rd November 2011 (Agenda Item 11)

This item was taken prior to agenda item 7.

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

The following questions and comments would be taken forward to District Executive on 3rd November 2011.

Report from Yeovil District Hospital Board of Governors

Members questioned the process of appointing a representation to an outside body where the representative is not a current serving member. Members understood that the matter would be addressed by the imminent work of the Task and Finish Group looking at the appointment of members to outside bodies.

SSDC Heritage Service – Options for the Future

During consideration of the report members questioned what processes the Council has in place for seeking a third party?

Members understood that the Council's lottery funding obligations finish at the end of the year and therefore questioned whether option 2 would be more viable?

Changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefits

In view of the ongoing changes, members suggested that it would be beneficial to establish a Task and Finish Review to monitor the changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefits as part of the Government's Welfare Reform Programme and to contribute towards the decision making process to define the Local Support for Council Tax.

The Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning welcomed scrutiny's involvement.

Members raised concerns over whether the Council is resourced enough to take on the new challenges and also the timescales involved.

With reference to page 19 – Cumulative impact of Universal Credit and localisation of support for Council Tax - one member requested the last sentence to be amended to read:

The speed, volume and breath of change pose a very real risk to the health and wellbeing of our **most vulnerable** citizens.

2011/12 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter ending 30th September 2011

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) introduced the report, which updated Members on the current financial position of the capital programme of the Council and reported reasons for variations from approved budgets for the period 1st April to 30th September 2011.

In response to a member comment regarding Section 106 Deposits by Developers, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) agreed to include further information in future reports on the date money was transferred and where the money has been spent.

2011/12 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter ending 30th September 2011

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) introduced the report, which updated members on the current financial position of the revenue budgets of the Council and to report the reasons for variations from approved budgets for the period 1st April to 30th September 2011.

In response to a member question, the Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) agreed to provide further information on the Economic Development Balance as referred to on page 34 of the agenda.

Consultation Paper – Local Government Resource Review – Proposals for Business Rate Retention

In response to a member question, the Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) explained how the New Homes Bonus would operate.

Appointment of Substitute Members – Audit and Scrutiny Committee

During consideration of the report members raised the following points:

- Why is it necessary to appoint substitutes?
- What has initiated the demand? Members are not aware of any problems with attendance and output of either Committee.
- Is there a specific problem that needs addressing?
- It was felt that members sitting on the Audit Committee required a certain level of expertise and to allow untrained members to attend could result in a number of difficulties as the Committee has certain legal responsibilities.
- Audit and Scrutiny Committee were not supposed to be political and members are disappointed that the issue of politics has been raised in association with an a-political committee.
- Substitute members would not understand the underlying processes of scrutiny and it would take time to explain.

District Executive Forward Plan

Members highlighted that there was no mention of the Corporate Plan on the Forward Plan and questioned what the timescales are for approval?

Members agreed to consider establishing a Task and Finish group to look at the Economic Development Strategy. The matter will be considered in more detail at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 29th November 2011.

With reference to the Temporary Accommodation Strategy due to be considered by District Executive on 1st December 2011, Scrutiny members requested the attendance of the Strategic Housing Manager at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting when they would be considering the report.

70. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 29th November 2011 at 10.00am 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