

South Somerset District Council

Notice of Meeting



Scrutiny Committee

Making a difference where it counts

Tuesday 4 September 2012

10.00am

**Main Committee Room
Council Offices
Brympton Way
Yeovil
Somerset BA20 2HT**

The public and press are welcome to attend.

Disabled Access is available at this meeting venue.



If you would like any further information on the items to be discussed, please ring the Agenda Co-ordinator, Becky Sanders on Yeovil (01935) 462462
email: becky.sanders@southsomerset.gov.uk, website: www.southsomerset.gov.uk

This Agenda was issued on Friday 24 August 2012.

Ian Clarke, Assistant Director (Legal & Corporate Services)



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Scrutiny Committee Membership

Chairman Sue Steele
Vice Chairman David Bulmer
Carol Goodall

Cathy Bakewell
Nigel Gage
Peter Gubbins
Pauline Lock

Tony Lock
Paul Maxwell
Graham Middleton
Sue Osborne

Wes Read
Martin Wale
Nick Weeks

Information for the Public

What is Scrutiny?

The Local Government Act 2000 requires all councils in England and Wales to introduce new political structures which provide a clear role for the Council, the Executive and non-executive councillors.

One of the key roles for non-executive councillors is to undertake an overview and scrutiny role for the council. In this Council the overview and scrutiny role involves reviewing and developing, scrutinising organisations external to the council and holding the executive to account

Scrutiny also has an important role to play in organisational performance management.

The Scrutiny Committee is made up of 14 non-executive members and meets monthly to consider items where executive decisions need to be reviewed before or after their implementation, and to commission reviews of policy or other public interest.

Members of the public are able to:

- attend meetings of the Scrutiny Committee except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Scrutiny Committee meetings; and
- see agenda reports.

Meetings of the Scrutiny Committee are held monthly on the Tuesday prior to meetings of the District Executive at 10.00am in the Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

Agendas and minutes of these meetings are published on the Council's website www.southsomerset.gov.uk.

The Council's Constitution is also on the website and available for inspection in council offices.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the agenda co-ordinator named on the front page.

South Somerset District Council – Council Plan

Our focuses are: (all equal)

- Jobs – We want a strong community, which has low unemployment and thriving businesses
- Environment – We want an attractive environment to live in with increased recycling and lower energy use
- Homes – We want decent housing for our residents that matches their income
- Health and Communities – We want communities that are healthy, self-reliant, and have individuals who are willing to help each other

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Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 4 September 2012

Agenda

Preliminary Items

1. **To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th August 2012**
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (adopted July 2012), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting. A DPI is defined in The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012 No. 1464) and Appendix 3 of the Council's Code of Conduct. A personal interest is defined in paragraph 2.8 of the Code and a prejudicial interest is defined in paragraph 2.9. In the interests of complete transparency, Members of the County Council, who are not also members of this committee, are encouraged to declare any interests they may have in any matters being discussed even though they may not be under any obligation to do so under any relevant code of conduct.

4. **Public Question Time**
5. **Issues Arising from Previous Meetings**

This is an opportunity for Members to question the progress on issues arising from previous meetings. However, this does not allow for the re-opening of a debate on any item not forming part of this agenda.

6. **Chairman's Announcements**

Items for Discussion

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Scrutiny Committee – 4 September 2012

1. Minutes

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of the **Scrutiny Committee** held on Tuesday 14 August 2012 in Council Chamber B, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00am – 12.15pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Cathy Bakewell
David Bulmer
Nigel Gage
Pauline Lock

Tony Lock
Ian Martin (sub)
Paul Maxwell

Graham Middleton
Martin Wale
Nick Weeks

Also Present:

Councillor Ric Pallister

Officers:

Rina Singh
David Julian
Rob Murray
Emily McGuinness
Jo Gale
Becky Sanders

Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Economic Development Manager
Economic Development Officer
Scrutiny Manager
Scrutiny Manager
Committee Administrator

29. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 3rd July 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Goodall, Peter Gubbins, Sue Osborne and Wes Read. (Councillor Ian Martin was substitute for Councillor Wes Read)

31. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

34. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman thanked members for accommodating the change to the meeting arrangements. She also noted that the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services), wished to thank members of the Council Tax Reduction Task and Finish Group and the Scrutiny Manager for all their work and time to date.

35. Verbal Update on Reports Considered by District Executive on 5 July and 2 August 2012 (Agenda Item 7)

There were no verbal updates. It was noted that minutes of the meeting on 5 July had been circulated with the District Executive agenda for the meeting on 2 August 2012.

36. Health Inequalities Scrutiny Programme (Agenda item 8)

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report as detailed in the agenda. She commented that ideally further members were needed for the Task and Finish Group and it would be a good opportunity to learn new scrutiny skills. In response, Councillor Paul Maxwell requested to be included in the group. It was noted that the work was time limited and needed to be completed by the end of September.

37. Draft Economic Development Strategy (Agenda Item 9)

In advance of the meeting, a list of questions (see appendix to these minutes) put together using best practice guides was forwarded to Scrutiny Committee members and appropriate officers in order that they could respond with the relevant information when addressing the Scrutiny Committee. The session took the form of an open discussion.

The Economic Development Manager introduced the draft Economic Development Strategy and set the context in which it needed to be considered, making reference to the Local Growth White Paper of October 2010. He also referred to the Local Enterprise Partnership, Local Infrastructure Plan and the SSDC Council Plan in which jobs featured as a key focus.

It was explained that the draft strategy had been prepared using evidence from two documents - 'The State of the Somerset Economy' (Ekosgen 2010) and an 'Economic Review of Yeovil' (Ekosgen 2010). Both studies and the draft strategy had involved, and continued to involve, extensive consultation with stakeholders, other SSDC services and officers. The aims of the strategy were around jobs, emphasis on a good economic environment and the support to new, existing and inward investing companies.

During a lengthy and lively discussion, scrutiny members raised several concerns, queries and suggestions, some of which included:

- Skills for the workforce and higher education were important for growth but didn't appear to feature prominently within the strategy
- Be useful to have a list of potential partners/stakeholders or what actions might be delivered through approaching the Local Strategic Partnership.
- Had consultees involved so far also been consulted on the draft strategy?
- Unclear exactly who the strategy was for, the main audience should be businesses.
- Some wording and terminology would benefit from being rephrased to make clearer and easier to understand.
- Concerns about third tier education and availability of courses locally had been discussed by the Local Strategic Partnership
- Concern that the strategy could become fragmented
- Strategy indicates what we will do but doesn't say how
- Might be useful to give the links to other strategies and also sources of business support
- Should be more SMART targets.
- Economic Development do excellent work but it's not mentioned in the strategy
- No mention of supporting exporting.
- Agriculture is important to South Somerset and the wording around it in the strategy needed to be strengthened.
- What would SSDC be doing about business rate retention?

In response to the above comments made the Leader, Strategic Director (Place and Performance) and Economic Developer Manager clarified or noted that:

- It was acknowledged that skills and education were a key to growth, however they were functions which SSDC did not have a statutory responsibility to deliver and were delivered by other organisations; therefore it featured as a low priority for direct delivery by SSDC. Addressing the skills agenda needed a high-level partnership response with responsibility resting with the Local Strategic Partnership. This did not mean that SSDC would not be trying its best to influence.
- It was a strategy for SSDC, which would be delivered with partners for the benefit of everyone in South Somerset. Anyone could read the document to see what we intended to deliver in terms of the strategy. The strategy was about delivering the aims outlined in the Council Plan. The strategy provides a District response to the Government White Paper 2010 and the LEP Business Plan 2012 and contextualised SSDC's role in maintaining an attractive local economy.
- The strategy was SSDC's Economic Development Strategy to deliver for the residents and businesses of South Somerset. There was a recognition in the strategy that Economic Development in the District could not be delivered by SSDC alone. Working with partners and LSP was key. SSDC already had a Sustainable Community Strategy which was a partnership strategy, where all the actions were owned by the partners. All actions of the Economic Development Strategy are owned and due to be delivered by SSDC be it with partners.
- The draft strategy focussed on and prioritised what could be directly delivered or influenced by SSDC. With the resources available, SSDC would be unable to deliver the skills agenda, but will have a role to facilitate through the Local Strategic Partnership.
- The same process and format for developing the strategy had been followed as for any other key SSDC strategy or plan i.e. when producing the Corporate Plan we had member workshops after which a draft was circulated, amended and finally presented to and approved by District Executive. The final copy was sent to external partners. The process for the Economic Development Strategy has been no different.

- Undertaking a skills audit was not a role for SSDC but could be put to the Local Strategic Partnership.
- That work on presentation and layout needed to be redone after content was agreed and acknowledged some phrasing needed to be changed, in particular with regard to the 'we wills' and 'endeavours'.
- Detailed tasks would be part of service plans not the strategy. This was a headline action plan.
- Would look at putting in a reference to the action plan in the 'we will' column from page 8 onwards. The Strategic Director (Place and Performance) to discuss with Cllr Martin Wale outside of the meeting.
- A list of stakeholders could be provided as a separate document but it would be preferential not to include as part of the strategy, as not all partners would be involved in every action. Reference to the Partnerships Register could also be included.
- Agreed that exporting should be added to the strategy. Exporting is viewed by the government as an activity best co-ordinated at central government level.
- Full details of the business rate retention scheme were still emerging and the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) to lead on this. Reduction in business rates cannot be included in the strategy as no decision made and is part of the budget discussion.

Following the discussion, the Strategic Director (Place and Performance) summarised the main actions to be taken by the Economic Development team as:

- Add in references to exporting
- Liaise with Councillors Martin Wale and Ric Pallister regarding changes to the wording of the 'we wills' to 'plain English' and presentation of the document.
- Liaise with Councillor Cathy Bakewell regarding performance indicators and SMART targets.
- Liaise with Councillors Nick Weeks, about strengthening the wording around agriculture. Although the action plan would remain constrained by existing resources.
- The Leader and Portfolio Holder to finalise wording of the strategy before re-circulating prior to District Executive.

Members were content that during the course of the discussion the questions circulated to officers prior to the meeting had been addressed. The Chairman thanked the officers for attending the meeting.

38. Verbal Update on Task and Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 10)

Council Tax Reduction

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the task and finish group had worked incredibly hard to agree a draft scheme to go out to consultation. Originally it had been an ambition to produce a single scheme across Somerset, not all the authorities agreed on an exact same scheme to consult on so SSDC had to produce their own survey, this was now live on the website and members would be receiving an information pack to show what was being sent out to households.

The task and finish review group have a break now until the results are in and ready for analysis.

Budget – Inescapable Bids

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the first meeting would be on 5 October and would also look at additional income streams.

Student Engagement

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that the first meeting would take place in October.

39. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

Reference was made to the agenda report, which informed members of the Scrutiny Work Programme. The Scrutiny Manager noted that the next meeting would include a Portfolio Holder presentation and reminded members to forward any questions or suggestions to the Scrutiny Manager, for matters they would like to be discussed with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted as detailed 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)

40. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 4 September 2012 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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

.....
Chairman

Appendix to minute 37 Draft Economic Development Strategy

Questions circulated in advance of the meeting

In advance of the meeting, a list of questions put together using best practice guides was forwarded to the appropriate officers in order that they could respond with the relevant information when addressing the Scrutiny Committee. The questions were:

1. Have all the 'key players' been identified and effectively consulted during the policy development process?

Best practice examples identify the following key players in local authority Economic Development:

- other tiers of local government
- Health bodies
- Further / Higher Education establishments
- Utility bodies
- Chambers of Commerce
- Large private businesses
- SME representatives
- Voluntary and Community Groups

2. Through consulting with these groups, have their likely interests been identified as well as the resources each stakeholder has available to contribute?
3. To what extent does the strategy support the approach set out in the LGA document "Local Leadership, Local Growth (June 2012) - The 21st century approach is about working with partners to create the right environment for business growth?"
4. Has the professional expertise of the business and voluntary sector been fully exploited?
6. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee have stated that, '...while the aspirations for community-led regeneration are in place, the practical mechanisms are lacking.' (2011). Does the SSDC ED Strategy adequately detail the practical mechanisms necessary to achieve its ambitions?
7. Are there clear arrangements in place for the on-going engagement of all the identified stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy?

Local Economy Assessment

8. Is the strategy based on a sound and current assessment of the local economy and has a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) assessment of the South Somerset economic situation been undertaken and has this information been used to inform the strategy?

Strategy Development Process

9. Does the document correspond with the Local Development Plan for SSDC?
10. Have the Planning, Housing and Finance team been consulted/involved in the creation of this strategy?

11. What is the 'vision' of the Strategy – if the strategy is successfully implemented, is it clear what the economic landscape of South Somerset will look like?
12. Is this vision shared and agreed by all the relevant stakeholders?

Action Plan

13. Is each goal / action underpinned by SMART targets?
14. What are the goals of the Strategy?
15. Is responsibility for each action / goal clearly shown?
16. Are there targets in terms of outputs/funding/timing etc against which progress can be measured?
17. The LGA Local economies, local growth report identifies several key actions they are planning to take forward over 2012-13 to promote local economic development. One of these actions is to encourage local authorities at all levels to develop more effective relationships with local educational establishments to ensure a closer match between education and skills provision and the needs of local businesses. How is this issue addressed in the ED Strategy?

Other

18. Does the strategy clearly show how each action will be funded through to completion?
19. Is the strategy sufficiently ambitious in terms of identifying all potential funding streams, even in the current economic climate?
20. Does the strategy enable SSDC to deliver what members understand to be the local economic development ambitions of the authority?
21. The purpose of local economic development is to build up the economic capacity of the local area, to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all. It is a process by which public, business and community sector partners can work collaboratively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation. Does this strategy:
 - support small and medium sized enterprises?
 - Encourage new enterprise?
 - Attract, where possible, external investment?
 - Identify hard infrastructure initiatives?
 - Identify soft infrastructure targets (education, skills, regulatory issues etc)
 - Recognise the role and different needs of key economic 'groups' (rural economy / tourism etc)?
 - Provide employment opportunities for all?
22. Does the strategy make adequate reference to the regional context? Does it 'fit in' with the aims and objectives of the Heart of the South West LEP, therefore ensuring that South Somerset is able to access all available funding from this source?

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7. Portfolio Holder Presentation

Following the Budget Scrutiny session held on 15th December 2011, the Scrutiny Committee agreed that a programme would be developed for each Portfolio Holder to attend Scrutiny Committee to discuss their service areas with members of the Committee.

These sessions are intended to be a relatively informal opportunity for Scrutiny members to discuss the following with Portfolio Holders:

- key achievements within their service areas over the past 12 months,
- priorities for the coming 12 months,
- budgetary implications; and
- opportunities for Scrutiny to support the policy development work of the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Sylvia Seal will be attending the September Scrutiny meeting. Councillor Seal is Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture and the following services fall within her Portfolio:

- Sport
 - Countryside
 - Arts
 - Heritage
 - Health and Well-Being
 - Third Sector and Partnerships
 - Member Development
-

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8. TEN Performance Management System

Lead Officer: Sue Eaton, Performance Manager
Contact Details: sue.eaton@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462565 or

The Performance Manager will attend the meeting to provide a refresher demonstration on the TEN performance management system.

Scrutiny Committee – 4 September 2012

9. Employment Support Assessment - Report to Scrutiny Committee

Lead Officer: Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager
Contact Details: emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462566

Purpose of report and action required

Earlier this year, the Scrutiny Committee were made aware of the fact the Welfare Benefits Team were encountering significant issues relating to the recently introduced Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and this in turn was having an impact on capacity within the team and their ability to fulfil all their functions. It was agreed that the issue would be investigated and reported to the Scrutiny Committee.

This report sets out the findings of that investigation and a number of points (detailed from paragraph 8) that, if endorsed by members, can be submitted to the independent review process described in the report.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At SSDC we are fortunate to have a dedicated Welfare Advisory Service which over time has had significant success in ensuring South Somerset residents access the benefits to which they are entitled. Taking such a proactive approach has enabled us to support residents before crisis points are reached – thus minimising both the financial and operational impact to this authority. The team work to ensure advice available on a broad range of benefits, however, since the introduction of the ESA, they have found that a disproportionate amount of their time is being spent on the administration of this particular benefit – to such an extent that until recently – the team was unable to accept new clients.
- 1.2 This report briefly explains the ESA process and sets out a number of points that, if endorsed by members, can be submitted to the independent review process described in the report.

2.0 What is ESA?

- 2.1 Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) was introduced in October 2008. It replaced three incapacity benefits – Incapacity Benefit, Income Support by virtue of a disability and Severe Disablement Allowance – for claimants making a new claim for financial support on the grounds of illness or incapacity. ESA is intended for people who have limited capacity for work (who are placed in the Work Related Activity Group), and people who have limited capability for work related activity (who are placed in the Support Group).
- 2.2 The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) determines whether a claimant falls into one of these groups, or is fit for work. People who are found fit for work may be eligible for Job Seeker's Allowance, which is the benefit paid to people who are available and actively seeking work.
- 2.3 The WCA replaced the Personal Capability Assessment that was used to assess people claiming incapacity benefits. It is intended as a functional health assessment rather than

as a diagnostic medical assessment, which will already have taken place through the claimant's GP or healthcare specialist. The focus of the WCA is on what people can do rather than what they cannot.

- 2.4 In April 2011, the Government began reassessing people entitled to Incapacity Benefits (IB), Severe Disability Allowance and Income Support on incapacity grounds to determine their eligibility for ESA. This reassessment is a key part of the government's welfare reform agenda by ensuring that those people who can work are encouraged to do so.

3.0 ESA Process

- 3.1 Generally all claimants will complete an initial application form and then enter a 13 week assessment phase and start on the same benefit rate as Job Seekers Allowance. When they apply for ESA they are required to send a 'fit note' to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to decide whether they are entitled to ESA and which category they should be in. There are three potential outcomes to the assessment:

- allocated to the ESA Support Group,
- allocated to the ESA work related activity group,
- found fit for work and not entitled to any ESA.

- 3.2 The WCA is then carried out by a healthcare professional (usually a doctor or a nurse – but there is some evidence that assessments have been carried out by Physiotherapists). The health care professionals are employed by a private contractor appointed by the DWP – Atos Health Care. Once the medical assessment has been carried out, the health care professional sends their report to a 'decision maker' at the DWP. Based on the information available, the Decision Maker decides if and at what level, ESA should be awarded.

- 3.3 The WCA conducted by the Atos employee follows a scripted interview process – the healthcare professional asks a number of questions from a computer programme. Each question relates to a different type of physical functioning (called a *Descriptor*). Each descriptor scores a different level of points depending to on the individuals' level of impairment. The report of the Atos professional is then sent to the DWP decision maker.

4.0 Concerns/Issues

- 4.1 The quality of the WCA provided by Atos has been a major concern for many involved – especially the accuracy of their reports. It is estimated that over the lifetime of their contract with the DWP, Atos will have been paid over £1 billion and it is not clear if there are any financial penalties for inaccurate reports which lead to appeals by applicants being supported at tribunal stage.

- 4.2 Most Claimants are sent an ESA 50 form which asks for details of how their condition or impairment affects their functioning. Further medical evidence may be sought at any time from the claimant's own doctor although evidence from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the experience of SSDC Officers suggests that this additional information is rarely sought. In many cases NHS Doctors will charge an average of £30 for medical evidence and few people on low incomes can afford this.

- 4.3 The large majority of new claimants are asked to attend a face to face assessment (which is a cause of concern to some advocacy groups supporting claimants with mental health issues as the assessments can be a stressful experience with little flexibility to allow for the needs of the individual to be taken into account).

- 4.4 CAB reports a significant level of inaccuracy on many of the Atos medical reports – the response of Atos and DWP has been that they carry out a significant number of assessments and there are bound to be a ‘few mistakes’. However, when looking at only those cases dealt with by SSDC officers, there appears to be a significant level of inaccuracy, resulting in a notable number cases being appealed and upheld at tribunal. To substantiate previously anecdotal concerns over the accuracy of Atos assessment reports, the CAB carried out a national investigation. Full details of the investigation can be found at www.citizensadvice.org.uk. Out of the 37 cases chosen nationally, 16 were identified as having a serious level of inaccuracy, 10 indicated a medium level of reported inaccuracy and 11 cases indicated a low (or no) level of inaccuracy.
- 4.5 There were 5 main types of inaccuracy identified:
- 4.5.1 - **Omissions or incorrect observations recorded**
E.g. a pronounced and clearly observable impairment simply not recorded.
 - 4.5.2 - **Incorrect factual recording of the history given by the claimant**
E.g. a claimant saying he couldn’t dress unaided was recorded as saying that although they experienced some difficulty was able to dress unaided.
 - 4.5.3 - **Medical evidence inappropriately determined**
E.g. Atos making medical assessments they are not qualified to do.
 - 4.5.4 - **Closed questions, lack of empathy to encourage the person to talk and incorrect assumptions made when the information was not gathered, and**
 - 4.5.5 - **Inconsistency within the report.**
E.g. the narrative information in the report indicated a certain number of points should be awarded, yet a different number are actually awarded.

The experience of SSDC officers would support these findings and would strongly indicate that these issues remain current and to date, show little, if any signs of improving.

5.0 Tribunals

- 5.1 Claimants who feel that they have been placed in the wrong category following their WCA can appeal the decision and may take their case as far as tribunal. Government figures from April 2012 show that 60% of those who have undergone the WCA have been declared fit for work, 41% of such decisions have been appealed against and 38% of appeals have been successful. In some cases, claimants scoring 0 points after the initial assessment have been awarded in excess of 15 points at appeal.
- 5.2 There is a considerable amount of work (and stress) involved in taking a case to tribunal. From the perspective of the Tribunals System, the Ministry of Justice estimates the total cost to the Courts Service of the 112,30 ESA appeals disposed of in the six months from April to October 2011 to be £26.844 million and likely to rise to £50 million a year. The service currently has to list additional tribunal hearing dates and recruit additional staff accordingly.

- 5.3 From an SSDC perspective, preparing cases for tribunal is a lengthy and involved process which takes up a considerable amount of the Welfare Benefit Advisory Team's time. Essentially the team has to operate on a reactive basis, mitigating the impact of a change in Government Policy rather than being able to proactively support clients in the take up of appropriate benefits.
- 5.4 Based on figures collected during July, in staffing costs alone, SSDC is spending approximately £2714.47 per month supporting clients through the ESA and WCA process- this roughly equates to £33k per year administering a single benefit's process.

6.0 Independent Review Process

- 6.1 The Welfare Reform Act of 2007 which introduced these elements also legislated for *an independent report on the operation of the assessment annually for the first five years aftercoming into force.*
- 6.2 The first independent review of the ESA / WCA was carried out by Professor Malcolm Harrington and was published in November 2010. This review found that, whilst the system was not broken,*"beyond repair, it was not working as well as it should..."*
- 6.3 The review made a number of recommendations to improve the fairness and effectiveness of the system, including:
- 6.3.1 - improving the capability and confidence of the Decision Makers at DWP operations who decide benefit entitlements;
 - 6.3.2 - making the WCA a more compassionate process;
 - 6.3.3 - improving the face-to-face assessment conducted by contractors Atos Healthcare by putting in place 'champions' with additional expertise in mental, cognitive and intellectual conditions and by ensuring every Atos assessment contains a personalised summary in plain English.
- 6.4 Professor Harrington's second review was published in November 2011. This review stated that he believed the WCA remained the right process and asked that all those who believed that improvements had not been made to be patient – things were getting better. He did go on to make a series of further recommendations including:
- 6.4.1 - **better communications and sharing of information between all parts of the system** - this will mean that everyone involved knows their roles and responsibilities, the purpose of the WCA and the reasons for any decisions taken.
 - 6.4.2 - **Increasing and improving the transparency of the assessment**
 - 6.4.3 - **Monitoring the impact if recommendations from the Independent Reviews** – Ensuring that the issues identified are being addressed and they are having the desired impact.
- 6.5 Relating to all his recommendations, Professor Harrington acknowledged that there were likely to be cost implications but stated that seen in the wider context the proposed changes would be likely to be cost saving or cost neutral in the medium to long term by ensuring that decisions are right first time.
- 6.6 As part of the call for evidence for the third annual review, SSDC have the opportunity to state how the system is currently operating from our perspective. To date, no other local authority has contributed to the independent review process, although several national

organisations have provided considerable evidence as to how the ESA is impacting on some of the most vulnerable people in our society

7.0 Recommendations for improvement

- 7.1 Accuracy seems to be the key in securing improvement. In his second independent report, Professor Harrington expresses concern about the WCA process as a whole and inaccuracy specifically and the Government itself in a report to the Work and Pensions Select Committee in 2012 recognises the need to do more to learn lessons from the management of the Atos contract, including the need for robust performance indicators.
- 7.2 SSDC officers and members support the call for independent monitoring of the accuracy of WCA reports and the introduction of more formal quality assurance procedures.
- 7.3 Our experience would support the call for DWP decision makers to take a more proactive approach when making their decisions about whether or not to award ESA. The Decision Makers should more routinely challenge and question findings of the Atos completed WCA. The Decision Taker should have received adequate training and be made aware that the Atos report should form **part** of their decision making process, along side evidence from GP's. We support the calls for medical evidence to be provided from the professional nominated by the claimant as knowing them best. We concur that it should not be the responsibility of the claimant to provide medical evidence as this would lead to an inequitable situation where only those who can afford it, get a better quality of decision.
- 7.4 Completed WCA's should be routinely sent to claimants for them to verify prior to a final ESA decision being taken – claimants should be given a specified amount of time within which to confirm the content before it is sent to DWP – no response will be taken as confirmation.
- 7.5 Bearing in mind the significant value of the contract between DWP and Atos and the costs involved in inaccurate decisions being overturned at Tribunal, the DWP should consider imposing financial penalties on Atos for every inaccurate report they produce.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 SSDC Experience supports the wealth of evidence gathered by national organisations such as CAB and would seem to contradict Professor Harrington's assertion that practitioners should be patient as the issues identified in years one and two are now being resolved.
- 8.2 It is recommended that the very practical experiences of our officers should be reported to the third annual Harrington Review so that those conducting the review are clear that the situation is still causing grave concerns at an operational level with very little sign of improvement.
- 8.3 The Call for Evidence for Professor Harrington's Third Annual Review asks three very specific questions. The questions and the suggested SSDC response are as follows (as detailed in 8.4, 8.5 and 8.6 below):

8.4 Communications

- 8.4.1 The questions contained in the current ESA 50 form do not correspond directly to the descriptors so it is difficult to see how the Atos professional can use the

information gathered via the ESA 50 form to award points against the agreed set of descriptors.

- 8.4.2 It is very difficult to make telephone contact with the DWP – you can never call and speak directly to the officer dealing with a particular case – you have to leave details which are e-mailed to the relevant officer who will make one attempt to get back to you. This can be very difficult for vulnerable people trying to resolve their cases.

8.5 Face to face assessment

- 8.5.1 From an operational perspective, we remain very concerned about the accuracy of the reports resulting from the face to face assessments.

In one example, the assessment that our client underwent did not effectively measure fitness for work. Our client has Multiple Sclerosis and suffers from the full range of associated symptoms –due to her illness she has not worked since 2002. Following her WCA she was found not to meet the threshold for Limited Capability for Work. This decision was subsequently appealed and overturned but not before a vulnerable client had been subjected to a lengthy and stressful process.

The written report of the assessment states that the client would have difficulty standing for periods of longer than 2 minutes and needed help to fulfil a range of daily tasks – the points awarded however did not seem to match the written observations.

- 9.5.2 Another of our cases highlights the fact that the face to face assessment does not adequately take account of mental health issues. In the case in question, the client suffers from long standing bi-polar disorder and also on-going mobility issues. In her initial form, the client stated her full range of physical impairments as well her difficulty in coping with social engagement and appropriateness of behaviour with other people.

Our client's assessment was conducted by a physiotherapist with no experience of mental health issues and concluded that none of the physical activity outcomes or any of the mental health descriptors applied to our client.

A complaint was made to the DWP Decision Maker on behalf of the client and the DWP admitted that the assessment report was '*short of relevant information and is superficial and does not cover all aspects of your client's walking ability*'. Despite this and the fact that additional medical information was provided, the original decision was not overturned and the appeal again progressed to Tribunal Stage.

Our client was extremely anxious during the tribunal process but was finally awarded 42 points on mental health factors alone and it was concluded that our client satisfied the criteria for Schedule 2. para.14 and was consequently placed into the Support Group. It is worth noting that the Tribunal Judge and medical professional noted that our client 'needs help and we hope that she gets it'.

8.6 Decision Making

- 8.6.1 We consistently find that the DWP Decision Maker is not taking account of additional medical information when taking decisions. Guidance clearly states

that the WCA is not a diagnostic assessment – yet information relating to clinical diagnosis is either not routinely sought, or when it is provided, it is not taken into account.

- 8.6.2 It appears that the Decision Makers may not feel able to challenge the report of the Atos professional when it appears there is contradictory additional information. We are not in a position to say if this is down to inadequate resources or inadequate training. However, it is resulting in a significant number of incorrect decisions being taken which are subsequently over turned at tribunal.
- 8.6.3 Locally, the quality of decisions would be greatly improved in the DWP decision takers allowed for our officers to comment on ESA applications. Our officers have more detailed knowledge of our clients' needs as well as a good understanding of the ESA assessment process. As an organisation we are currently spending a considerable amount of time, effort and money on supporting clients through the ESA application and appeals process – resources that are already in short supply. It would represent a much better use of limited resources – both ours and those of the DWP and Tribunal Service, if we could find a way of making sure the Decision Maker is actually taking a decision based on the whole picture, rather than just on the WCA assessment report – which is after all only supposed to form **part** of the final decision making process.
- 8.6.4 If clients and/or their advisors if applicable, were sent a copy of the WCA report prior to it being sent to the Decision Maker and given a specified amount within which to respond, any inaccuracies / omissions could be identified and corrected **prior** to a decision being taken.
- 8.6.5 Concern may be expressed that such an approach may lead to delays in the decision making process – however, the current system with such a high proportion of cases resulting in Tribunal hearings, is already causing a delay in reaching a final outcome and is in addition, causing significant levels of stress and anxiety for vulnerable people.
- 8.6.6 We would be willing to work with DWP and other agencies involved to pilot practical solutions to the current operational difficulties.

9.0 What one thing (if any) would you change about the WCA to make the system better for people claiming ESA?

We would like to see all of the practical suggestions mentioned in this response taken forward in order to improve the claimant's experience of the ESA / WCA process. However, if asked to identify one thing in particular that we would wish to change, it would be a more stringent requirement for Decision Makers to seek the views of a claimant's own GP or clinical professional. Being routinely in possession of such information would allow the Decision Maker to take a decision based on all the available information rather than solely on the WCA report. The requirement to provide additional clinical information should not financially disadvantage any claimant.

Scrutiny Committee – 4 September 2012

10. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 2 August 2012

The Chairman will update members on the issues raised by Scrutiny members at the District Executive meeting held on 2 August 2012.

Attached for information is a copy of the draft minutes from the District Executive meeting held on 2 August 2012.

MEETING: DE.03: 12:13
DATE 02.08.12

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **District Executive** held on **Thursday 2nd August 2012** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(9.30 a.m. – 11.55 a.m.)

Present:

Members: Ric Pallister (in the Chair)

Tony Fife
Henry Hobhouse
Michael Lewis

Patrick Palmer
Sylvia Seal
Angie Singleton

Also Present:

Carol Goodall
Nigel Mermagen

Sue Steele
Martin Wale

Mrs Lesley Boucher, SSDC representative on the Yeovil District Hospital Board of Governors
Karen Collins, Somerset Community Foundation

Officers:

Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus)
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Ian Clarke	Assistant Director (Legal and Corporate Services)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
David Julian	Economic Development Manager
Colin McDonald	Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Manager

Note: All decisions were approved without dissent unless shown otherwise.

28. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2012, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

29. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Carroll, Jo Roundell Greene and Peter Seib and Mark Williams, Chief Executive.

30. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

31. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public present.

32. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that the Chief Executive would return to work on 3rd September.

33. Report from Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (Agenda Item 6)

Mrs Lesley Boucher, SSDC representative on the Yeovil District Hospital Foundation Trust, introduced the report to Members and invited questions.

Mrs Boucher confirmed that:-

- In future, supplementary information would be circulated by e-mail.
- The sources of income for the Yeovil NHS Trust would be circulated separately.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture thanked Mrs Boucher for attending and providing a comprehensive and valuable report. Members were content to note the report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive noted the report from the Yeovil District Hospital Foundation Trust.

Reason: To receive an update report from the SSDC representative of the Yeovil District Hospital Foundation Trust.

(Sylvia Seal, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture)
(sylvia.seal@southsomerset.gov.uk)

34. Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) Local Giving Match Challenge Campaign (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture introduced the report to the Committee. She said the funding requested would be a one-off grant to set off the Local Giving Campaign in Somerset.

Karen Collins of the Somerset Community Foundation advised that:-

- People would be able to donate money on-line through the localgiving.com website.
- There were currently 109 charitable groups on the website.
- The Government would match fund every £10 donated during September and any regular donations set up would be match funded for the first three months.
- Fundraising workshops would be held to help charities raise funds and look at alternative ways to sustainably fund themselves in the future.
-

In response to questions from Members it was confirmed that:-

- Monitoring of the scheme would take place and a full evaluation report would be presented to the Corporate Grants Committee in October 2012.
 - SSDC were the first Council in Somerset to support the project.
 - Any funding and donations received would be used within the local SSDC area.
-

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree the funding for the project.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive supported the work of Somerset Community Foundation and agreed to £10,000 once-off funding from the District Executive Contingency Fund to support the forthcoming Local Giving Campaign in South Somerset.

Reason: To agree to work with and support the Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) to boost awareness and uptake of the forthcoming Local Giving Campaign in South Somerset.

*(Alice Knight, Third Sector and Partnerships Manager – 01963 435061)
(alice.knight@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

35. The Localism Act – Community Right to Challenge (Agenda Item 8)

The Leader of the Council advised that in agreeing the recommendations of the report, SSDC would accept an open tender process for any Community Right to Challenge applications. He also noted that communities wishing to bid to operate SSDC services may also have to compete with private companies.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that Members may wish to consider a longer period for pre-expression of interest discussions, as detailed in the table on page 16 of the Agenda, and she recommended 12 rather than the suggested 8 weeks.

The Scrutiny Chairman reported that the comments from the Scrutiny Committee were:-

- 30 days was a long time to acknowledge and log an application.
- The applicant should be informed of the Council's decision regarding their expression of interest before it was made public.
- A list of postcodes could be added to the guidance notes to assist officers in identifying the area of the request.
- The guidance notes should include a paragraph explaining that they were also available in different formats and languages.
- Section 7 of the guidance notes on page 29 required further explanation.

The Assistant Director (Communities) agreed to take up these points in the final document.

During discussion, varying views were expressed. Some Members felt the process could be hugely bureaucratic whilst others felt their communities would embrace it as an opportunity to run a service locally. It was also questioned whether it was possible to charge for the procurement service. The Strategic Director (Place and Performance) cautioned that the process was intended to be competitive and to operate a service at a reduced cost to local residents.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree the recommendations, subject to the comments of the Scrutiny Committee, and, the proposed 12 weeks for the pre-expression of interest discussions.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive agreed the process and decision making route for responding to the Community Right to Challenge, as set out in the Appendix A (as amended) to the report.

Reason: To set out the proposed SSDC approach to responding to the Community Right to Challenge under the Localism Act 2011.

*(Helen Rutter, Assistant Director (Communities) – 01935 462060)
(helen.rutter@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

36. Affordable Housing Development Programme (Agenda Item 9)

The Leader advised that the supply of affordable housing was now slowing down. Yarlington Homes were coming towards the end of their housing replacement programme and the way forward may now be through 'bought not built' properties in the future. He also advised that any re-negotiation of Section 106 agreements for housing development sites could affect the future affordable housing agreed at the sites.

The Corporate Strategic Housing Manager noted that the report contained both the affordable properties built in the last 4 years and those projected to be built in the forthcoming year. He said that although affordable housing had been negotiated as part of many housing schemes, it did not necessarily mean they would be built in the near future. He reported that there were 4 rural exception sites currently under construction or in negotiation, two of which had received £1.3m funding from the Homes and Communities Association.

Members thanked the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager for providing a comprehensive report and were content to agree the recommendations.

- RESOLVED:** That District Executive:
1. note the outturn position of the Affordable Housing Development Programme for 2011/12;
 2. confirm the re-allocation of £165,000 from the Yarlington scheme at Sparkford to increase the rural exception scheme fund;
 3. agreed an additional allocation of £20,000 for the Raglan scheme at East Street, Chard.

Reason: To update Members on the final position of the Affordable Housing Development Programme for 2011/12 and make minor amends to the allocations within the existing budget.

*(Colin McDonald, Corporate Strategic Housing Manager – 01935 462133)
(colin.mcdonald@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

37. SSDC Heritage Service – The way forward (Agenda Item 10)

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture drew Members attention to the reduced cost of providing the heritage service from £173,300 in 2008 to £76,600 in 2012. She asked that Members agree the recommendation to continue the service at a cost of £56,300 in future.

The Economic Development Manager provided Members with a comprehensive overview of the heritage service past history and recent achievements. He noted the main problems associated with converting the service to a charitable trust and he asked Members to agree the recommendation to continue the service at a reduced cost for the present time.

Joseph, a volunteer at the CHAC site, spoke briefly about the work and the visitors to the centre.

In response to questions from Members, the Economic Development Manager confirmed that:-

- Visits to the CHAC site were by telephone appointment
- No entrance fee was currently charged however this would change in the next year.
- Positive marketing to encourage more visitors would be starting shortly.

During discussion, Members expressed their disappointment that charitable status was not possible at the current time and were content to agree to continue the service on a reduced budget as recommended.

- RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:
1. noted the difficulties likely to be encountered if SSDC were to set up a Charitable Trust for SSDCs Heritage Collection at this time.
 2. noted that following exploration of Trust Status for the Heritage Service as authorised by District Executive Committee in November 2011, members agreed to SSDC continuing to manage the current service at a reduced funding level as described in the report.

Reason: To agree an option for the future delivery of the Council's Heritage Service.

*(David Julian, Economic Development Manager – 01935 462279)
(david.julian@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

38. Village Hall Waste Collections (Agenda Item 11)

The Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change advised that in future, unless village halls only opened “wholly or mainly” for public meetings, then a charge would have to be made to collect their waste. He noted that the report gave a number of options for the introduction of the charges and that although option 3 was recommended, he was inclined towards option 2 with the addition of allowing individual village halls to apply for a transitional grant to help with the costs in the first year.

The Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) advised that the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 had altered the definition of household and commercial waste for village halls, clubs, societies and churches. Public meeting waste was defined as household waste and collection authorities had a duty to collect this waste and recover the cost of collection. However, waste from premises used for business, sport, recreation, clubs, societies and social events was classified as commercial waste. Although the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) could collect commercial waste at commercial rates, village halls had the option to use a private commercial company if they preferred.

During discussion, Members agreed the option 2 was the preferred option with the addition of allowing individual village halls to apply for a transitional grant to help with the costs in the first year if genuine hardship could be demonstrated. The application for the transitional grants would be made to the Area Development teams. Members also asked

that the costs of collection of waste from village halls be made clear to the hall owners in future.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree the amended recommendations of the report.

- RESOLVED:** That the District Executive:-
1. agreed to request that the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) offer a basic waste and recycling service to all village halls and community meeting places in South Somerset;
 2. agreed to request that the SWP instruct the contractor to recover the cost of this collection directly from the relevant community and village halls from October 2012;
 3. agreed that individual community and village halls apply to the Area Development Teams for financial transitional assistance of up to £45 per village hall for one year only on proven hardship grounds, to provide transition support and allow time to develop new arrangements. The funding to be found from savings in the waste formula and a further £2,000 from the District Executive Contingency Fund.

Reason: To agree a consistent waste and recycling service be offered to community and village halls across South Somerset.

*(Vega Sturgess, Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) – 01935 462200)
(vega.sturgess@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

39. The Green Deal (Agenda Item 12)

The Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change advised that a cross-party group of Members and officers would be set up to look at the implications of the Green Deal for SSDC. He said that funding had been sought to enable infra-red photographs to be taken of every property in South Somerset to demonstrate to householders where their major heat losses were. He explained how the Green Deal would work and its possible drawbacks for residents and he said it was envisaged that SSDC may introduce a no-cost scheme which aimed to help local residents.

Following a brief discussion, the Portfolio Holder for Property and Climate Change confirmed that he would be shortly issuing a press release on the discontinuation of the Warmhomes loft insulation scheme in October 2012.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to agree the Green Deal action plan as attached at Appendix One.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive agreed the Green Deal action plan as attached at Appendix One to the Agenda report.

Reason: To agree a Green Deal action plan for South Somerset to help households to reduce their energy bills

*(Vega Sturgess, Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) – 01935 462200)
(vega.sturgess@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

40. 2012/13 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the quarter ending 30th June 2012 (Agenda Item 13)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) advised that some income generating services including car parking charges and development control application fees were experiencing a drop in income due to the ongoing recession.

In response to questions from Members, she confirmed that the business rates discretionary relief scheme and all business rate discounts would be reviewed later in the year as the current scheme was overspent. Members requested that the Yeovil Vision and the Market Town Investment Group should be involved in the business rate relief review.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

- a. noted the current 2012/13 financial position of the Council;
- b. noted the reasons for variations to the previously approved budgets as detailed in paragraphs 3.3 and that Management Board are taking steps to reduce the anticipated overspend;
- c. noted the transfers made to and from reserves outlined in paragraph 7.1 and the position of the Area Reserves as detailed in Appendix C and the Corporate Reserves as detailed in Appendix D;
- d. noted the virements made under delegated authority as detailed in Appendix B;

Reason: To update 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 June 2012.

*(Donna Parham, Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) – 01935 462225)
(donna.parham@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

41. 2012/13 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the quarter ending 30th June 2012 (Agenda Item 14)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) introduced the report to Members. In response to a question, she confirmed that the Section 106 money detailed in the report were the actual funds held by SSDC and did not include any negotiated or expected funding in the future.

Members were content to confirm the recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:-

- a. approved the revised capital programme spend as detailed in paragraph 6;
- b. approved the return of £26,000 to capital balances as detailed in

paragraph 8;

- c. noted the progress of individual capital schemes as detailed in Appendix A;
- d. noted the slippage in the capital programme as detailed in paragraph 8;
- e. noted the total land disposals to registered social landlords as detailed in Appendix B;
- f. noted the balance of S106 deposits by developers held in a reserve as detailed in Appendix C;
- g. noted the current position with regard to funds held by the Wessex Home Improvement Loans as detailed in paragraph 11.

Reason: To update Members on the current financial position of the capital programme of the Council and to report the reasons for variations from approved budgets for the period 1st April to 30th June 2012.

*(Donna Parham, Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) – 01935 462225)
(donna.parham@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

42. District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 15)

The following additions to the Forward Plan were noted:

- Safer Somerset Group - September 2012

RESOLVED: That the District Executive:

1. approved the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A with the following amendment:-
 - Safer Somerset Group – September 2012
2. noted the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Reason: The Forward Plan is a statutory document.

*(Ian Clarke, Assistant Director (Legal & Corporate Services) – 01935 462184)
(ian.clarke@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

43. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 16)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive would take place on Thursday 6th September 2012 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil commencing at 9.30 a.m.

*(Ian Clarke, Assistant Director (Legal & Corporate Services) – 01935 462184)
(ian.clarke@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

.....
Chairman

Scrutiny Committee – 4 September 2012

11. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 6 September 2012

Lead Officers: *Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager*

Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager

Contact Details: *emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462566 or*
joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462077

Scrutiny Committee members will receive a copy of the District Executive agenda containing the reports to be considered at the meeting on 6 September 2012.

Members are asked to read the reports and bring any concerns/issues from the reports to be discussed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 4 September 2012.

The Chairman will take forward any views raised by Scrutiny members to the District Executive meeting on 6 September 2012.

Scrutiny Committee – 4 September 2012

12. Verbal Update on Task and Finish Reviews

The Task and Finish Review Chairs will give a brief verbal update on progress made.

Scrutiny Committee – 14 August 2012

13. Scrutiny Work Programme

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Issue for Main Scrutiny Cttee	Budget	Background/Description	Lead Officer/ Lead Member
30 Oct '12	Joint Working/shared services	✓		An initial report to Scrutiny Committee from the Chief Executive / Management Board outlining the Council's current approach to joint working / shared services, and the benefits to date. Scrutiny Committee members will then be able to identify any areas for further investigation / information as appropriate.	
30 Oct '12	Yarlington's community initiatives, funding and debt work	✓		Scrutiny Committee have requested that an appropriate officer from the Community Initiatives Team at Yarlington attends a meeting to discuss with members their Community Initiatives work.	Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager
30 Oct '12	Consideration of report of the Car Parking Strategy review Group	✓		At the June 2012 Scrutiny Committee meeting it was agreed that Scrutiny would consider the draft report of the Car Parking review group a month prior to the reports' consideration by District Executive.	Martin Woods – Assistant Director – Economy.
2 Jan '13	Localism – relationship between tiers of local government (County / District / Town and Parish) to ensure effective working	✓		Initial presentation to full Scrutiny Committee on the relevant legislative changes and how SSDC are planning to implement them.	Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Issue for Main Scrutiny Cttee	Budget	Background/Description	Lead Officer/ Lead Member
5 Feb '13	Innovation Centre – occupancy levels	✓		Initial Portfolio Holder presentation to Scrutiny to give an overview of the service and whether ambitions of the centre are being met, so that members can identify any specific areas for potential further investigation from an informed position.	
2 April '13	Update report on the site management of the Gypsy Park Homes at Ilton and Tintinhull	✓		At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 28 th February 2012 members received an update on the management of park home sites and requested a 12 monthly report on this issue.	Steve Joel, Assistant Director (Health & Well being) Ric Pallister – Portfolio Holder - Leader, Strategy and Policy
TBC	Monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the HomeFinder Somerset Review	✓		To give Scrutiny members an opportunity to ensure their recommendations as accepted by the HomeFinder Somerset Board are being implemented as stated.	Jo Gale Scrutiny Manager Ric Pallister – Portfolio Holder - Leader, Strategy and Policy
TBC	Review of Capital Strategy	✓			
TBC	Report from the Yeovil Vision Board and the Market Towns Investment Group about the DCLG High Street Innovation Funding.	✓		This was requested at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 3 July 2012 Members To receive a report from the Yeovil Vision Board and the Market Towns Investment Group regarding what has been done or is intended to be done with their share of the DCLG High Street Innovation Funding.	

Task & Finish Reviews

Date Commenced	Title	Members
December 2011	Review of Member Representation on Outside Organisations	Martin Wale – Review Chair Carol Goodall Dave Bulmer Colin Winder Gina Seaton Sue Osborne
March 2012	Housing and Council Tax Benefits	Carol Goodall – Review Chair Dave Bulmer Sue Osborne Jenny Kenton David Norris David Recardo Colin Winder
August 2012	Health Inequalities Scrutiny Programme	Cathy Bakewell – Review Chair Carol Goodall Paul Maxwell
October 2012	Budget – Inescapable Bids and Additional Income Streams	Martin Wale – Review Chair Carol Goodall Derek Yeomans Sue Steele David Norris Paul Maxwell
October 2012	Student Engagement	To be agreed
To be agreed	Review of the Market Towns Investment Group (MTIG)	To be agreed

Scrutiny Committee - 4 September 2012

14. Date of Next Meeting

Members are requested to note that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will be held on Tuesday 2 October 2012 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.
