

South Somerset District Council

Draft minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 4 September 2012 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 1.00pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer
Carol Goodall
Peter Gubbins

Pauline Lock
Ian Martin (Sub)
Sue Osborne

Wes Read
Martin Wale
Nick Weeks

Also Present:

Councillors Angie Singleton, Gina Seaton, Jo Roundell-Green Sylvia Seal and Ric Pallister

Officers:

Rina Singh
Catherine Hodsmen
Steve Joel
Emily McGuinness
Anne Herridge

Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Performance Officer
Assistant Director- Health and Well-Being
Scrutiny Manager
Committee Administrator

41. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 14 August 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Lock, Nigel Gage and Cathy Bakewell

43. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

44. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

46. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman thanked Cllrs Martin Wale, Nick Weeks and Cathy Bakewell for the work they had carried out on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee on the development of the Economic Development Strategy.

47. Portfolio Holder Presentation (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Sylvia Seal Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture gave a short presentation to update members on the challenges and opportunities facing the services within her portfolio comprising of: Sport; Countryside; Arts; Heritage; Health and Well-Being; Third Sector and Partnerships and Member Development.

During the presentation members were informed of the following:

Sport Countryside and Art

- Due to modern day living and smaller houses and gardens young children needed the opportunity to play outside in large open spaces the many local parks and open spaces within South Somerset now gave them that opportunity ;
- Community health walks had been well attended;
- The Green Flag had been awarded to the country parks again;
- Both the Olympic Torch relay and visit by the Queen had proved popular with members of the public;
- Several skate and play parks in South Somerset had recently been refurbished;
- All school holiday activities in the area had been well attended;
- There had been several efficiency savings made within the service;
- The Octagon Theatre and Country parks have over 3,500 volunteer days a year saving the service at least £150,000 a year;
- The transfer of the Community Bus to Yarlington Housing Group saved the service another £30,000 a year;
- Wincanton Community Sports Centre was set to save £107,000 over the next 10 years due to a change in the maintenance service;
- Surplus wood from the country parks was now offered for sale;
- The manager of the Octagon Theatre was part of a group of theatre managers who collectively reviewed various concerns at local theatres such as pricing issues etc., He would give a broad review to scrutiny members before Xmas about current issues within the theatre world;

Tourism, Heritage and the Lean Programme

- A chart of the services to be leaned was handed out to Scrutiny Committee members, the programme was set to focus on statutory services in the first instance;
- The Heritage Service had already been leaned saving 30% of the 2010/11 budget, further cuts had already been agreed by DX and even with the lean savings staff were still highly motivated;

- Footfall at both Yeovil and Cartgate Tourist Information Centres had increased and the new restaurant at the Cartgate TIC had boosted visitor numbers even further. Economic Development had been closely involved and would continue to be involved in maintaining both services, but there was a need to update the SSDC website as future generations were more likely to want to have information on Tourism at their fingertips;
- Tourism played a large part in the economy of South Somerset;

Health and Well-Being

- Two officers from the service: Charlie Coward and Cheryl Lingard were congratulated on the work they had carried out on the highly successful healthy lifestyle advice centres.

The Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director for Health and Well-Being both responded to members' comments and questions. Responses included the following:

- The Octagon Theatre was benchmarked against other theatres under the control of local Authorities and other theatres outside of the area that had a similar number of seats, the report from the manager of the Octagon Theatre due later in year would explain the process in more detail;
- The programme of events at the Octagon had again been very successful; tickets for the pantomime were already up on last year. Income from pantomime ticket sales accounted for 20% of the annual turnover;
- There would be no financial advantage of running the Octagon as a trust;
- GP referrals were not made to the Healthy Lifestyle service as such, but information was often picked up by way of conversation whilst visiting the surgeries. Referrals were not as structured as they once had been since Health Centres came under Health Trusts.
- It was recognised that there was a shortfall in sports facilities in Chard mainly due to the lack of available land that issue would be addressed in the long term, but short term it may be possible to get the schools on board to make their sports pitches more accessible;
- Once the Olympics and Paralympics were over it would be important to maintain the motivation for sports
- Consideration would be given to the suggestion of advertising how successful the Octagon Theatre summer school had been.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Sylvia Seal for attending the meeting.

48. TEN Performance Management System (Agenda Item 8)

The Performance Officer provided members with a refresher demonstration of the TEN performance system

Members felt this new format was a great improvement but questioned how many members would actually access the information contained within it.

In conclusion, members were told that once the system was set up there were no hidden costs. It was quicker to obtain relevant information than trawling through spread sheets.

Concern was raised that any member could look at another's list of favourite topics, they were told that consideration would be given to that issue.

49. Employment Support Assessment (Agenda item 9)

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report as detailed in the agenda, the main recommendation was to ensure that the Atos report should only form part of the decision making process, evidence from a professional known by the claimant should also be used in order to avoid inaccurate decisions being overturned at costly Tribunals.

Members supported the recommendations detailed from paragraph 8 in the agenda report. It was felt that a great deal of officer time was taken up dealing with the tribunals; the Atos contract should be reviewed and better overall communication was required.

Cllr Ric Pallister had sent a covering letter with the report to David Laws MP, saying that a different work ethic should be considered in order to reduce the costs and misery caused by the current state of affairs.

The Vice Chairman thanked the Scrutiny Manager for the in-depth report and endorsed Cllr Pallister's statement.

50. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 2 August 2012 (Agenda item 10)

There were no verbal updates but members did confirm that in future they were happy not to have the District Executive minutes printed in the Scrutiny Committee agenda.

51. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 6 September 2012 (Agenda item 11)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 6 September 2012. It was agreed that the following comments and questions would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration.

Economic Development Strategy 2012-2015

In general, the Committee would like to thank those officers who had worked hard to take into account the views of the Committee expressed at the last meeting.

They raised the following points:

- Members would like a map included, maybe on the front page, showing the geographical location of Yeovil and South Somerset.
- Members of the Committee suggest that the Action Plan should be included in the main body of the Strategy to give it the priority and status that it requires – the Action Plan is arguably the most important part of the Strategy.
- In terms of the Action Plan itself, members made the following comments:
 - Could the actions be displayed in priority order within each aim, the highest priority action listed first?
 - The indicator of 100% of Planning Applications responded to within deadlines doesn't seem an appropriate indicator to ensure that the planning process is used to preserve the integrity of our town centres – perhaps something relating to change of use applications would be more suitable?

- Under Aim 3 of the Action Plan, Action one could be amended to reflect other local cottage industries besides only food production – perhaps the word 'food' could be removed?
- Members would like to see the promotion of agriculture strengthened and suggest that it reads as follows: Promote and support agriculture and where appropriate facilitate diversification of agricultural and other land based industries.

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring report – 1st Quarter 2012/13

Members in general were happy with the revised format but asked that the following be noted:

- P1008 – Members ask that a formal comment could be sent to Somerset County Council to make them aware of the impact of their funding decisions on frontline services to our communities;
- P1003 – Members seek further clarification – how many is a 'couple of appeals'?
- Members of the Committee feel that Appendix C could be available on TEN so that members who are interested in the data can access it as they wish;
- Following the TEN demonstration given at the Scrutiny Committee meeting, members requested that all members are given the same demonstration and the Director suggested that a presentation to each Area Committee would be the most appropriate way of achieving this.

Somerset Community Safety Partnership Merger

Members endorsed the recommendations contained in the report and sought clarification as to how the performance of the partnership would be monitored within SSDC?

Wincanton Community Sports Centre restructuring of Contractual and Funding arrangements (Confidential)

Members had several questions relating to this report and were grateful to the Assistant Director – Health and Well-Being and the Assistant Director – Finance and Corporate Services for joining the meeting at short notice to answer questions. Members were reassured that the report to DX would be amended to include the Ten Year Plan and explain fully the funding sources.

52. Verbal Update on Task & Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 12)

Council Tax Reduction

Cllr Carol Goodall, Chairman of the Task & Finish Review reported that there had been an error on the Overview and Scrutiny Work programme and wanted to clarify that Cllr Sue Steele had been part of the Task and Finish review group since the beginning and Cllr David Recardo had not participated due to work commitments.

She went on to explain that task and finish reviews often entailed a great deal of work and members should advise the review chairs if they were struggling with the workload or felt they could not give enough of their time.

As part of the consultation stage, paper copies of the lengthy questionnaire had been sent to **all** Council Tax Benefit recipients within South Somerset, a post card

questionnaire would now be sent to **all** residents within South Somerset. The next meeting of the group would be held on 19 September to ascertain how the consultation was going.

Outside Organisations

Members were informed that a report would be presented to Scrutiny Committee in October 2012,

Budget - Inescapable Bids and Additional Income Streams

Members were informed that this piece of work had to be completed by mid December 2012.

Gypsy and Traveller Health Inequalities

The Scrutiny Manager reported that this review entailed a great deal of work and the data required was very prescriptive. A meeting was due to be held at Yeovil Innovation Centre during the morning of Friday 28 September 2012 for various groups and stakeholders.

Student Engagement

Members were informed that as the Student Engagement Task and Finish review would involve youngsters between the ages of 16 – 19 the group would work with Yeovil College

Several members wanted it noted that they were unhappy that the meeting of Full Council scheduled for 20 September 2012 had been cancelled.

53 Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager)

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(Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager)

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

54. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 2 October 2012 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman