

South Somerset District Council

Draft minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 2 October 2012 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 12.05pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Peter Gubbins	Sue Osborne
Cathy Bakewell	Pauline Lock	Wes Read
Dave Bulmer	Tony Lock	Nick Weeks
Nigel Gage	Graham Middleton	

Officers:

Saveria Moss	Family Support Programme - Project Manager
Donna Parham	Assistant Director, Finance & Corporate Services
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Committee Administrator

55. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Graham Middleton requested that the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 4 September 2012 be amended to indicate his attendance at the meeting. Subject to the change being made, the minutes were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

56. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Maxwell and Martin Wale.

57. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

58. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

60. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed members that she had attended the Council Tax reduction drop-in session at Langport. She had also attended the latest Somerset Waste Partnership Board meeting where it had been mentioned that above normal increases in waste in wheelie bins during April to August was being investigated. The Scrutiny Manager also reminded members of the next Joint Waste Scrutiny meeting on 18 October.

61. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 6 September 2012 (Agenda item 7)

There were no verbal updates.

62. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 October 2012 (Agenda item 8)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 4 October 2012. It was agreed that the following comments and questions would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

Report from Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Members raised several queries:

- Reference at the bottom of page 1 to the development of a multi-storey car park – members asked for more detail as they had no knowledge of the proposal
- What were the views of the governors on the findings of the recent survey conducted by the King's Fund that 40% of NHS finance officers feared that from 2013 care levels in the NHS would reduce due to budget reductions and efficiency savings?
- How were things going regarding the progress of integration with Public Health.

"Family Futures" – The Family Support Programme for South Somerset

Members felt it was a worthwhile project and the concept was good, however they raised a few general concerns regarding:

- The source of funding for the work undertaken should the criteria not be met for results funding
- Whether sourcing the number of volunteers required was achievable.
- Assurances that regarding SSDC staff becoming volunteers:
 - that they would be safe
 - that work pressures and workloads would permit the release of the required volunteer staff
 - that any additional pressures associated with undertaking the volunteer role would not impact upon SSDC
 - monitoring of the 'staff release time' to ensure no additional workloads
- Scrutiny Committee requested an update report in 6 months.

Retained Business Rates – Formation of a Somerset Pool

Members were generally supportive of the principle of being in a pool. However, they shared the concerns raised by the officer's presentation, relating to the risks involved if one of the authorities in the pool should have a reduction in business rate income. The Committee also felt that officers should continue to negotiate to ensure that should

SSDC enter into pooling arrangements, we would be **no worse off** than if we remained outside pooling arrangements.

Wide Area Networks Links – Save to Earn

Members were supportive of the recommendations, but did ask if there were any other future major I.T. projects likely to come forward in the near future.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan for 2013/14

After receiving a short overview from the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services), members were content to endorse the report.

District Executive Forward Plan

Last year at the October District Executive a resolution was passed that a full review report of the Local Strategic Partnership would be due in Nov 2012 – but it was not indicated on the forward plan?

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 following items 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).

Photovoltaics at Wincanton Sports Centre (Confidential)

Members were content to endorse the recommendations although it was commented that figures on the 'whole of life' costings would have been useful.

Consent to Dispose of a Third Party Property (Confidential)

Members did not raise any concerns regarding the disposal of this specific property but did comment about similar 'disposals' in the future:

- The Committee suggested that it should be routine for the local ward member to be consulted at the earliest opportunity on such matters in the future.
- Members felt there needed to be vigorous monitoring of the transfer of such properties and that a standing item should be included on District Executive agendas.

63. Verbal Update on Task & Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 9)

Council Tax Benefit Changes

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the group had met recently to look at the interim results of the South Somerset consultation. They had focussed on looking at the comments made to see if anything had been raised that had not been considered in the review. The group reviewed the consultation response levels across Somerset and had requested details of Sedgemoor District Councils strategy as they had achieved an excellent response.

Their next meeting would be looking at updated financial modelling.

Budget - Inescapable Bids and Additional Income Streams

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that the initial meeting would take place on Friday 5 October.

Gypsy and Traveller Health Inequalities

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the stakeholder event held the previous week had been well received.

Student Engagement

The Scrutiny Manager reported that work was continuing, and it was hoped the first meeting with students would be arranged for January 2013.

64. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members of the report due at the next meeting about shared services. Members expressed a preference for a written report and not just a presentation.

The Scrutiny Manager also informed members that there was a need to review the Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief. Members agreed that the item should be added to the Scrutiny Forward Plan for a Task and Finish review once resources were available.

Members were also informed that Councillor Tony Lock was the SSDC representative on the Police and Crime Panel, and would receive induction training at the end of October. He would give an update to members at the Scrutiny Committee meeting in December.

ACTION: That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager)
(emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462566)
(Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager)
(joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077)

65. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 30 October 2012 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman