

South Somerset District Council

Draft minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 30 October 2012 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 12.35pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Cathy Bakewell	Pauline Lock	Wes Read
Dave Bulmer	Tony Lock	Martin Wale (to 11.25am)
Nigel Gage	Graham Middleton	Nick Weeks
Carol Goodall	Sue Osborne (from 10.40am)	

Also present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Henry Hobhouse, Gina Seaton

Officers:

Ken Comber	Yarlington Housing Group
Phyllida Culpin	Yarlington Housing Group
Mark Williams	Chief Executive
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

66. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 2 October 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Gubbins and Paul Maxwell.

68. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Cathy Bakewell declared a personal interest in item 8 of the Scrutiny agenda as she was on the Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority.

Councillors Dave Bulmer, Carol Goodall and Nick Weeks mentioned they were members of the Market Towns Investment Group (District Executive agenda item 7).

69. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

71. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed members that the car parking strategy had been moved to the spring in order to fully assess the implications of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) - the report to Scrutiny Committee would be in March. She also noted that the last Waste Scrutiny meeting had considered future budget setting and service delivery.

72. Yarlington Housing Group Presentation on Community Initiatives (Agenda item 7)

The Chairman welcomed Phyllida Culpin (Executive Director) and Ken Comber (Head of Resident Involvement & Community Investment) of Yarlington Housing Group. They gave a presentation about Yarlington's community fund and community investment projects. It was explained that their community investment priorities were:

- Employment, education and training
- Health and wellbeing
- Initiatives to raise self-esteem and positive behaviour
- Access to services

It was highlighted that there had been 59 successful applications to the community fund last year, with funding contributions ranging from £200 to £5,800 to which there had been 24,130 beneficiaries. Community investment projects were briefly explained including:

- Somerset Rural Youth project – moped loan scheme
- Careers SW – employment advice
- Youth and Community Development Project
- Somerset Community Foundation – Surviving Winter
- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) – specialist money advice
- CAB – volunteer work experience project
- Mandala Specialist Therapeutic Service
- Barnardo's Revolutions
- Inspired to Achieve
- South Somerset Mind Wellbeing Project
- Camelot Credit Union

The officers explained that the Yarlington's Community Investment was about making a difference in the community, and was incorporated into their 30 year business plan. In response to comments made by members, Ms Culpin commented that:

- South Somerset Together would be undertaking a scoping exercise regarding rural public transport, to which Yarlington would be the project sponsor
- If members had specific issues within their wards they were recommended to make contact with Yarlington, and parish walkabouts could be arranged if necessary.
- Garden maintenance was acknowledged as an issue for some residents, and Yarlington were looking to establish a kind of work experience scheme to help address the matter.

- Until recently they were only collecting data on four points of the equalities criteria, but all nine points were now being collected.

Members thanked Ms Culpin and Mr Comber for their informative presentation.

73. Shared Working – Update Report (Agenda item 8)

The Chief Executive introduced his report as shown in the agenda. During a lively discussion members raised several comments including:

- The necessity for several senior high level officers at Area East Committee meetings
- Quantity of projects in the pipeline. Shared working with East Devon hadn't progressed as had originally been envisaged.
- Relationship with Somerset County Council could be better; were there opportunities to be better joined geographically through sharing of office space?

In response to comments made the Chief Executive noted that:

- Comments about officer attendance were acknowledged and would be looked into.
- With regard to East Devon, both councils had their respective financial pressures, and the situation was now more about assessing what could be gone without rather than what could be shared. Sharing was still an option to make something more affordable and options would be worked upon when opportunities arose.
- The Leader was aware of the opportunities and benefits of working on the same sites as other service providers.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for the update on shared working.

74. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 October 2012 (Agenda item 9)

The Chairman reminded members that a Special District Executive meeting had been arranged for 7 November 2012 to consider business rates pooling arrangements.

75. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1 November 2012 (Agenda item 10)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 1 November 2012. It was agreed that the following comments and questions would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

Localism Act – Community Right to Bid

- Rec 2 – Scrutiny questioned whether the process should be reviewed after a defined number of applications/bids had been considered rather than after the specified 6 months.
 - Compensation – members asked for details about which budget this will come from and how much will be allocated
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Market Towns Vision, Community Planning and the High Street Innovation Fund (Portas Plus) Proposals

- The Portfolio Holder decision taken in June relating to the allocation of the £100k Portas funding stated that the precise draw down mechanisms would be agreed at a later stage, can the Portfolio Holder provide a brief summary of the actual process that MTIG has agreed?

Community Office Opening Hours

- Page 30 – New opening pattern – Scrutiny members sought clarification about the length of the trial for the new opening hours and the monitoring arrangements.
- Scrutiny also sought clarification about the interim arrangements for staff during the trial (e.g. would they be doing other work if not manning the front office etc.?)

Investment in Infrastructure to Support and Develop the Local Economy

- Members were supportive that the process commence but sought clarification that the service had sufficient capacity to undertake the work and it would not cause other work to be delayed.

The Leasing of 34 and 36 Goldcroft, Yeovil

- Members were concerned about rec. 4 with the money to be vired from the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) budget – what happens in the future if there is more interest in DFGs? Is there a risk?
- Are there risks associated with having no money in the Empty Homes Budget?

Capital Budget Monitoring Report for Quarter Ending 30 Sept 2012

- Members queried when the capital strategy would be revised?
- Page 60 – Air Cooling Equipment ICT – 15K remaining budget, the project is complete, will this money be returned to the capital budget.
- Page 62 – Affordable Housing – Lyde Road Key Site – 1K remaining budget, the project is complete will this money be returned to the capital budget
- Page 62 – members asked for an update on the current situation with the Rope Walk, West Coker.
- Page 68 – Birchfield Sewer Pollution Easement Works – comments mention £178k surplus – members queried is this would 'go back into the pot?'

Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for Quarter Ending 30 Sept 2012

- Page 82 – Scrutiny sought clarification about interpretation of the figures for Revenues and Benefits.

76. Inescapable Bids Scrutiny Task and Finish Group (Agenda item 11)

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Sue Steele, introduced the report as shown in the agenda and reminded members that bids could still be modified as they progressed through the process.

Members considered the report and several made the comment that the follow up response for bid reference E17 was difficult to comprehend and questioned why pitch fees had been frozen.

ACTION: That the report be noted.

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

Council Tax Benefit Changes

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the group were looking at all the comments made in response to the consultation. The final report of the group was hoped to be made to the next Scrutiny meeting, but the group were still waiting on the regulations and some specific information from Communities and Local Government. There were many elements for the group to consider as new policies would be generated from the decision made by Council.

Health Inequalities Scrutiny Programme

Chairman of the review, Councillor Cathy Bakewell reported that the review was going well, and that Councillor Goodall and herself were visiting Tintinhull and Ilton Gypsy sites the following week. She commented that the timetable set by the government programme was tight, and the work needed to be completed for the January meeting.

Student Engagement

The Scrutiny manager informed members that application forms had been circulated and that Yeovil College would primarily be involved. An interview date of 30 November 2012 had been arranged. A report to a future Scrutiny meeting would formally request members to be on the group. The group would initially meet in the new year and work would need to be completed by April to fit in with college coursework dates.

Outside Bodies

The Democratic Services Officer reported that the group were collating their final report. Due to the Scrutiny work programme and council budget setting, a report was unlikely to be made to Scrutiny Committee until February or March.

78. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

Councillor Tony Lock tendered his apologies for the next meeting, and it was agreed to move the verbal update on the Police and Crime Panel to the January meeting.

It was agreed to move the Localism item on the forward plan to the March meeting.

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that the Budget Scrutiny meeting had been arranged for 12 December 2012.

ACTION: That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager)
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(Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager)
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79. Somerset Waste Board – Forward Plan (Agenda item 14)

ACTION: That the Somerset Waste Board Forward Plan be noted.

80. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 15)

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

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Chairman