

## South Somerset District Council

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

(10.04 a.m. – 11.55am)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer  
Nigel Gage  
Peter Gubbins  
Pauline Lock

Paul Maxwell  
Graham Middleton  
Sue Osborne

Wes Read  
Martin Wale  
Nick Weeks

**Also present:**

Councillors Tim Carroll and Gina Seaton.

**Officers:**

Ian Potter  
Donna Parham  
Catherine Hodsmen  
Emily McGuinness  
Becky Sanders

Revenues and Benefits Manager  
Assistant Director, Finance and Corporate Services  
Performance Officer and LSP Coordinator  
Scrutiny Manager  
Democratic Services Officer

---

### 81. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 30 October 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

---

### 82. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cathy Bakewell, Carol Goodall and Tony Lock.

---

### 83. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

---

### 84. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

---

### 85. Issues Arising from Previous Meetings (Agenda Item 5)

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

---

## **86. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

The Chairman informed members that there would be a need to hold an additional meeting in order to consider and make comments on the report of the Task and Finish Group regarding Council Tax benefit changes.

She noted that the Scrutiny Manager and herself had attended a recent Scrutiny Network meeting where the focus had been the Health Scrutiny, during the event it was highlighted that Somerset did not appear to have a Health Scrutiny Committee, which other counties had. The Scrutiny Manager suggested that a report be made to Scrutiny Committee in February regarding suggestions for Health Scrutiny arrangements in Somerset.

The Scrutiny Manager also reminded members of the budget meeting on 12 December. She noted that when the meeting was originally arranged it had not coincided with any meetings at Somerset County Council (SCC). However meetings had since been rescheduled by SCC due to the recent flooding. As a consequence many 'twin-hatters' had given their apologies for the budget meeting.

---

## **87. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 1 November 2012 (Agenda item 7)**

The Chairman commented that many of the Scrutiny comments were included in the minutes that had been circulated.

---

## **88. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 6 December 2012 (Agenda item 8)**

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

### **South Somerset Voluntary and Community Action**

- Members noted that it was difficult to scrutinise this in the absence of a written report. Whilst members continue to be supportive of the work of the SSVCA and note that the issues they are currently facing are different from those encountered in the past, members did raise some concerns over the long term sustainability of the SSVCA and hoped that the presentation given during the meeting would answer their queries.

### **South Somerset Together (SST) Strategic Partnership**

- It was commented that the SST website needed attention as much information was out of date.
  - Members again raised concern that there might be some duplication of work
  - Members sought clarification as to how the strategy group would report back on progress
  - Clarification was sought about how much value SSDC was getting from the partnership, and how the LSP worked alongside other partnership bodies such as the Health and Wellbeing Board?
-

- Members suggested that detail of how the partnership income was used would be useful
- Monitoring of how effective the partnership is was required - clear measurable outputs are needed and an annual report to Scrutiny was suggested.

### **Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter**

- Flytipping – members sought confirmation that the cost recovery agreement with SCC was still being applied and would continue to be applied in the future.
- Sickness absence – members noted the increase in long term sickness absence. It was noted that whilst many cases of long term absence were unavoidable, absence due to work related stress could be addressed and potentially improved. Members wished to show their support to staff in the face of current changes and that all appropriate steps are being taken to minimise work related stress. Scrutiny have agreed to monitor the figures for the next quarter.

### **Local Development Scheme Update**

Last bullet point of key elements on page 15 agenda – members sought clarification that the identified risks were/would be adequately addressed/mitigated.

### **Medium Term Financial Plan Update**

- Members sought assurances that parishes would be made aware of the potential implications of referendums relating to precept increases and that all members are also copied into correspondence.

### **Capital Programme**

- CIL is due for implementation in 2014 – members sought clarification that would be when the capital strategy would be reviewed.

### **Council Tax Reforms**

Scrutiny sought clarification that the identified risks (page 35) would be adequately addressed / mitigated.

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

## **89. Budget Scrutiny (Agenda item 9)**

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report as shown in the agenda, and explained that a briefing note had been circulated to Portfolio Holders. She summarised the format for the meeting which would include Portfolio Holders highlighting their top three savings for the following year, the impact of the identified savings upon the relevant service and the consultation planned regarding the proposed changes. It was also noted that the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) was very supportive of the event. Members were reminded that there was a need to focus on policy decisions and not politics.

**ACTION:** That the report be noted.

*(Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager)*  
*(emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462566)*

---

## **90. Verbal Update on Task & Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 10)**

### **Council Tax Benefit Changes**

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the final report was being drafted and a meeting of Scrutiny members would make any comments on the report before it was finalised.

### **Health Inequalities Scrutiny Programme**

The Scrutiny Manager commented that the last meeting of the group had been cancelled due to recent flooding. A report to Scrutiny Committee would now be put back to February.

### **Student Engagement**

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that a student was due to have been interviewed the previous week, however due to illness had been unable to attend. Interviews would now take place in January.

### **Outside Bodies**

The Chair of the Task and Finish Group reported that the final report was being drafted and a report was likely to be made to Scrutiny in February or March.

---

## **91. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)**

As had been discussed at agenda items 6 and 10, the report on the Health Inequalities Scrutiny Programme would be moved to March and a report on Health Scrutiny arrangements would be made to the February meeting. The following changes and additions to the work programme were also agreed:

- Occupancy Levels at the Innovation Centre be moved to March
- Consideration of report of the Car Parking Strategy Review Group be moved to February
- Review of Capital Strategy be removed as it would be reviewed when CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) was implemented.
- Flooding – The Scrutiny Manager was requested to investigate the possibility of establishing a Joint Review of the recent flooding incidents involving all Somerset Authorities – an update would be given at the January meeting.

**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)*

---

**92. Somerset Waste Board – Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)**

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

---

**93. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)**

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

.....

Chairman