

South Somerset District Council

Draft minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 7 May 2013 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.05am –12noon)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Cathy Bakewell
Dave Bulmer
Nigel Gage

Carol Goodall
Pauline Lock
Graham Middleton

Sue Osborne
Martin Wale

Also present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Ric Pallister, Colin Winder

Officers:

Kirsty Larkins
Jon Batty
Martin Woods
Emily McGuinness
Becky Sanders

Housing and Welfare Manager
Housing Policy and Performance Officer
Assistant Director (Economy)
Scrutiny Manager
Democratic Services Officer

148. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 2 April 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

149. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Gubbins, Tony Lock, Paul Maxwell and Wes Read.

150. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Carol Goodall declared a personal interest in item 16, Review of Member Representation on Outside Bodies as she was a director of Ilminster Forum.

Councillor Pauline Lock also declared a personal interest in item 16, as she was a voting member on one of the organisations.

Councillor Graham Middleton, also declared a personal interest in item 16, as he was a voting member on Martock M3 Community Partnership.

151. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

153. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman commented that she was disappointed that the News From YDH publication appeared to have been circulated late, as an article regarding notice of governor elections referred to a deadline for nominations as 12 April.

154. Gypsy Site Management (Agenda item 7)

The Housing and Welfare Manager presented the report as shown in the agenda, and highlighted to members key points within the report. She explained that the park homes had a shelf life of around 30 years and a sinking fund had been established for their replacement. The Housing Policy and Performance Officer commented that the sites were running smoothly at the moment.

In response to comments made the officers responded:

- Maintenance costs were not an indication of the standard of the home, but were for general wear and tear, although it was acknowledged there had been issues with some of the cookers.
- Issues with individual invoicing direct to tenants by the water supplier were being addressed, and was primarily due to the location of the main water supply only going to the entrance of the sites.
- Tenants did get charged dilapidation costs, when the location of a tenant was known.
- At the start of tenancies, the tenancy agreement and maintenance handbook made it clear which party was responsible for different maintenance.
- Non park home pitches and utility blocks remained the responsibility of SSDC
- Residents on the two sites would not be affected by the 'bedroom tax'. Staff were working with the site residents to do budget exercises in preparation for reform changes.

Members thanked the officers for their informative report and requested a further update in 12 months time.

ACTION: Members to note the report.

*Kirsty Larkins, Housing and Welfare Manager
kirsty.larkins@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462744
Jon Batty, Housing Policy & Performance Officer
jon.batty@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462749*

155. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 April 2013 (Agenda item 8)

The Chairman commented that the Scrutiny comments were included in the District Executive minutes that had been circulated.

156. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 9 May 2013 (Agenda item 9)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 9 May 2013. It was agreed that the following comments and questions would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

District Wide Car Parking Strategy Review – item 6

- Scrutiny were pleased that many of their comments had been included within the document.
- Scrutiny raised a few questions and suggestions including:
 - SSDC should not be liable for software costs (for car parking machines) if individual towns and parishes should opt for variable charging rates in the future.
 - The report should contain clearer details about costs - details of maintenance costs for each car park would be beneficial to show what % of income is used for maintenance.
 - It would be beneficial if the town by town action plan indicated priorities (high, medium, low)
 - When would the annual review of charging take place each year?

Annual Review of SSDC Partnerships – item 7

- Pleased the process for reviewing partnerships annually is working well.

Future Role of the Corporate Grants Committee – item 8

- No comments

Community Right to Bid – item 9

- Scrutiny sought clarification that the reference to SCC in point 7.2 on page 15 had been made in error.

DX Forward Plan – item 10

- No comments

CONFIDENTIAL - 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 item 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).

Commercial Property Disposals – item 12 (Confidential)

- Scrutiny did not raise any concerns and were content that the recommendations go forward.

157. Report of Task and Finish Group – Health Inequalities (Agenda Item 10)

Councillor Cathy Bakewell, Chair of the Task and Finish Group, presented the report as shown in the agenda and commented that the programme had been very interesting. Each group in the programme had focussed on a different health issue and South Somerset had looked at maternity issues of the Gypsy and Traveller Community. She felt that the cost benefit analysis should be looked at for each review that the Scrutiny Committee undertook.

It was noted that Health Scrutiny structures did not exist in Somerset, but a report had been taken to the County Scrutiny Committee to look into the feasibility of having such a function. She suggested waiting to see what action the new Scrutiny Committee would take following the recent elections, before asking what progress would be made about establishing a Health Scrutiny function.

Members noted the positive outcomes of the report and thanked those involved.

ACTION: Members to note the report.

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

158. Verbal Update on Task & Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 11)

Council Tax Benefit Changes

Chair of the review group, Councillor Carol Goodall commented that monitoring and gleaning feedback was ongoing.

Countywide Review of Homelessness Strategy

The Scrutiny Manager reminded the committee that SSDC would now do their own Task and Finish review which would then be circulated to the other Somerset authorities for comment.

Business Rates – Discretionary Rate Relief

There was no update since the last meeting.

The Scrutiny Manager commented that future reviews were on hold until the new Scrutiny Committee had considered the work programme, which was planned for the next meeting.

ACTION: Members to note the updates.

159. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Manager gave updates regarding:

District-Wide Review of Flooding

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that the Flooding Steering Group had met the previous week and had discussed:

- Local pilot for community resilience
 - One stop Somerset flooding website
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- Identifying work to be done and the work of SCC as the lead flood authority and linking with examples of good practice
- Civil contingencies and the local partnership

She noted a report regarding the Joint Scrutiny of Flooding and the Flood Summit would be completed by 19 May.

Members commented that good constructive progress was being made and it was pleasing that communities were receiving feedback and information on shared resources.

Joint Waste Scrutiny

No update since the previous meeting.

Health Scrutiny

There was no update as the topic had been discussed as part agenda item 10 – Health Inequalities.

ACTION: • Members to note the updates.

160. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that at the request of the Chairman, an item on GP Commissioning would be added to the work programme for future consideration.

ACTION: Members to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

161. Somerset Waste Board – Forward Plan (Agenda item 14)

ACTION: Members to note the Somerset Waste Board Forward Plan.

162. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 15)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 4 June 2013 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

Confidential Item

The Committee resolved that the following report be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under Paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**163. Review of Member Representation on Outside Bodies (Confidential)
(Agenda Item 16)**

Chairman of the Task and Finish group, Councillor Martin Wale, presented the confidential report as shown in the agenda. He commented that the review had been a lengthy process, but very enlightening. There was a short discussion during which a couple of minor amendments to the report were suggested.

Members unanimously agreed that the report be recommended to District Executive subject to the suggested changes being made.

ACTION: Members to note the report of the Task and Finish group, and to recommend it to District Executive for consideration.

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Chairman

