

## South Somerset District Council

**Draft minutes** of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 3 December 2013 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00am –12.40pm)

Present:

**Members:** Councillor Sue Steele (in the Chair)

David Bulmer  
Nick Colbert  
Nigel Gage  
Carol Goodall

Tony Lock  
Nigel Mermagen  
Graham Middleton

Sue Osborne  
David Recardo  
Martin Wale

**Also present:**

Councillors Tim Carroll, Ric Pallister

**Officers:**

Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)
Neil Waddleton	Section 106 Monitoring Officer
David Julian	Economic Development Manager
Catherine Hodsman	Performance Officer
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

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### 86. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 5 November 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Clarke, Pauline Lock and Paul Maxwell.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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**90. Issues Arising from Previous Meetings (Agenda Item 5)**

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

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**91. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

The Chairman reminded members that the Budget Scrutiny meeting arranged for the 19 December 2013 had been cancelled. Discussion of the budget would now be included in the January agenda for consideration at the meeting on 7 January 2014.

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**92. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 7 November 2013 (Agenda item 7)**

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

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**93. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 5 December 2013 (Agenda item 8)**

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 5 December 2013. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

**Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – item 6**

- Scrutiny were pleased to note that that fly tipping figures were reducing

**Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2018/19 – item 7**

- Para 11 - Scrutiny felt reports should be requested go back to District Executive to reaffirm funding for projects which had been originally approved before 2010

**Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2013 – item 8**

- Members sought clarification as to how the document fitted in with the emerging Local Plan
- Members sought clarification on the density numbers used in the report compared to those actually being currently approved.

**Annual Housing Monitoring Report 2012-13 – item 9**

- Scrutiny were content that the recommendation go forward

**Review of Council Tax Reduction Scheme – item 10**

- The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group confirmed that the group agreed with the recommendations.
- Scrutiny asked when the financial impact upon SSDC would be reviewed

## **Proposal to give free parking in the Council's pay and display car parks over the Christmas and New Year period 2013/14 – item 11**

- The preference of Scrutiny was option 3 but with consideration of the start time being 1pm rather than 2pm in order to encourage lunchtime shoppers
- In addition to publicity / signage, Scrutiny members that the covering of parking meters should be considered so that it was very clear to the public when charging did not apply.
- Some members were of the opinion that the concept of a free parking period may be more beneficial after Christmas to support traders in quieter times
- Scrutiny sought clarification of the monitoring arrangements so that information was available for the future.

## **Replacement All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) for the Countryside Service – item 12**

- Members found it difficult to understand the financial figures in the report as the figures stated on page 50 didn't seem to tally with recommendation 1 and asked what the difference is between a 'Capital Bid' and 'A save to Earn bid' and how these definitions apply to this report.

## **Community Right to Bid – Nominations Received for Assets of Community Value – item 13**

- Scrutiny did not have any comments

## **Unified Community Grants System – item 14**

- Scrutiny requested that rec a (ii), and elsewhere throughout the report, should refer to the Portfolio Holder and (not or) the ward member etc.

## **Clarification of the process for seeking planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – item 15**

- Noted

## **Facilitating Economic Growth – Investing in Infrastructure – item 16**

- Bullet point near bottom of page 80 – Scrutiny sought clarification that SSDC had a key duty to create jobs. We understand this is a core aim, but not a duty.
- Some members sought clarification if approval of council was needed for the process given the potential significant sums of money involved.
- It was requested that for openness and transparency that the Scrutiny Chairman be informed of any revisions to the process (as detailed in 3<sup>rd</sup> para on p.84)
- They also suggested that as this process obviously has significant financial implications, that the s151 officer should be involved in any refinement/ongoing processes to ensure financial compliance.
- Whilst the Committee are broadly in support of the proposals contained in the report, they sought assurances that due consideration had been given to increased risk levels and were a little concerned with the statement that..' The District Council currently under utilises the potential of its capital reserves and maximises its financial return only through its treasury management function...."- there has been no mention previously of under-utilisation of our capital reserves in any internal or external judgements.

- Scrutiny members supported the suggestion for the assessment panel to consist of non-executive members to ensure as many members as possible are aware of and engage in this process.

#### **Somerset Growth Plan Framework – item 17**

- Members felt that any growth plan should prioritise the need to dual the A303
- Members were slightly concerned that on p.100 of the agenda that reference to the food sector seemed to not mention small rural businesses and area but focussed on market towns and larger centres.

#### **District Executive Forward Plan – item 18**

- Scrutiny did not have any 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 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).

#### **Disposal of land at plot 5, Jarman Way, Chard Business Park – item 20 (confidential)**

- Scrutiny were content with the recommendations in principle, but there were concerns about the number of affordable homes on the site
- Members sought reassurance that legal matters would be dealt with promptly.

### **94. Verbal Update on Task & Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 9)**

#### **National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) – Discretionary Rate Relief**

The Chairman informed members that the group were meeting the following day with a representative from Into Somerset to glean more information and opinions.

#### **Connecting Somerset and Devon Broadband**

The Scrutiny Manager, advised members that the next meeting would take place in Honiton on 16 January, to which representatives from BT, relevant portfolio holders from both councils and a director of Connecting Somerset and Devon broadband would be attending.

**ACTION:** Members to note the updates.

### **95. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 110)**

The Scrutiny Manager provided the following updates:

- County Wide review of Flooding – an update meeting had been held and a summary report would be produced by Christmas. She informed members that she had been in contact with the office of the Prince of Wales to discuss how the value of agricultural land could be better recognised in future flood prevention funding decisions. These discussions were promising and on-going.

- Joint Waste Scrutiny – having previously reported that SSDC would no longer be providing officer support to the Joint Waste Scrutiny, she had been requested to co-ordinate a meeting for 17 December in Taunton to discussing emerging changes with regard to some of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. The issue of supporting Joint Waste Scrutiny in the future was still under discussion with the other Somerset authorities.
- Budget Scrutiny – members were reminded that the Scrutiny Budget Meeting on 19 December had been cancelled, and the budget would be discussed at the Scrutiny Committee on 7 January.

**ACTION:** Members to note the updates.

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**96. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)**

There were no updates to the Scrutiny Work Programme,

**ACTION:** Members to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

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

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

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

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 7 January 2014 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman