

South Somerset District Council

Draft minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 5 November 2013 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00am –1.15pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (in the Chair)

David Bulmer
Pauline Clarke
Nick Colbert
Nigel Gage

Carol Goodall
Pauline Lock
Graham Middleton

Sue Osborne
David Recardo
Martin Wale

Also present:

Councillors Tim Carroll, Ric Pallister and Shane Pledger

Officers:

Adron Duckworth	Conservation Manager
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Laurence Willis	Assistant Director (Environment)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director, Finance and Corporate Services
David Julian	Economic Development Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

72. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 1 October 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

73. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Lock, Paul Maxwell and Nigel Mermagen.

74. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

75. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

77. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman made several announcements including:

- A parliamentary outreach session being organised by Sedgemoor District Council had been cancelled due to lack of interest.
 - She had attended the Assembly meeting of South Somerset Together where there had been some interesting presentations from AugustaWestland, RNAS Yeovilton, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Action for Market Towns
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78. Listed Buildings in Disrepair – Policy and Procedure (Agenda item 7)

The Conservation Manager summarised the report as shown in the agenda and gave a comprehensive presentation on the legislation, national guidance and local policy regarding listed buildings in disrepair including:

- Duties and responsibilities – owners and local authorities
- Powers of local authorities
- Options for dealing with buildings in disrepair
- Examples of some 'at risk' properties where repairs had been undertaken
- Examples of where urgent Works Notices had been served to secure buildings

During discussion members raised several comments and queries including:

- There were non-listed buildings, some of which were falling into disrepair, in Conservation Areas that were of concern
- Wording of the legislation regarding responsibilities of owners was ambiguous
- Was there definitive guidance or policy for when a local authority should take action?
- How could a building be de-listed?
- In some cases buildings seemed to be beyond repair.
- There seemed to be some inconsistencies about when it was considered to be cost effective to service Notices.

In response to comments made, the Conservation Manager explained the process for de-listing buildings and also commented that:

- Section 215 of the Planning Act could be used to require repairs to buildings in disrepair while Urgent Works Notices could be served in Conservation Areas on unlisted buildings
- Each building at risk was assessed individually to consider whether action should be taken, and the risks to SSDC regarding costs
- Serving Urgent Works Notices was not about restoring a building, but about stabilising it and preventing further deterioration.
- A particular risk to SSDC in not taking any action was to its reputation.
- Local policies regarding historic buildings were defined in the Local Plan

The Portfolio Holder for Conservation and Building Control commented that looking at alternative options for listed buildings including innovative and contemporary options needed be explored further and was something he was keen to do in the future.

The Chairman thanked the Conservation manager for his report.

ACTION: That members note the report.

*Adron Duckworth, Conservation Manager
adron.duckworth@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462652*

78. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 3 October 2013 (Agenda item 8)

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

79. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 7 November 2013 (Agenda item 9)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 7 November 2013. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

Proposed Submission Local Plan 2006 - 2028 – item 6

- Scrutiny felt that recommendation 1 should be worded to make it clear that approval was being sought for the process of going out to consultation regarding the proposed main modifications.
- It was queried if the Inspector's comments about Yeovil had been fully addressed and whether a full assessment of 'necklacing' had been done.
- With regard to employment land, the interpretation of the Inspectors comments was queried. Did his comments refer to identifying, as in location, of employment land or the quantity.
- With the changes proposed for the urban extensions for Yeovil, Scrutiny expressed concerns regarding the number and location of education places, and that the figures calculated by SCC often appeared to be under-estimated.
- Scrutiny sought clarification that we (SSDC) were confident that the proposed modifications have taken into account the comments made by the Inspector.

2013/14 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the quarter ending 30th September 2013 – item 7

- Para. 6 SSVCA - Scrutiny queried if the predicted financial loss would lead to a loss of service.

2013/14 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the quarter ending 30th September 2013 – item 8

- Page 26 of the appendix pack – Scrutiny requested a comment regarding the Ropewalk as it was omitted in the agenda report.
 - Page 18 agenda – Additional Income (bottom table) – there is reference to a play scheme at Pill Bridge Lane which indicates funding has been from Ilminster Town Council – this is incorrect and should say Ilchester.
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Adoption of a Countywide Homeless Strategy 2013-16 – item 9

- Scrutiny made no comments in addition to those made at their last meeting and recommended the strategy to District Executive.

ICT Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity using Private Cloud – Save to Earn – item 10

- Scrutiny queried that as the end date of the current contract was known whether this item could have been foreseen and hence budgeted for.

District Executive Forward Plan – item 11

- No comments were made.

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).

Proposal for Sharing Brympton Way Office Space with Somerset County Council – item 13 (Confidential)

- Scrutiny made several comments regarding this item in closed session.

Request for Flexible retirement by a Staff Member – item 14 (Confidential)

- Scrutiny did not feel it was appropriate to comment on this item.

80. Countywide Homeless Strategy and Action Plan (Agenda Item 10)

Members did not raise any comments and were content that the strategy be recommended to District Executive. The Chairman thanked the Scrutiny Manager and everyone involved with the review.

ACTION: That members note the report and recommend the strategy to District Executive.

*Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager
joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077*

81. Verbal Update on Task & Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 11)**National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) – Discretionary Rate Relief**

The Scrutiny Manager commented that the group would be shortly meeting with some external experts before considering consultation and policy formation.

Monitoring of the Council Tax Benefit Reduction

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that a report on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for year 2 would be considered by District Executive in December.

Inescapable Unavoidable Budget Pressures

This group had met on 23 October and had agreed to meet again directly following this meeting to consider the remaining bids. The group had had some discussion about the nature of Scrutiny involvement in considering such bids in future and their comments would be taken into account when discussion next year's programme.

Connecting Somerset and Devon Broadband

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that the initial meeting had been held and that she was currently in the process of arranging a meeting with representatives from the Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband project team.

ACTION: Members to note the updates.

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

The Scrutiny Managers provided the following updates:

- Countywide Strategic Housing Framework - discussions were ongoing regarding if SSDC would do their own review or whether there would be a countywide approach.
- County Wide Review of Flooding – a further meeting had been arranged to discuss progress on actions.
- Budget Scrutiny – a reminder that the meeting had been arranged for 19 December in the afternoon. Members were invited to send the Scrutiny Manager any suggestions for specific items to be included in the meeting.
- Scrutiny Guidance – a copy had been circulated for reference.

ACTION: Members to note the updates.

83. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

The Scrutiny Manager commented that as there were likely to be a lot of District Executive reports to be considered at the next meeting, that the item on the Local Enterprise Partnership would be moved to the new year.

ACTION: Members to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

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

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

85. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 15)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 3 December 2013 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman
