

Meeting: SC10M 13/14
Date: 04.03.14

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 4 March 2014 in the Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00am – 11.35am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (in the Chair)

David Bulmer
Nick Colbert
Nigel Gage

Carol Goodall
Pauline Lock
Nigel Mermagen

Sue Osborne
David Recardo
Martin Wale

Also present:

Councillors Tim Carroll and Sylvia Seal

Officers:

Catherine Hodzman	Performance Officer
Paul Wheatley	Principal Spatial Planner
Andrew Gillespie	Performance Manager
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

128. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 4 February 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

129. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

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

130. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

131. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues arising from previous minutes.

133. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman wished to thank all staff and SSDC services who had been, and continued to be, involved in helping with the flooding crisis on the Somerset Levels and Moors.

134. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 6 February 2014 (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.

135. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 6 March 2014 (Agenda item 8)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 6 March 2014. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 3rd Quarter 2013/14 – item 6

- Members commended the report which was easy to understand
- Scrutiny noted that figures suggested that reductions/efficiencies to front line services was not impacting upon performance and targets
- Scrutiny asked if it was possible to separate long term and short term sickness, due to skewing of data. It was acknowledged that short term sickness was the area of more concern.

Proposed Main Modifications to the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) – item 7

- Scrutiny noted that the report was difficult to read as there were many references to multiple documents
- Scrutiny felt there could and should be more focus given to the Inspectors conclusions and how, or in which section, each of his comments had been addressed.
- Table 1.1 on page 15 – PMM3 – Members commented that people who had signed the petition may be disappointed their objections had counted as one. The explanation given by the Assistant Director (Economy) was acknowledged.

- Footnote 8 on page 55 of Appendix – makes reference to information and analysis being published later. Whilst acknowledging information is available on the website, it was suggested it might be appropriate for such information to be sent to at least the Town Council if not all those who had made representation on the particular issues referred to.

Adoption of County-wide Housing Strategy Framework – item 8

- Para 7.2 - Members were pleased to note that Scrutiny's role had been appreciated and that the views of the Task and Finish group are to be used in the preparation of a South Somerset Strategic document.

Retail Relief from Business Rates – item 9

- Scrutiny queried if the relief would be automatically applied to eligible businesses or whether people would to have individually apply? It was commented that automatically might be preferable in order to minimise administration and publication costs.
- Members sought clarification regarding any overlap with flood relief schemes.

District-wide Voluntary Sector Grants 2014/15 – covering report – item 10

- Scrutiny made no comments on the covering report.

Funding for South Somerset Citizen's Advice Bureau – item 11

- Scrutiny expressed concern that the CAB gave a limited service to areas outside of Yeovil
- Members sought reassurance regarding any overlaps with SSSDC in service provision
- Scrutiny commented that not everyone has access to the internet and email and felt consideration should be given to a Freephone number to access services
- Table on page 44/45 – Scrutiny noted that the figures seemed to indicate that caseloads were decreasing and queried if problems with recruiting volunteers was a primary factor.

Funding for South Somerset Voluntary and Community Action – item 12

- It was noted that SSVCA had shut down in Chard and there were concerns if some clients would, or were able, to travel to Yeovil.
- Due to substantial funding given, Scrutiny felt SSSDC should be able to influence some of the service provision to ensure outreach of services.

District-wide Health and Well-being Grants 2014/15 – item 13

- Pages 65 and 69 – Members sought clarification if Somerset Arts Week (p. 65) was the same as Somerset Arts Works (p.69).
- Members acknowledged the grants were relatively small but made a difference to many people.

Service Level Agreement with Somerset Rural Youth Project – item 14

- Scrutiny made no comments.

Funding for South Somerset Disability Forum (SSDF) – item 15

- Scrutiny made no comments.

Designation of Neighbourhood Area – Wincanton Parish – item 16

- Scrutiny made no comments (no comments made last month either)

Statutory Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers – item 17

- Scrutiny made no comments.

District Executive Forward Plan – item 18

- Scrutiny made 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).

Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision – Yeovil Country Park Education and Ranger Centre Project – Capital Financing – item 20 (Confidential)

- Members made comments in closed session.

136. Verbal Update on Task & Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 9)

The Scrutiny Managers updated members on the progress of current Task and Finish reviews.

National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) – Discretionary Rate Relief

There had been little progress since the last committee meeting as the group were waiting for information in order to do test cases and try to ascertain financial impacts, which would have a bearing on the Equality Impact Assessment.

Somerset Strategic Housing Framework

There were no further updates as the item had been discussed at agenda item 8. An item would be added to the Scrutiny Work Programme.

Connecting Somerset and Devon Broadband

A further meeting was planned to discuss information that could be released to the wider public without a need to sign a non-disclosure document. At the current time it was not envisaged there would be a need for a further meeting of the group, just a final report to be written.

ACTION: Members to note the updates.

137. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 10)

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that the Flooding Steering Group would reconvene in April and would be the vehicle for monitoring the Flooding 20 Year Plan. Members agreed it was important to agree and commit to some issues to minimise the risk of Somerset ‘dropping down the priority list’ and prior to the next general election in case there was a change in political direction.

ACTION: Members to note the update.

138. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that an item on the district specific document regarding the County-wide Housing Strategy Framework would be added to the Work Programme – as had been discussed during Scrutiny Committee agenda item 8. It was also suggested that Scrutiny Committee receive a monitoring report on the Council Tax Benefit Reduction Scheme following its implementation. Due to timeframes if any changes were required, it was suggested the report be made to the July meeting.

ACTION:

- Members to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.
- Democratic Services to add the following items to the Work Programme:
 - District specific document regarding the County-wide Housing Strategy Framework.
 - Monitoring report for the Council Tax Benefit Reduction Scheme – July 2014

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

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

140. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 4 March 2014 at 10.00am in Committee Rooms 3 & 4, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman