

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil** on **Tuesday 2 September 2014**.

(10.05am - 11.10am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

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| Dave Bulmer | Tony Fife |
| Nigel Mermagen | Tim Inglefield |
| Pauline Clarke | Tony Lock |
| Nick Colbert | David Recardo |

Also Present:

Tim Carroll

Officers

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| Rina Singh | Strategic Director (Place & Performance) |
| Andrew Gillespie | Performance Manager |
| Colin McDonald | Corporate Strategic Housing Manager |
| Penny Blunn | Performance Support Officer |
| Nicola Doble | Performance Support Officer |
| Emily McGuinness | Scrutiny Manager |
| Becky Sanders | Democratic Services Officer |

40. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 5 August 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Goodall, Pauline Lock, Sue Osborne and Martin Wale. Councillor Tony Fife was substitute for Pauline Lock.

42. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

43. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

44. Issues arising from previous meetings (Agenda Item 5)

When the Council Tax Reduction Scheme had been discussed at the July meeting the Revenues and Benefits Manager had indicated he would source some information that had been requested at the meeting and circulate to Scrutiny members. It was noted that the information had not been circulated.

45. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman noted she had recently attended a meeting of the Somerset Water Management Partnership. She commented it had been agreed that the Levels and Moors Task Force would be held in abatement until such time as it was needed again.

46. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 7 August 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.

47. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 September 2014 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 4 September 2014. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District executive for consideration:

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 1st Quarter 2014/15 – item 6

- Members noted the figures for planning appeals and have agreed to keep a watching brief on this indicator to ensure that, as stated in the report, this increase does not become a trend.
- Scrutiny queried that if, as stated on page 3 of the report, an increase in sickness absence could not be attributed to stress caused by the current levels of change within the organisation, what are the other contributing factors and how are these being addressed?
- Members sought clarification as to what evidence led to the comment made on page 3, that the reduction in FTE's could be seen as a positive in terms of a reduction of costs / increase in efficiency? How can we be sure that the reduction of staff has not led to a decrease in service standards and/or led to an increase in temporary staff and/or consultants?
- Scrutiny queried if SSDC had a Work Force Strategy that provided a more strategic approach to workforce levels?

Affordable Housing development Programme – item 7

- Members queried who had made the decision that the HCA would no longer financially support mortgage rescues, and questioned if the eligibility criteria for

mortgage rescues was clear? If SSDC were to agree to take on a Mortgage Rescue function, would there be scope for us to influence the eligibility criteria?

- Scrutiny asked what the risks were for the future HCA funding if there was a change in government?

Update on the creation of a Day Centre and related accommodation at 80 South Street, Yeovil – item 8

- Scrutiny made no comments.

Community Right to Bid – Nominations Received for Assets of Community Value – item 9

- Scrutiny made no comments.

District Executive 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).

Confidential – Lease of Floor at Churchfield, Wincanton – item 13

- Members made comments in closed session.
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48. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 9)

The Chairman and Scrutiny Manager updated members on the progress of current Task and Finish reviews:

Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband

The draft report was now with members of the group for comment and would be considered by Scrutiny Committee on 30 September and by the East Devon Scrutiny Committee in mid October.

Civil Contingencies

There will be a further meeting of the group on 9 September to look at how the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Partnership is structured and how partnership actions are commissioned and delivered. The meeting will be attended by officers from both SSDC and SCC.

Somerset Strategic Housing Framework

The group would not meet again until a 12 week consultation period had finished, when they would consider the responses. To date, the response rate had been very low.

Members were informed that there would be a Budget Task and Finish Group established shortly.

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

The Scrutiny Manager updated members that the Flooding Steering Group would meet in September to discuss the future role of the Steering Group and its relationship with the 20 Year Flood Action Plan.

50. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that it had been arranged for someone from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to attend the next meeting to talk about Health Scrutiny.

ACTION: Members to note the Scrutiny Work programme

51. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 30 September 2014 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman