

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT on Tuesday 30 September 2014.**

(10.00 am - 12.25 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Graham Middleton
Nigel Mermagen	David Recardo
Pauline Clarke	Martin Wale

Also Present:

Tim Carroll	Sylvia Seal
Ric Pallister	

Officers

Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

52. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 2 September 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

53. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Goodall, Tim Inglefield, Pauline Lock, Tony Lock and Sue Osborne.

54. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

55. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

The Scrutiny Manager noted an email had been circulated to members about information regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which had been raised as an 'issue

arising' the previous month, and that a briefing note on the matter would be circulated by the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services).

57. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman noted she had:

- Recently attended a High Street seminar in London which had been most interesting.
 - Attended the Annual Members' Meeting of Taunton and Somerset Foundation Trust on 22 September.
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58. Presentation about Health Scrutiny (Agenda Item 7)

Ann Reeder, Regional Advisor on Health Scrutiny for the Centre for Public Scrutiny provided a presentation to members regarding the potential for Health Scrutiny. She explained the powers of the County Council for Health Scrutiny and the arrangements they currently had in place.

With reference to examples in Dorset, Lancashire and Warwickshire it was explained how health Scrutiny could work in a two tier authority. It was noted that much work had already been done by SSDC to engage people in health and well-being, hence contributing to a better quality of life to residents.

In response to comments made during discussion the Regional Advisor noted that:

- SSDC may be able to influence input into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- There is no statutory provision for the County to engage with districts regarding the JSNA, but there is provision for joint Scrutiny. There is an opportunity for SSDC to add value and capacity.

During discussion comments raised by members, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder included:

- Current arrangements for health Scrutiny were not adequate, and were sadly lacking compared to others
- Difficult situation as we can only look at SSDC but much of the district looks further afield. e.g. Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton.
- The Better Care Fund, was something Scrutiny should monitor in this area.
- Need to ascertain what Scrutiny can do in South Somerset, what can be achieved, and what joint arrangements could be in place for strategic issues.

At the conclusion of discussion, the Chairman and members thanked Ann Reeder for her informative presentation. Members agreed that a report outlining potential options for SSDC Scrutiny involvement in Health Scrutiny would be brought forward to a future meeting.

59. Connecting Somerset and Devon Broadband (Agenda Item 8)

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report as detailed in the agenda and outlined the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group. A copy of the Foreword for the report,

written by the Task and Finish Group Chairman was circulated to members for information.

After a brief discussion members were content to endorse the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group to District Executive.

The Chairman thanked the officers and members involved with the review.

60. Verbal Update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 September 2014 (Agenda Item 9)

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

61. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 2 October 2014 (Agenda Item 10)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 2 October 2014. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

Report from Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – item 6

- Members suggested that an annual report is given to Council by the council's representative on Musgrove Park Hospital Board.
- It was suggested that the newly appointed Chair of Musgrove Park's Board of Governors be invited to attend a future Full Council meeting.

Draft Asset Management Plan – item 7

- Members commented on the comment on page 27, "*...more than fully stretches existing resources etc.*" and questioned if the plan was deliverable.

Highway Officer Report – item 8

- Members sought clarification on the potential redundancy costs SSDC could be exposed to, it is their understanding that we would be liable for the full length of service of any post holder – not just their time with SSDC. This could have significant implications in terms of redundancy costs.
- Members asked if there was any evidence of costs regarding appeals for non-determination of planning applications to compare against the anticipated costs of this post. Scrutiny also suggested that if the report recommendations are approved that monitoring is done in order to compare the value and cost benefit of having the post / advice.

Loan to Somerset Waste Partnership for Waste Vehicles – item 9

- Scrutiny queried if the 3.5% interest to be charged by SSDC was of a similar rate to if the money was invested elsewhere, or whether there was a risk that SSDC would be getting a lower return.
- Members commented that replacing the vehicles must always have been in the long term plan for the company but acknowledged the explanation from the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) that providing the loan was the most cost effective way forward for SSDC.

Policy on Audio / Visual Recording and Photography at Council Meetings – item 10

- There was some concern that recording of meetings may put members under more pressure, but it was acknowledged the public and press were now freely able to record meetings.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan – item 11

- Members commented that recommendation 3 seemed sensible, and thanked the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) for her explanation about Non Domestic Rate Volatility.

District Executive Forward Plan – item 12

- 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).

Investing in Infrastructure – Progressing SSDC Projects (Confidential) – item 15

- Scrutiny queried what processes were in place to review and reassess projects (as detailed in third para on page 64) and were reassured that all funding decisions would be referred to District Executive or Full Council as appropriate.

62. Verbal Update on Task and Finish Reviews (Agenda Item 11)

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

Civil Contingencies

The group had met once since the last update. It was felt there was enough information to form the basis of a report, and there would little value in holding a further meeting with officers. A final report would be made to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting and November's District Executive meeting.

Somerset Strategic Housing Framework

The group had not met and there was no update.

Budget

It was explained that a different approach would be taken this year, and 10 members would be required for a working group rather than a Task and Finish. It was anticipated the group would meet fortnightly with a final report being made to Committee in December.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee awaited the report to the County Scrutiny on 14 October regarding the Library Service Review Programme to see if there was need to look at the mobile library service in rural areas.

63. Update on Matters of Interest (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Manager updated members that the Flooding Steering Group had met the previous week. It had been agreed there was a role to play in monitoring the 20 Year Flood Action Plan and the group would meet quarterly in the future, with monthly update reports submitted to each authority's Scrutiny Committee by their Steering Group representative.

64. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that the Strategic Director (Operations and Customers Focus) and the Leader would attend the next meeting of Scrutiny Committee to give an updated on the proposed Somerset Rivers Board.

65. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 4 November 2014 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman