

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 6 January 2015.**

(10.00am - 11.45am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Tim Inglefield
Nigel Mermagen	Tony Lock
Pauline Clarke	Graham Middleton
Nick Colbert	David Recardo
Carol Goodall	Martin Wale

Also Present:

Tim Carroll	Ric Pallister
Peter Gubbins	

Officers

Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Ian Potter	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Kim Close	Assistant Director (Communities)
Roger Brown	ICT Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

93. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

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

94. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Lock and Sue Osborne.

95. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor David Recardo declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 - Reports to be considered by District Executive on 8 January 2015 item 12, as he is a member on the Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery Joint Committee.

Councillor Carol Goodall declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 - Reports to be considered by District Executive on 8 January 2015 item 10, as she is on Ilminster Town Council who are a beneficiary of one of the grants as detailed in the report.

96. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised.

98. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed members that she had attended a meeting of the Joint Waste Scrutiny Committee with Councillor Carol Goodall – there was nothing that needed to be drawn to members attention.

She also noted this was the first committee meeting to take place since the introduction of new car parking arrangements and enforcement at the Brympton Way Office. The situation was being monitored and any issues should be raised via the Scrutiny Manager or Democratic Services Manager in the first instance.

99. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 December 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.

100. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 8 January 2015 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 8 January 2015. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision – The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) interim funding – item 6

- Scrutiny made no comments.

Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision – Acquisition of the Former Millers Garage Site, Crewkerne – item 7

- Scrutiny noted the report but queried if there was:
 - a financial risk to SSDC if planning permission was not granted?
 - how many spaces could potentially be provided on the site?

Setting the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2015/16 – item 8

- Scrutiny members noted that the Task and Finish Group would reconvene on 22 January to consider the scheme for 2016/17 onwards.
- Reassurance is sought that the changes do not imply any further risk to SSDC

Council Tax – Discretionary Reduction in Liability Policy – item 9

- Members noted there was still some equalities work to complete regarding the policy via the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment.
- Regarding appeals – some members queried the likelihood of a case progressing to the tribunal stages and if there were costs associated with the process.

Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme Update – item 10

- It was queried if the Revenue Support Grant Fund had been confirmed?
- Page 22 – Business Rate Retention figures – are the figures indicated actual or estimated?

Report of Scrutiny Task and Finish Group – Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingency Partnership – item 11

- It was noted that the County Council had now said the review will not commence before April 2015.
- Scrutiny are content to revise their recommendation – so that funding continues for 2015/16 only and to endorse the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group to District Executive.

Increasing Management Capacity at Yeovil Crematorium – item 12

- Scrutiny were supportive of the principle that improvements need to be made and had no questions regarding outcomes, however a number of points were raised about the process including:
 - The timeframes outlined in the report are very tight, but content if the dates can be delayed as necessary.
 - Concern about whether the process as outlined in the report was being conducted in the most appropriate order. Several members were of the opinion that consultation should have been undertaken first and then recommendations put forward.
 - A member appointed to the Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery Joint Committee was disappointed to note that the first he had heard of these proposed changes was through this report. It was noted that a meeting of the Joint Committee was due to take place next week and it would be useful if more information could be provided.
 - Members queried what the way forward might be if other members of the Joint Committee were opposed to the proposals?

Upgrade to the ICT helpdesk System – item 13

- Scrutiny sought clarification that the system would be fully compatible and integrated with other existing systems. If there will be any compromises what would they be?

Commercial Property Disposals – Winsham Allotments and Band Hut – item 14

- No comments as no written report.

Final Recommendation of the Community Governance Review of Lopen Parish Council – item 15

- Scrutiny made no comments.

Monthly Performance Snapshot – item 16

- Scrutiny made no comments.

District Executive Forward Plan – item 17

- Scrutiny made no comments.
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101. Final Report from the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group (Agenda Item 9)

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the draft final report of the Budget Task and Finish Group and explained it was an opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to comment on the report prior to it being considered by District Executive in February as part of the wider budget setting process.

She informed members that one member of the group had forwarded a number of comments to her, and highlighted some of the points including:

- Highlighting more the accuracy of forecasting in the Medium Term Financial Plan
- The Task and Finish Group had only considered revenue budgets not capital
- Limitations of the review needed to be highlighted

The councillor concerned responded that he felt some elements of the budget could be developed further and acknowledged it would be more appropriate for him to discuss the matter with the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) outside of the current committee meeting.

During the brief discussion other members comments included:

- Query use of expression ‘economic downturn’ as it was understood Government now considered this had turned around and was in the process of upturn.
- The Task and Finish Group had every confidence in the financial officers
- All Scrutiny could do was check the process now in place was being done the right way
- If a member of the Task and Finish Group has further concerns the group should meet again to discuss.

It was agreed the Task and Finish Group would meet again shortly, with the Portfolio Holder (Finance), and the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) to discuss the comments that had been forwarded to the Scrutiny Manager by a member of the Task and Finish Group.

102. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 10)

It was noted that following discussion of the previous agenda item, the Budget Task and Finish Group would reconvene shortly for one further meeting.

103. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 11)

As mentioned earlier in the meeting, under Chairman's Announcements, there had been a recent meeting of the Joint Waste Scrutiny Committee but there was nothing that needed to be drawn to members attention.

104. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that a verbal report would be made to the March meeting to provide an update following the immigrant incident in Ilminster in August.

During a brief discussion it was agreed that the update on the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) be put back to the March meeting as the PCP were due to meet the week before.

105. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 3 February 2015 in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman