

## 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 31 March 2015**.

(10.03 am - 12.30 pm)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Tim Inglefield (to 12.20pm)
Nigel Mermagen	Pauline Lock
Pauline Clarke	Tony Lock
Nick Colbert	Graham Middleton
Carol Goodall	Sue Osborne (from 10.25am)

**Also Present:**

Tim Carroll	Sylvia Seal
Ric Pallister	Cathy Bakewell

**Officers**

Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Steve Joel	Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Kim Close	Assistant Director (Communities)
Jo Wilkins	Policy Planner
Paul Herbert	Housing Policy Officer
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

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**131. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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**132. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Recardo and Martin Wale.

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**133. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

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**134. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)**

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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**135. Issues arising from previous meetings (Agenda Item 5)**

There were no issues raised.

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**136. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

The Chairman noted this was the last meeting of the current Scrutiny Committee prior to the elections in May. She took the opportunity to thank members for their valued contribution over the past four years.

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**137. Ninesprings Café, Education and Information Centre (Agenda Item 7)**

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) introduced the report as detailed in the agenda, which set out the key stages of the project which had spanned over a number of years. He noted the report captured the main points.

Responses made by the Assistant Director (Health and Well Being) and Portfolio Holder (Leisure and Culture) to comments raised by members during discussion included:

- Details regarding funding had been clearly outlined in a confidential report made to District Executive in January 2014.
- The reasons why the project had not commenced before all external funding had been secured, but acknowledged the delay in sourcing funding had necessitated the need to reapply for planning permission.
- An explanation of the Unilateral Agreement.
- There were constraints on some of the country park sites including land ownership. It was felt that Chard Reservoir did not have the footfall to make a similar facility viable. Whilst there might be scope for a visitor type facility or mobile café at Chard Reservoir it was not felt there was an opportunity at the current time.
- It was considered the use of the Ninesprings facility offered a good return for the capital investment.
- The work and commitment of volunteers was invaluable and their efforts had been central to delivering the project.

Members were pleased to note the centre and café were doing well and congratulated the volunteers for their work and support. Scrutiny requested that a further update report be made in 12 months, and thanked the Assistant Director (Health and well Being) for his informative report.

**ACTION:** That members note the report.

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**138. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5 March 2015 (Agenda Item 8)**

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

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### **139. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 2 April 2015 (Agenda Item 9)**

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 2 April 2015. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration.

#### **Presentation from Highways Contractor on Flood prevention Works on the A303 (presentation) – item 6**

- As no report no comments were made.

#### **South Somerset Together (SST) Strategic Partnership – item 7**

- Members were pleased to note the progress of SST and how well the partnership now seemed to be working.
- Scrutiny also queried if the core funding was agreed for the three years, or if it was a three year programme with funding confirmed annually.

#### **Adoption of a Balanced Rural lettings Policy – item 8**

- Scrutiny thanked officers for their hard work and obvious expertise in this area.
- Scrutiny felt that the explanation of the shading on the maps should be made clearer, for example there seemed to be different reasons for an area being shown as white.
- Scrutiny felt the maps would need to be reviewed quite frequently and request that an update report is made to Scrutiny in 12 months.

#### **South Somerset District Council Advertising Policy – item 9**

- As part of the Budget Task and Finish Group members have already discussed and supported the principle of income generation through advertising
- Scrutiny sought clarification that the bullet points of items to not be promoted referred to the product rather than premises or places.
- Some members commented there needed to be a fine balance and whilst general principles of health and wellbeing should be promoted, this should not prevent local industries such as Wincanton Racecourse or local cider producers being able to advertise.
- Members commented that some public may not agree with SSDC taking the advertising approach, but sources of income generation needed to be explored.
- Scrutiny request that an update report is made in 12 months.

#### **Loan to Kingsdon Parish Council – item 10**

- Scrutiny were content to agree the recommendation but sought clarification on the following:
  - If the capability of Kingsdon Parish Council to repay the loan had been assessed?
  - If there was a limit to the amount or quantity of loans that SSDC could make?
  - That SSDC policy is to loan only where we can make a first charge on a property when appropriate?

## **Designation of Neighbourhood Area – South Petherton Parish – item 11**

- Scrutiny supported the recommendation.

## **Safer Somerset Partnership – Update report – item 12**

- Scrutiny queried what the difference was between the Yeovil One Team and the previous LAGs.
  - Scrutiny noted the One Team approach was Yeovil centric and queried if, or when, there may be plans to go further afield across the district.
  - Scrutiny queried the first priority (improving links to other partnerships) under paragraph 9.2 in the agenda report as it didn't seem to gel with the other four priorities. Members noted there did not seem to be any priority regarding vulnerable children or child exploitation.
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## **140. Scrutiny Committee End of Term Report (Agenda Item 10)**

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report as detailed in the agenda, which provided a review of the work of the Scrutiny Function at South Somerset District Council over the past four years. She commented that the Scrutiny Committee should be proud of the work achieved both internally and externally. Many members had given much time and effort when undertaking Task and Finish reviews, and the awards gained were validation of the work achieved. The list of reviews in the report would also be used as a training tool and to demonstrate the potential of a Scrutiny role to newly elected members.

During a brief discussion comments made by members included:

- As a new member have found Scrutiny invaluable and have benefitted from being involved in task and Finish groups.
- What's good about Scrutiny at SSDC is that we have three sides that can work together sensibly.
- The Connecting Somerset and Devon Broadband review had not been mentioned in the report but needs to be mentioned.

The Chairman and members thanked both Scrutiny Managers for all the work done and their support over the past four years.

**ACTION:** That members note the report.

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## **141. Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel (Agenda Item 11)**

Councillor Tony Lock, SSDC representative on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel, provided a verbal update to members. He highlighted the reducing funding that the police are working with, and although this year's budget was balanced, there was expected to be a substantial deficit next year.

During a brief discussion members comments included:

- Unfortunate that since the Police and Crime Commissioner system has been introduced that Avon and Somerset have hardly had a Chief Constable in place.
- Concern that if Avon and Somerset merge with Wiltshire that parts of South Somerset will be even more on the periphery.

- If budgets are reducing, the workload also needs to be reduced – new laws are being made but few abolished.
- Identity theft and digital crime does not appear to be a priority.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Lock for the update.

**ACTION:** • Members to note the update

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**142. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 12)**

The Scrutiny Manager noted that the Council Tax Reduction Group had not met since the last meeting and would next meet in mid-April to receive an update from the Revenues and Benefits Manager about the content for a consultation.

**ACTION:** Members to note the update.

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**143. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)**

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that all items on the Work Programme would be re-assessed with the new committee following the elections.

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**144. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 14)**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 2 June at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman