

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 5 August 2014.**

(10.05 am - 12.50 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Graham Middleton
Nigel Mermagen	Sue Osborne
Carol Goodall	David Recardo
Tim Inglefield	Martin Wales
Tony Lock	

Also Present:

Tim Carroll

Officers

Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place & Performance)
Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Andrew Gillespie	Area Development Manager (West)
Paul Wheatley	Principal Spatial Planner
Saveria Moss	Programme Manager - Family Support Programme
Helen Miller	Revenues Officer
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

28. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 July 2014 (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 1 July 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Clarke, Nick Colbert, Pauline Lock and Paul Maxwell.

30. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Sue Osborne declared a personal interest in item 7 on the District Executive agenda (Commercial Property Disposal – Winsham Allotment and Band Hut) as she is the ward member for Winsham.

Councillor Nigel Mermagen declared a personal interest in item 7 on the District Executive agenda (Commercial Property Disposal – Winsham Allotment and Band Hut) as he is a resident of Winsham.

31. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

When the Council Tax Reduction Scheme had been discussed at the previous 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.

33. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

There were no Chairman's announcements.

34. Final report from the Non Domestic rates (NNDR) - Discretionary Relief Task and Finish Group (Agenda Item 7)

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) presented the report as detailed in the agenda. She explained the background, risks and context to the review and NNDR relief. The process for the review was highlighted including how consultation responses had been fed into the review to develop the new proposed policy and that everyone directly affected had been consulted.

It was explained that the fundamental reason the review had been done was to limit liability and financially protect SSDC into the future, and it had not be done as a cost cutting exercise.

During discussion members acknowledged that the topic was complicated and some aspects were very technical. In response to concerns raised about potential constraints on start-up businesses and the risks if government were to claw back mandatory relief, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) clarified that the review would develop a new policy and the policy could be tighter if members wished to recommend that to District Executive.

Members agreed that the Task and Finish Group report be endorsed, as detailed in the agenda, and recommended to District Executive.

The Chairman thanked all members for their involvement in the Task and Finish review, which had not been easy at times, and also particularly wished to mention Donna Parham (Assistant Director, Finance and Corporate Services), Helen Miller (Revenues Officer), Jo Gale (Scrutiny Manager) and Jo Morgan (Equalities Officer).

ACTION: Members to note the report of the Task and Finish group, and to

recommend it to District Executive for consideration.

35. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 7 August 2014 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive agenda for 7 August 2014. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration:

Wincanton Car Parks – Income Compensation Scheme – item 6

- Members sought clarification as to why the town council wished to terminate the agreement, and whether it was possible for the town council to implement a charging system themselves.

Commercial Property Disposal – Winsham Allotments and Band Hut – item 7

- Concern about the many detailed restrictions and conditions regarding use of the site / on the parish council – was there a risk that the facility might be lost.
- It was noted that the map shown in the agenda was incorrect – the arrow should be pointing to the area shown in green.

Enhancement of Yeovil CCTV – item 8

- Members were content with the recommendations in principal but did raise concern about which budget the SSDC funding would come from. It was queried if funding could come from the Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV) budget in the Area South Portfolio (page 59 – capital budget monitoring) – as this mentioned that the remaining budget for the LDV will be allocated to Yeovil Vision projects.

Somerset Intelligence Partnership – Data Sharing – item 9

- Members raised a number of concerns regarding privacy and requested clarification as to what postcode level would be used – the first part of the postcode or the whole postcode e.g. TA20 or BA20 2HT.
- Members queried the implications of releasing information that was, or might, be incorrect.
- Scrutiny asked if there were likely to be any equalities implications as there was no mention of any in the report.
- Paragraph 3 (page 33) refers to SSDC joining the partnership in December 2014, should this read 2013?
- Paragraph 3 (page 33) refers to an annual fee of £4,600 but page 37 indicates that the other district councils fee is £2,675 – Scrutiny requested an explanation for the differing figures.
- Members noted that some of the sources of information, such as the Census 2011, may now be out of date as people will have moved. Members asked that some checks were in place to ensure information was up to date before release otherwise the information would skew data.

SSDC Partnerships – Annual Update – item 10

- Members were content with the recommendations.

2014/15 Capital Budget Monitoring for Quarter 1 to 30th June 2014 – item 11

- It was queried if funding from the Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV) budget in the Area South Portfolio (page 59) could be moved to fund the Yeovil CCTV (agenda item 8)

- Page 68 – Scrutiny asked for an explanation of ‘drawdown’.
- Members sought clarification that deadlines were monitored for when S.106 money would need to be returned to the developer and if local ward members were informed. It was also asked what happens to the interest on the deposits..
- Deposits by developers – members commented that legalities often seemed to slow progress, and sometimes there were long delays with highway schemes coming forward.

2014/15 – Revenue Budget Monitoring for Quarter 1 to 30th June 2014 – item 12

- Page 83 – Building Control – members asked for an explanation of the variance.
- Scrutiny queried if Area South having no reserve remaining was a concern.
- It was queried why the revenue reserves seemed to be decreasing.
- Page 107 – Summary of useable reserves – members asked if the ‘Eco-Town Reserve’ could be renamed as we didn’t have one anymore, or if the funding could be re-allocated.

Constitution Update – HR Management Rules – item 13

- Page 109 – financial implications – members did not understand the term ‘strain charge’ and asked for explanation.

Reports from Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – item 14

- No comments

Update on the Family Focus Programme –item 15

- Page 144 – regarding the options, members wished to check that there was no disadvantage to SSDC by not getting into the *getset* service quicker.
- Scrutiny also sought confirmation that SSDC were receiving the financial resources required for the work.

District Executive Forward Plan – item 16

- No comments

Addendum – Further Main Modifications to the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)

- Members asked about the current position of policy SS2, as the Inspector didn’t appear to have made reference to it in his letters.
- Page 18 – Regarding the review for Wincanton, members sought clarification as to whether there would be parameters upon which to draw a conclusion, and whether any new conclusions could conflict with policies currently in the emerging Local Plan – i.e. could our position for Wincanton change?
- Being mindful of the elections in 2015, members expressed concern about the timetable for adopting the Local Plan and that there might become a time when the current Council would not be in a position to adopt the plan prior to May 2015. Reassurance was sought about timing of the next steps.
- Members noted that although the report indicated ‘no financial implications arising from the report’, there would be financial implications to the next steps. Scrutiny requested that a financial update be provided.
- Members considered that the wording of recommendation 1 should read ‘....by full council for approval for consultation.’

36. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 9)

The Chairman and Task and Finish Group Chairman updated members on the progress of current Task and Finish reviews.

Discretionary Rate Relief

The final report of the Task and Finish Group had been considered earlier on the agenda.

Somerset Strategic Housing Framework

The group would not meet again until a 12 week consultation period had finished, when they would consider the responses.

Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband

The Task and Finish Group met for the last time on 17 July. It had been agreed that they would comment on a draft report over the summer.

Civil Contingencies

An initial meeting had taken place and a further meeting was arranged for early September to look at how the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Partnership is structured and how actions are commissioned and delivered. The meeting would be attended by officers from both SSDC and SCC.

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

The Chairman updated members that the Flooding Steering Group had met in July and would meet again in September to discuss the future of the Steering Group and its relationship with the 20 year Flood Action Plan.

38. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

It was noted that the Task and Finish Report for Civil Contingencies would be rescheduled for the meeting on 30 September 2014.

ACTION: Members to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

39. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 2 September 2014 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman