

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 April 2016.**

(10.00 am - 12.00 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Clare Aparicio Paul	Val Keitch
Jason Baker	Sue Osborne
Amanda Broom	Tiffany Osborne
Dave Bulmer	David Recardo
John Clark	Garry Shortland
Gye Dibben	Rob Stickland

Also Present:

Ric Pallister	Mike Beech
Jo Roundell Greene	Angie Singleton

Officers

Vega Sturgess	Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus)
Laurence Willis	Assistant Director (Environment)
Steve Joel	Assistant Director (Health & Well-Being)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Kirsty Larkins	Housing and Welfare Manager
Sally McCarthy	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager

133. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

134. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Lock and Martin Wale. Councillor Amanda Broom attended the meeting as substitute for Councillor Martin Wale.

135. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

None received.

136. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

No matters were raised.

138. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman sent the best wishes of the Committee to Jo Gale (Scrutiny Manager) who had been unable to attend the meeting.

139. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 3 March 2016 (Agenda Item 7)

Members noted the update given by the Chairman of Scrutiny Committee.

140. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 7 April 2016 (Agenda Item 8)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the reports contained in the District Executive Agenda for the 7 April 2016 and made the following comments:

Report from Taunton and Somerset (Musgrove Park Hospital) NHS Foundation Trust (Agenda item 6)

Members asked how effectively Somerset County Council are discharging their statutory Health Scrutiny role across the County?

SSDC Council Plan 2016 to 2021 (Agenda item 7)

Members noted that this is first iteration of the Council Plan and that as it passes through Scrutiny, District Executive and ultimately Full Council there will be some opportunity for wider member engagement in the Plan – although it was noted that this involvement is not as extensive as it has been in the past.

Whilst accepting that the plan is a realistic analysis of the Council's aims and objectives over the coming years and that more service level detail would be available in the annual plan members felt that the one page plan would benefit from more SMART targets where appropriate – allowing for more effective public monitoring of progress.

Members questioned if the information from some residents gained in the pre-election period in 2015 was an adequate assessment of the communities priorities – bearing in mind this is now 12 months old?

It was suggested that the appendices of the plan be amended to include a specific action to work in partnership with the appropriate agencies to reduce carbon emissions?

It was noted that Town and Parish councils no longer provide licensing services.

Members suggested that a document needs to be created of potential future plans – aspirational projects that will be brought forward as and when conditions are right. This

will ensure the public can see the status of projects within their own communities and will be able to see that SSDC remains committed to such projects.

Scrutiny suggest that the 'Economy' element of the Plan should also make explicit reference to the importance of agriculture and the very rural nature of the district. Members felt that as it currently reads, the plan does not accurately reflect the rurality of South Somerset.

Members preferred the new format of the Plan stating that it is very accessible.

Members sought clarification as to the numbers of actions defined as 'High' priority – they noted that Management Board feel that whilst it will be a stretch, the priorities are spread fairly evenly across the authority. Are all 'high' priorities equally 'high' or are there degrees of importance?

Scrutiny welcomed the Leader's commitment that Scrutiny will be actively involved in the reassessment of the Corporate Performance indicators that will flow from the adoption of this Council Plan.

Members recommended that 6 monthly updates on progress be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee.

Gypsy Site Management (Agenda item 8)

Members agreed with the recommendations in the report and thanked the officers for their work in bringing forward this option for the future management of this service. The Committee were reassured to note that the sinking fund created to cover the costs of replacing the Park Homes at the end of their useful life will be maintained.

Members were reassured that SSDC would maintain a presence on the sites through quarterly site inspections.

Huish Episcopi Academy Swimming Pool project Funding Decision

Members commended the officers concerned for securing Sport England funding for two SSDC projects.

Members noted that Academies are considered as any other legal entity in terms of awarding funding.

The Committee was pleased to note that progress is being made to secure a future collaboration with Somerset County Council regarding swimming pool provision in Area West.

Members sought clarity about Para. 25 in the report - in the table entitled 'confirmed funding' it is stated that £20k of community funding remains to be raised.

The Committee noted that any over contractual overspends would be the responsibility of the Academy.

The Committee support the report recommendations.

Affordable Housing – Revenue Grant Funding for Direct Access Hostel Provision (Agenda item 10)

Members noted that this represents the best short term solution for SSDC to meet our statutory obligations whilst a more sustainable county wide solution is drawn up and therefore support the recommendations.

Members did comment that in the past, SSDC has made public statements that we would not cover any shortfall in service provision caused by a reduction in funding from Somerset County Council – this seems to represent a move away from this stance.

Asset Transfer of Castle Cary Market House (Agenda item 11)

Members supported the recommendations.

Designation of Neighbourhood Area – Martock Parish (Agenda item 12)

Members noted that the report states that government funding that was initially available to SSDC for administering the Neighbourhood Planning process is now reducing whilst the number of applications to create Neighbourhood Plans is increasing. Members queried whether insufficient district council resources could be cited as grounds for refusing to designate a Neighbourhood Plan area?

Members also asked how many applications need to be received before there needs to be a reassessment of priorities within the Spatial Planning Team?

The Scrutiny Committee noted the potential risks to capacity mentioned in the report and asked that they are updated as necessary.

Community Right to Bid Quarterly Update Report (Agenda item 13)

Members noted the recommendations contained within the report.

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

The Scrutiny Manager updated the Committee on the work of the following Task and Finish Groups:

Homefinder Somerset – Local Connections element of allocations policy

Members were informed that the meeting of this group scheduled for later that day had been postponed as officers were still waiting to hear back from the majority of our Housing Association partners – the meeting would be rescheduled as soon as possible.

Consent to dispose

The first meeting of this group had been held to agree the review aims and objectives and the group was now looking to identify potential evidence sources.

Journey of exploration

Members were informed that following the adoption of the Solo Business case and the agreement of Full Council to pursue the Transformation Programme, this Task and Finish Group was currently on hold whilst governance arrangements of the various

programme boards are finalised. Members agreed that a clearly defined role for Scrutiny should be a critical element of any new governance arrangements.

Direct Housing Payments

Members were reminded that an email had been sent to all members by Jo Gale asking for members who wished to take part in this Task and Finish Group.

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

Members agreed to establish a Task and Finish group to look at the roles and responsibilities of the Community Council for Somerset. In line with agreed processes, an email would be sent to all members inviting them to take part in this piece of work. Members agreed that the main focus of the review should be to establish potential areas of duplication between the work of SSDC and the Community Council for Somerset.

The more detailed terms of reference would be agreed at the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group.

143. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted the current Scrutiny Work Programme with the addition of a report to come forward in June outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Scrutiny Manager position.

144. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 10th May 2016 in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman