

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 May 2016**.

(10.00 am - 11.50 am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Tony Lock
Mike Beech	Sue Osborne
Amanda Broom	Rob Stickland
Dave Bulmer	Martin Wale
Val Keitch	

Also Present:

Jo Roundell Greene	Sylvia Seal
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Officers

Rina Singh	Interim Chief Executive
Alasdair Bell	Environmental Health Manager
Andrew Gillespie	Performance Manager
Anna-Maria Lenz	Performance Officer
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager

1. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Clark, Tiffany Osborne and Garry Shortland.

3. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meeting.

6. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Sue Steele welcomed Councillor Amanda Broom to Scrutiny Committee. She stated there was no update from the Transformation Board as it had not met since the last Scrutiny Committee meeting, the next Transformation Board meeting is scheduled for 6 July 2016.

7. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 12 May 2016 (Agenda Item 7)

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

8. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 2 June 2016 (Agenda Item 8)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the reports contained in the District Executive Agenda for the 2 June 2016 and made the following comments:

SSDC Annual Performance Report 2015/16 (Agenda item 7)

Having reviewed the Council Plan 2012-2015 final monitoring report members' sought an update on the action being taken to progress Action C1.12 – regenerate the former ACI site and the Boden Mill site by 2013 and asked for clarification of the risks if the Development Agreement expires.

The interim Chief Executive and Cllr Jo Roundell Greene Deputy Leader and Portfolio holder for Economic Development explained:

- The agreement is still in place and that they hope to see a planning application come forward in the autumn.
- Henry Boot has been commissioned to undertake this piece of work; we are in regular contact with them.
- This is a very difficult climate to be working in
- The funding from the HCA was used to purchase the site
- There is no danger of losing funding.

Members spoke of their concern for Economic Development, given there are numerous Council Plan actions that are at partially completed. Whilst members appreciate that the actions are impacted on by external influences such as the financial climate recognising the priority of Economic Development in both the last Council Plan and the new one, Scrutiny Committee members felt it would be beneficial for the Economic Development Team to attend Scrutiny Committee to outline the issues they face. The committee want to work with the team to identify any obstacles and potential solutions and make sure there are adequate resources within the team to deliver on these high priority actions.

The committee understand there are already a number of reporting mechanisms such as Regeneration Boards and Portfolio Holder Briefings and do not wish to cause officers to duplicate work but felt these other boards and meetings are not an alternative to Scrutiny and the role it has to play.

In response to members' concerns regarding the performance monitoring data for PI031 – percentage of calls to the contact centre resolved in contact centre not being able to be provided the Performance Manager advised:

- The data regarding call monitoring was not available using the new telephone management system, an alternative solution has been found.

Scrutiny Committee members voiced their concerns with regard to the time it has taken to resolve the issues with the telephones and the reputational issues it could cause, members sought re-assurance with regard to:

- The lack of data and the issues this causes the management.
- How the authority will manage the technical challenge of implementing entire new technical solutions as part of transformation – We must ensure we have the appropriate skills and resource in place?

Members requested a definite list of all the issues and the scheduled fix date.

In response to members' questions regarding PI032- Working days lost due to sickness absence per Full Time Employee the following information was provided:

- The target for working days lost due to sickness per full time employee is 8 days, for last year the total was 10.58 days
- Sickness is categorised as long-term once someone has been off continuously for 10 working days or more.
- The majority of cases shown in the report have been off for a significantly longer period than 10 days.
- If long term cases of sick are excluded the total is only 3.39 days
- This area is the subject of further attention; further training is being provided to all managers regarding sickness management this includes identifying any underlying causes.

Revised Homefinder Somerset Policy (Agenda item 8)

The Scrutiny Chair reminded the committee a one off members group was set up to review the draft consultation, so considerable Scrutiny input has already been given and taken into account

The Scrutiny manager confirmed a full Equalities Analysis of the policy had been completed and was available for consideration.

Members commented the consultation responses did not add up to a 100% and questioned if the remaining percentage would be representative of those who disagree. The committee felt presenting the results in this way was not clear.

Scrutiny Committee agreed they would be willing to review the draft Plain English policy and contribute towards the final version.

Fixed penalty Notices for Fly Tipping (Agenda item 9)

Alasdair Bell – Environmental Health Manager introduced the report and explained the provision of the fixed penalty was another tool to help to deter fly-tipping.

Following members questions the officer explained the process for determining when an offence is appropriate for a fine or a prosecution.

Members of the committee questioned if it is cost effective to proceed directly to court for second offences or more and suggested that perhaps a different approach is taken to reflect the costs to the Council.

Local Strategic Partnership South Somerset Together Annual Review (Agenda item 10)

Rina Singh - Interim Chief Executive introduced the report and explained:
The partnership had achieved many outcomes since it was formed. The five funding partners had been reviewing reducing overheads for a considerable period of time and now felt this was the right time to take this next step, simplifying governance arrangements and each partner taking responsibility for chairing on a rotating basis.

Members sought reassurance that the work will continue, the projects will progress and there will be no duplication of work with the other partnerships SSDC are in.

The committee questioned how members will be kept aware of the work of the partnership and asked how future projects will be funded.

The following information was provided:

- There were only five members contributing funding towards the partnership before and all are committed to the partnership.
- The South Somerset Together website will remain, so all information will be accessible for members.
- Some project money remains which the partners can bid for based on the existing process, once this money has been allocated a new system will come into effect where Multi Agency Business Cases will be completed and considered by the partners.

Corporate Grants Report 2015 – 2016 (Agenda item 11)

The Committee sought confirmation that SSDC always adopts an approach that is encouraging organisations and groups to become more self-sufficient and not reliant on SSDC funding when providing a grant.

Councillor Sylvia Seal – portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture reassured members and gave examples of the work that is done with grant recipients.

Increase in Councillors on Brympton Parish Council – Community Governance Review (Agenda item 12)

No comments

Monthly News Snapshot (Agenda item 13)

No Comments

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 14)

No comments

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

Members were updated as follows on the progress of the Task and Finish Groups currently underway:

Council Tax Reduction Review 2017

The Scrutiny Manager explained that this Task and Finish group had met again and are going to review:

- The impact of the changes to Council Tax Support for working age people that have been amended for pensioner age and for those in receipt of Housing Benefit.
- The costs of collection.
- Analyse those cases that are in arrears.
- Review case law surrounding Council Tax Support.
- Revisit all aspects of the scheme to ensure the scheme is working as members intended.
- Look at Council Tax Support schemes across the Country.
- Consider external evidence regarding Welfare benefits, low income households.

Discretionary Housing Payments

This group has now met for the first time and Cllr Cathy Bakewell has been appointed Chair. The group will be looking to develop a comprehensive SSDC DHP Policy to ensure the best use of resources and a consistent, equitable approach to administering payments. The group will be meeting with SHELTER and CAB as part of their research and will also be ensuring their work feeds into the ongoing work of the CTR Task and Finish Group.

Consent to Dispose of Housing Stock / Local Connections Allocation Policy

The Scrutiny Manager explained a joint evidence session was held in mid-May and was attended by senior Directors of our 5 largest Housing Providers. The meeting was a valuable opportunity for members to discuss their concerns directly with the Housing Providers and identify possible solutions for further investigation. The groups will now meet separately to consider their recommendations.

NNDR

NNDR discretionary relief policy review – the changes from the revised policy have taken affect from 1st of April, this has resulted in some more feedback from ratepayers, the Task and Finish group will review this and changes in legislation regarding mandatory relief to ensure the policy still achieves what it set out to do and that the impact of the changes to mandatory relief are taken into account. This group has yet to be formed invitations to all members will go out shortly.

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

The Scrutiny Manager explained that Scrutiny Training had been arranged for the afternoon of 5th July with a trainer from the Centre for Public Scrutiny. There was discussion regarding the training scope to ensure the training would aid the committee and in particular their work for the forthcoming year with regard to major change in terms of Transformation, Strategic Alliance and Income Generation.

11. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

Members discussed how and when the committee could effectively contribute to the Transformation, Regeneration, Strategic Alliance and Income Generation Boards. It was agreed that the committee would request a report or presentation to come to the next meeting explaining:

- The terms of reference and governance for each board.
 - The approach/process each board is planning to adopt.
 - How the work programme and progress of the boards will be shared with Scrutiny Committee and all members.
 - How priorities and the allocation of resource will be agreed across the boards? Is Social Return on investment going to be used as a measure to help make decisions, if not what method will be used with regard to Social Value?
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12. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on 5 July 2016, in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman