

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 1 November 2016.**

(10.00 am - 12.35 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	John Clark
Mike Beech	Rob Stickland
Amanda Broom	Martin Wales
Dave Bulmer	

Also Present:

Clare Aparicio Paul	Angie Singleton
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Officers

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Catherine Hood	Finance Manager
Paul Wheatley	Principal Policy Planner
Andrew Gillespie	Performance Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager

65. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

66. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Val Keitch, Tony Lock, Tiffany Osborne, Sue Osborne and Garry Shortland.

67. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

68. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions raised by members of public at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

70. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman explained that the Transformation Board had not met since July and has been re-assured that no decisions have been taken that would require the board.

Cllr Dave Bulmer confirmed the Strategic Alliance group had not met since Scrutiny Committee's last meeting and the next meeting is scheduled for 21st November 2016.

The Chairman welcomed, and introduced, the new Chief Executive Officer – Alex Parmley to Scrutiny Committee.

71. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 6 October 2016 (Agenda Item 7)

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

72. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3 November 2016 (Agenda Item 8)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the reports contained in the District Executive Agenda for the 3 November 2016 and made the following comments:

South Somerset Community Infrastructure Levy Report (Agenda item 6)

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic planning introduced the report, the Principal Spatial Planner went on to give an overview of the process going forward, and during discussions the following points were made:

- The Committee supported the suggestion that a recommendation be added asking Full Council to accept a CIL Implementation date of 3rd April 2017.
- Members sought assurances that the implementation date of 3rd April 2017 is achievable bearing in mind the potential impact of the Transformation programme, given that the successful implementation of CIL will rely on several different service areas – each being 'transformed' at different times, combined with the need to procure a new IT system?
- CIL and Section 106 payments may need to be paid on a site, Section 106 would only be paid for very site specific issues such as landscaping, street lighting and accessibility.
- The Regulation 123 list is produced with member involvement, if something is on the Regulation 123 list you cannot then ask for a Section 106 contribution for this.
- There is no back on CIL, it is non-negotiable.
- Member's clarified self-builders are still exempt from CIL.
- The Committee were pleased to note that due regard had been paid, and would continue to be given to the Equalities throughout this process.

Members thanked the Planning Policy Team for all their hard work in bringing the scheme forward.

2016/17 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 30th September 2016 (Agenda item 7)

- Members sought clarification about how and where vacant posts are accounted for. Members were unclear whether vacant posts agreed in years 2015/16 and 2016/17 would be claimed as Revenue Budget savings or would be attributed to Transformation? Members stressed the importance of avoiding double counting and that greater clarity is needed in the future – this is a high profile, high cost project. The Committee were informed by the Transformation Programme & Performance Manager that he had prepared a short note explaining this point, members requested that this is distributed to all members to help explain this complex issue.
- The delay in delivering the ANPR project and the resulting shortfall in anticipated savings was noted – members asked for further details about the delay.
- Members queried the statement that EDM savings from within Housing would now be incorporated into Transformation and delivered in a different way. The Finance Manager explained that the original budget was £100K, £75k had been transferred to the Transformation budget but £25K had been assigned as a saving in 16/17 and was agreed at Management Board in July.
- On page 3 of the Appendix under Procurement and Risk, members queried why an £8k underspend had been allocated to be transferred to the Transformation budget?

2016/17 Capital budget monitoring report for the period ending 30th September 2016 (Agenda item 8)

- Members sought clarification on the role and purpose of the Affordable Housing – Mortgage Rescue Contingency Fund and the Affordable Housing – Bought not Built Allocation – is it a statutory requirement to have these funds, have we assessed the need to maintain current levels given the statement that they are ‘unlikely to be spent this financial year..’
- Members questioned the MTIG Reserve and why so much of it remains unspent. The Committee were grateful to the Portfolio Holder for expanding on the comments within the report, and noted that a new raft of Community Plans are currently in production and new projects will emerge in due course.

Final Recommendation of the Community Governance Review of Yeovilton Parish Council (Agenda item 9)

Members noted the report and made no comments.

Draft Proposals of the Community Governance Review of Brympton Parish Council (Agenda item 10)

Members noted the report and made no comments.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 11)

Scrutiny Committee made no comments regarding the forward plan but requested the Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) attend the next Scrutiny committee meeting to answer any questions with regard to the District Executive report about the Somerset Waste Partnership – Recycle more project.

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

The following Task and Finish Groups are currently in progress:

- **Consent for Disposal of properties** – This group is now re-focusing on the impact of the disposal of properties by Housing Providers on SSDC’s Rural Letting’s Policy. Following evidence gathered by the Task and Finish Group it is clear that Yarlinton Homes in particular are committed to continue to dispose of rural properties and that SSDC must now seek to mitigate the impact of this as far as it possible.
- **Discretionary Housing Payments** – This group has collected a significant amount of evidence from key agencies and will be meeting on 4th November to review the data and comment on a draft policy.
- **Rural Services Network – Rural access to health project** – The Somerset CCG have provided a written response to the questions set which will be incorporated into a report for submission to the RSN national project.
- **Street Trading** - This group have now had their first meeting and have agreed the review Terms of Reference. Further meetings are scheduled for 4th and 29th November with the aim on producing a draft policy that will be sent to all interested parties for a 12 week consultation period at the end of November.
- **Devolution** – As referenced above, this review is held in abatement pending any announcements made in the Autumn Statement.
- **Council Tax Support** – Since the last update to Scrutiny committee the extended consultation period has closed and members have reviewed the results. The next piece of work is to collect information from some of those authorities who have already experienced the roll out of Universal Credit.
- **National Non Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief** – The group last met on 31st October with Officers from the Revenues and Economic development teams to analyse the impact of the changes around Small Business Rate relief to businesses, charities and organisations across South Somerset and the discrepancy this could cause in the discretionary relief award for similar businesses, charities and organisations that are in rural settlements, members considered the different options and estimated costs for each.
- **Right to Buy Clawback** - Following on from Garry Orr the CEO of Yarlinton Homes requesting members reconsider the approach taken with the monies obtained through the Right to Buy Clawback Agreement, a Task and finish group has been established to consider:
 - The impact on the Capital Programme in terms of the other significant projects that this Council wants or needs to deliver on behalf of the community.
 - How best to allocate the clawback monies to best meet those in housing need on the Housing Register.
 - Other housing priorities and areas of spending such as Disabled Facility Grants and grants to Houses of Multiple Occupation.

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

The Chairman invited the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to meet with members to discuss how Scrutiny Committee can effectively be part of South Somerset moving forward.

The CEO explained that in his previous roles he has developed the role of Scrutiny and values constructive challenge to assess processes are sound and the council is delivering for the community and people of South Somerset. He commented on the agenda noting the number of Task and Finish reviews and felt this approach was useful to get under the skin of issues and that from his perspective it is all about striking a balance to not get too immersed in the detail as this can have a detrimental impact as it should be being reviewed on behalf of the community.

During discussions the following points were made:

- Task and Finish work provides non-executive members a good opportunity to work with officers and representatives of the community and external organisations to develop policy and get a thorough knowledge of the services SSDC provides.
- The overview that comes from Scrutiny Committee in the form of recommendations is taken into account by the executive.
- The committee provides insight and knowledge that provides confidence and encourages members to ask difficult questions effectively.
- Some Scrutiny Committee members would like a more formal scrutiny arrangement of the transformation involving more members.
- The Transformation board agenda is sent to all members so they can contribute through Cllrs Sue Steele and John Clark.
- The next transformation board is on 18th November- as at yet there are no reports scheduled to go before District Executive
- No CRM system, software or hardware has been procured yet, IT and Ignite consultants have met with every service and conducted analysis of all the IT Systems that are in use and are required in the near future and a draft plan is being developed now.
- In the future model there will still be clear lines of accountability but they will run across the organisation opposed to up and down as they do now, there will still be a named report lead and manager.
- There is a relationship between Income Generation and Transformation, it takes a long time to build up an income stream and to generate other efficiencies, it is not realistic to think we can achieve enough through Income Generation to lessen the pressure to achieve savings through Transformation and we should always be looking to achieve the most efficient way of doing things on behalf of our residents.

Members commented that they had been advised at their Transformation workshops that they would need to change with regard to Transformation and asked for clarification and examples. The CEO responded "A detailed transition plan will be developed for how members' will engage with the authority, for example if members' continue to go to Officers X for this and Y for that this could undermine the process. Ultimately what it

means for members is still in member hands, how do you want it to benefit you and your work?"

Alex went on to explain that in Eastleigh members had Members View, this enabled members to request support and raise issues and track the progress of their requests.

Scrutiny Committee asked what consultation has and is being done to identify what our residents want and need from SSDC.

Officers explained there would be service testing with customers before we go live and an evaluation of how customers think our services are improving and have also conducted a study of social media.

Scrutiny committee raised concerns of this process and said they felt more needed to be done to ensure we identified exactly what customers want and need to inform the process moving forward and that we don't assume.

Scrutiny Committee members requested they have sight of the member's transition plan identifying the main steps of members' involvement with an accompanying communication plan for member involvement. It was also suggested that Scrutiny Committee could aid this part of the process with a Task and Finish group.

75. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The item regarding the Community Council for Somerset should no longer appear as it was completed earlier this year.

Members requested that the Economic Development Manager and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economic Development provide an update on the review of the Economic Development Strategy.

76. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on 29 November 2016, in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman