

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area South Committee** held at the **Virtual Meeting** using **Zoom meeting software** on **Wednesday 31 March 2021**.

(2.00 - 4.00 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Peter Gubbins (Chairman)

John Clark	Wes Read
Nicola Clark	David Recardo
David Gubbins	Gina Seaton
Kaysar Hussain	Peter Seib
Andy Kendall	Alan Smith
Mike Lock	Andy Soughton
Pauline Lock	Rob Stickland
Tony Lock	



Officers:

Jo Boucher	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Chris Cooper	Environment Services Manager
Stephanie Gold	Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)

NB: Where an executive or key decision is made, a reason will be noted immediately beneath the Committee's resolution.

197. Minutes of previous meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the Area South Committee held on Wednesday 2nd September 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

198. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Karl Gill and Jeny Snell.

199. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

200. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public.

201. Chairman's announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman informed members that they will shortly be receiving an email which will set out the future procedure of the planning applications process. He asked that members fully familiarise themselves with this procedure which will be in the form of a flow chart.

202. Reports from representatives on outside organisations (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor John Clark reported that the Westfield Community Association has successfully applied for a grant of £15,000. This will be used to create a new community garden on a piece of derelict land situated next to the co-op in Westfield, work had already started to clear this area.

203. Yeovil Chamber of Trade Presentation (Agenda Item 7)

David Woan, President of the Chamber of Trade addressed the committee and gave a detailed presentation regarding the work and links with Yeovil Town and the Chamber of Trade. This included:

- How the chamber supports local businesses and was a 'not for profit' network support group.
- Was a Key stakeholder on the Yeovil Refresh group and the Police lead Night-time Economy Steering group.
- Reported on a recent visit with the street pastors and had regular contact with the homeless sleep-coordinator.
- Success of the monthly executive committee.
- Financially self-sufficient with income coming from a mix of membership fees, sponsorship and other funding streams.
- Explained the difficulties in 2020 to deliver continued support throughout the Covid pandemic and Brexit.
- The success of the business leader's breakfast meeting including attendance from many senior business leaders including SSDC, Leonardo Helicopters, Yeovil District Hospital and Yeovil College.
- Relaunch of the website in May 2020.
- 64 local business entered first ever business awards in Oct 2020.
- Awarded a £5000 SCC grant to fund and deliver the 2021 business fair.
- Main issues to address going forward including Business rates and broadband coverage in the area.
- Success of the brand 'Love Yeovil' and the hope to continue to deliver town events such as the Yeovil half marathon and Christmas lights switch on and lantern parade when restrictions allow.
- Feedback from the Quedam Centre and other retailer operators, explaining the impact Covid 19 has had on the town and its businesses. They wished to thank the support of the local council and hoped to it will return to sustainable levels of footfall and trade very soon.
- Success of the M-Hub network bringing together local manufacturing and engineering businesses.

- Continued work with Yeovil College and various businesses regarding the I-Aero project to help support opportunities for employment and training.
- Continued liaison with RNAS Yeovilton and the need to re-engage the airbase with Yeovil Town.

In conclusion he said that the Chamber had a working budget of just £12,000 and adopted a commercially unique business model. He wished to thank both the private and public sector businesses for the cooperation received and that continued to make the Chamber of Trade a success.

In response to members' questions, he also clarified the following:

- The multi-agency approach and liaison with the local co-ordinator based at the Yeovil Gateway church in regard to homeless sleepers in Yeovil. The contact with the police and other agencies such as the Council to feed in the business sectors views.
- Explained the continuing communication with the council's Economic Development Team and the work being undertaken regarding the ever changing broadband delivery.
- Consider the internet as a positive tool and the need for businesses to adapt. He believes the internet has supported and helped sustain many businesses in the town during the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Acknowledged the input and support provided by Yeovil Town Council regarding 'Love Yeovil' and thanked them for their continued excellent work.
- Believed that businesses were still keen to come into the town, and that prior to lockdown had arrested the decline in the high street, although believe the full impact is not yet known.
- Acknowledged the nature of the high street was changing and becoming a multi-lateral offering with retail only being a part. He felt the main issue that needed to change was the business rates disparity. He also believed going forward town centre's would become a mix of commercial, residential and retail.

The Chairman wished to thank the President, Chamber of Trade for their excellent work and his help supporting the future of Yeovil Town.

204. Presentation on the Role of Scrutiny (Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Crispin Raikes, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Sue Osborne, Vice Chair and Stephanie Gold, Specialist Scrutiny and Member Development introduced themselves to the committee. With the aid of slides Councillor Crispin Raikes then gave a detailed presentation on the work and role of Scrutiny. This included:

- What is Scrutiny and why it has to be done.
- Four main activities of a Scrutiny and Overview committee.
- Principles of good Scrutiny in local authority.
- Who sits on Scrutiny and how it works at SSDC.
- The Scrutiny work programme.
- Examples of recent Scrutiny activity including Task and Finish groups and workshops.

- Why is Scrutiny here?

In response to questions, Councillors Crispin Raikes and Sue Osborne made comment as follows:

- Acknowledged the opportunity and prospect of future hybrid meetings, however believed it was a matter of whether legislation would allow and the technology available to achieve this.
- Clarified the different roles of the Scrutiny and Audit committee. They explained Scrutiny played a critical role within the authority, assessing risk and helping to ensure the authority was in line with policy, with Audit looking more at the financial risk. However, this was a grey area and believed there was a need to define the lines more in order to ensure 'nothing falls through the cracks' and 'better to do it twice than not at all'.
- Acknowledged that communication could be improved, where sometimes considerations already made at scrutiny are queried a second time. Believe this has improved since the introduction of zoom meetings and you tube as more members are attending the monthly District Executive.
- Other communication methods included monthly reports to DX and Scrutiny briefing note. They felt being a Scrutiny member and the Task & Finish groups were an excellent learning tool for members on how the authority and its services operate.
- Clarified the role of the Task & Finish groups.
- Acknowledged there was a main role for a Scrutiny Committee going forward regarding the future of Somerset, and vital to protect the interest of SSDC going forward, however it was too early to comment at this time.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Crispin Raikes and Councillor Sue Osborne for their informative presentation.

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205. Update of the Environmental Services (Agenda Item 9)

Chris Cooper, Environmental Services Manager addressed the committee and gave a detailed overview of the work and role of the Environmental Services Team. This included:

- The team is included within the Commercial Services & Income Generation directorate.
- The Service consists of the following main service areas:
 - Street cleaning
 - Horticultural
 - Fleet Management including vehicle workshops and in-house MOT facilities.
 - Bereavement services including the Crematorium and Cemetery.
 - Representative for SSDC on the Somerset Waste Partnership.
 - Own Administration team with in-house stores.
 - Car Park enforcement team.
 - Parish Rangers scheme.
- The Team carries out commercial work for many other parish and town councils.

- Largest team within SSDC explaining the number of staff within each service, plus agency staff as and when required.
- Summarised the budget figures for each service.
- Deliver these services in-house and the advantages for this.
- Support of other services including Christmas Tree shredding and supporting the 'Britain in Bloom'.

In response to questions, the Environmental Services Manager informed members of the following:

- Clarified the front line role in response to any emergency such as flooding to include the instant response of tree management, delivery of sand bags and gritting of roads.
- Appreciated the comments made by members on the excellent work carried out by staff in Area South.
- Explained the Parish Ranger scheme and how it would look to expand too meet demand.
- Approach of the future of electric vehicles and supply within the fleet.
- Clarified that the team are responsible for the maintenance of County Highways trees only within the boundary of Yeovil. Nonetheless his service followed a risk based approach and would hope that any issues were highlighted before any problems occurred.

The Chairman thanked the Environmental Services Manager for his detailed presentation and excellent work of his team.

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206. Area South Forward Plan (Agenda Item 10)

Councillor Rob Stickland requested a report be brought to committee regarding Enforcement services and raised concern regarding specific enforcement issues within Area South.

Councillor Peter Seib requested an update report be brought forward on the Yeovil Refresh and the plans moving forward.

There being no further requests for the Area South Committee, members noted the Area South forward plan.

207. Planning Appeals (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted the Planning appeals.

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Chairman

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Date