

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee (Informal)** held as a **Virtual Meeting** using **Zoom meeting software** on **Tuesday 1 March 2022**.

(10.30 am - 11.25 am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Gerard Tucker (Chairman)

Robin Bastable	Andy Kendall
Brian Hamilton	Sue Osborne
Charlie Hull	Oliver Patrick



Also Present:

Jason Baker	Tony Lock
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Officers

Anna Matthews	Chard High Street HAZ Project Manager
Jan Gamon	Director (Place and Recovery)
Kirsty Larkins	Director (Service Delivery)
Jill Byron	Monitoring Officer
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Michelle Mainwaring	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

121. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 8 February 2022 and 15 February 2022 were approved as correct records and would be signed by the Chairman.

122. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Karl Gill, Mike Lewis and Paul Maxwell.

123. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

124. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

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

The Chairman made reference to the traffic light report of comments which had been circulated to members in previous months. He advised that due to workload constraints of the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) the report would no longer be available, and any feedback regarding comments raised by Scrutiny Committee would now be verbal updates.

126. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reminded members that at Full Council the previous evening, he had spoken in appreciation of members for all the work done with reviewing reports, the quality of questioning had been sound and he thanked everyone for their input. He also conveyed thanks to the Case Officer for supporting work of the committee during the absence of a colleague, and also conveyed best wishes to the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) who was currently unwell.

127. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 10 February and 17 February 2022 (Agenda Item 7)

There were no updates. The Chairman commented that many of the items considered by District Executive had been discussed, and determined, at Full Council the previous evening.

128. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3 March 2022 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 3 March 2022 (Informal Consultative Meeting) and raised comments as detailed below. Responses to most questions and comments were provided at Scrutiny Committee (Informal Meeting) by the relevant officers or Portfolio Holder – except those marked by an asterisk:

Chard Shop Front Design Guide (Agenda item 6)

- *Members asked how enforceable is this guide going to be?
- A member queried if what's being done in Chard could be replicated elsewhere and are there any intentions to do so?
- A member asked if there would be any incentives offered to encourage shop owners to do this?
- A member queried how successful the grant uptake had been to date for the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)?
- Some members also asked if there were any lessons learned studies available regarding similar schemes elsewhere?

Planning Reimagined (Agenda item 7)

- A member sought clarification on the latest situation regarding extensions of time for applications?

- *A member asked if site visits were still being undertaken as various rumours were circulating about where some officers were based? They also sought clarification about whether the authority has a Landscape Officer?
- Some general concerns were expressed that it was felt the team were under-resourced.
- Some members requested that it would be useful to know if any planning applications are likely to go forward if the phosphate issue is mitigated for an application? It would be useful if a phosphates update had been provided in this agenda.
- Page 81, Enforcement – a member expressed concern that there still seemed to be little communication with members to provide updates on enforcement cases.
- Enforcement – one member asked for clarification on the 100% increase in enforcement notices issued. What are the figures behind this percentage increase?
- A member sought reassurance that some of the extra resourcing that had been agreed at February Full Council would be assigned to enforcement.
- Several members commented that it would be useful if communications could be improved to ward members and also to town and parish councils.

Investment Asset Update Report (Agenda item 8)

- No questions raised.
- *Members did make an observation that there seemed to be inconsistencies with the style of risk matrices in reports on the agenda. Members believed the risk matrix format was being revised to help make it easier to understand.

(Note: Members did not go into confidential session)

Review of SSDC Commercial Strategy (Agenda item 9)

- Pages 104-105 – members sought clarification that the red text was suggested new or replacement text for the strategy document.
- *Page 109, Table at para 1.1 (the area shaded red) – regarding embedding commercial thinking – out of interest a member asked how difficult had this been when going out to recruitment?
- Page 119, para 4.3.16 – members asked if the wording in the paragraph was new as it some members had not noticed it before. Members were encouraged by the wording of the first sentence.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 10)

- No comments.

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

The Chairman provided a brief verbal update on the progress of Task and Finish groups including:

- Flooding in South Somerset - no update.
- Productivity Analysis - the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) had suggested that this be deleted as it was unlikely there would be any progress due

to Local Government Reorganisation. The Specialist will discuss with relevant officers on a way forward.

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

The Chairman reminded members about the various Joint Scrutiny Committees and Panels, and that there were like to be some updates provided at the April meeting of Scrutiny Committee.

131. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The Chairman reminded members that an update was due to be provided at the next meeting regarding Customer Connect, and this would be an opportunity to pick up on comments and concerns raised at Full Council about customer contact and call waiting times.

He advised that the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) was following up on the report regarding Section 106s and SWAP audit findings. He also reminded members that when the flooding report becomes available that there may be some work for this Scrutiny Committee to consider.

Members were content to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

132. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 5 April 2022 at 10.30am - and likely to be a virtual meeting using Zoom.

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Chairman