

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee (Informal)** held as a **Virtual Meeting** using **Zoom meeting software** on **Tuesday 4 January 2022**.

(10.30 - 11.20 am)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Gerard Tucker (Chairman)

Robin Bastable	Mike Lewis
Karl Gill	Robin Pailthorpe
Charlie Hull	Oliver Patrick



**Also Present:**

John Clark	Tony Lock
------------	-----------

**Officers**

David Crisfield	Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Jan Gamon	Director (Place and Recovery)
Jill Byron	Monitoring Officer
Stephanie Gold	Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

---

### 90. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2021 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

---

### 91. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Hamilton, Paul Maxwell, Sue Osborne and Crispin Raikes.

*(Note - currently some vacancies on Scrutiny Committee.)*

---

### 92. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Regarding item 6 on the District Agenda (to be considered at item 8 on the Scrutiny agenda) - Councillor Karl Gill advised that whilst not considered to be an interest, for transparency he wished to declare that he had worked a lot with Spark through a community group he was involved with.

---

### 93. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

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

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

---

**95. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

There were no announcements from the Chairman.

---

**96. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 2 December 2021 (Agenda Item 7)**

Members noted that unfortunately the routine document detailing responses to the District Executive reports had been delayed, but would be circulated to members shortly by the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development).

---

**97. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 6 January 2022 (Agenda Item 8)**

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 6 January 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:

**District-wide Strategic Grants – Funding Arrangements with Citizens Advice South Somerset and Spark Somerset 2022/2023 (Agenda item 6)**

- Members noted they would be interested to receive information at a ward level about general headlines, themes and emerging trends regarding work cases, in particular those with a rural perspective.
- A member expressed concern about the £106k deficit regarding CASS, and sought clarification about which reserve funds were to be designated – CASS or SSDC?
- Members also expressed concern about funding for both organisations in future years and with the transition to a new authority.
- A member noted that many of the CASS caseloads were regarding debt. It was queried if it was known if debt recovery may become an increasing risk for SSDC in the coming year?

**Project Closure Report – Chard Leisure Centre (Agenda item 7)**

- A member expressed some concern that he felt an element of the increased build costs should possibly have been foreseen or taken more into account, as it was known the location was a brownfield site.
- A member asked if there was a complete statement available (as one document) detailing the capital and revenue costs, together with details of the grants received and where they had come from.

- A member sought clarification on the purpose of this report and asked if it was the 'deep dive' report which had been referred to some months previously or whether this/that was something else?
- On a different topic but related to regeneration, members queried if an update report would be coming forward in the near future regarding the Octagon.

### **Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23 (Agenda item 8)**

- Members noted the comments of the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) that there had not been a full Task & Finish report on the Council Tax Support Scheme this year. As the scheme has only been in place since April 2021 there was very little data to review, and so the general consensus had been to continue with the scheme in its current form for the coming year.
- \*A member asked what the risks were of continuing with the current scheme without any analysis?

### **District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 9)**

- Members made the observation that there were many items on the Forward Plan for February and raised concern about the potential size of the agenda and possible length of the meeting.

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

The Chairman and Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) provided brief verbal updates on the progress of Task and Finish groups including:

- Council Tax Support Scheme - Members noted the comments by Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) that there had not been a full Task & Finish report on the Council Tax Support Scheme this year. As the scheme has only been in place since April 2021 there was very little data to review, and so the general consensus had been to continue with the scheme in its current form for the coming year.
- SSDC Environment Strategy Refresh - a meeting was arranged for mid January.
- Flooding in South Somerset - the Chairman would be discussing the item with the Monitoring Officer imminently as there appeared to be some reluctance in some quarters about undertaking a Task and Finish review. The Chairman noted he would like to take the work forward if possible.

Members noted that the Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning) had approached officers to ask if Scrutiny would like to be involved with the annual review of the Council Plan. This would probably be a quick Task and Finish or workshop exercise with possibly one or two meetings. In response, the Chairman requested the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) circulate details to members by email to get an indication of interest, and take forward that way.

## **99. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 10)**

The Chairman referred to a recent emergency road closure in his ward for urgent gas works. The closure had necessitated a formal diversion along A-class roads. However, to avoid the lengthy diversion many people had used the local lanes which had led to pot

holes and damage to verges etc, He had contacted the Highways Authority about the matter but they seemed little concerned. He asked if other members had experienced anything similar and whether it was a subject that Scrutiny wished to look into further.

Following a brief discussion, whilst some members sympathised with the issue, there was little general appetite to pursue the issue any further.

---

**100. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)**

The Chairman advised members that he had had a discussion with the Chairman of Audit Committee to discuss items on both the Scrutiny and Audit Work Programmes.

Members were content to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

---

**101. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 8 February at 10.30am, as a virtual meeting using Zoom.

---

.....

Chairman