

## **Scrutiny Committee**

This report summarises the items considered by the Scrutiny Committee since 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014

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### **Final report from the Non Domestic rates (NNDR) - Discretionary Relief Task and Finish Group (5 August 2014)**

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) presented the report and explained the background, risks and context to the review and NNDR relief. The process for the review was highlighted including how consultation responses had been fed into the review to develop the new proposed policy and that everyone directly affected had been consulted.

It was explained that the fundamental reason the review had been done was to limit liability and financially protect SSDC into the future, and it had not be done as a cost cutting exercise.

During discussion members acknowledged that the topic was complicated and some aspects were very technical. In response to concerns raised about potential constraints on start-up businesses and the risks if government were to claw back mandatory relief, the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) clarified that the review would develop a new policy and the policy could be tighter if members wished to recommend that to District Executive.

Members agreed that the Task and Finish Group report be endorsed, as detailed in the agenda, and recommended to District Executive.

The Chairman thanked all members for their involvement in the Task and Finish review, which had not been easy at times, and also particularly wished to mention Donna Parham (Assistant Director, Finance and Corporate Services), Helen Miller (Revenues Officer), Jo Gale (Scrutiny Manager) and Jo Morgan (Equalities Officer).

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### **Presentation about Health Scrutiny (30 September 2014)**

Ann Reeder, Regional Advisor on Health Scrutiny for the Centre for Public Scrutiny provided a presentation to members regarding the potential for Health Scrutiny. She explained the powers of the County Council for Health Scrutiny and the arrangements they currently had in place.

With reference to examples in Dorset, Lancashire and Warwickshire it was explained how health Scrutiny could work in a two tier authority. It was noted that much work had already been done by SSDC to engage people in health and well-being, hence contributing to a better quality of life to residents.

In response to comments made during discussion the Regional Advisor noted that:

- SSDC may be able to influence input into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- There is no statutory provision for the County to engage with districts regarding the JSNA, but there is provision for joint Scrutiny. There is an opportunity for SSDC to add value and capacity.

During discussion comments raised by members, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder included:

- Current arrangements for health Scrutiny were not adequate, and were sadly lacking compared to others
- Difficult situation as we can only look at SSDC but much of the district looks further afield. e.g. Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton.
- The Better Care Fund, was something Scrutiny should monitor in this area.
- Need to ascertain what Scrutiny can do in South Somerset, what can be achieved, and what joint arrangements could be in place for strategic issues.

At the conclusion of discussion, the Chairman and members thanked Ann Reeder for her informative presentation. Members agreed that a report outlining potential options for SSDC Scrutiny involvement in Health Scrutiny would be brought forward to a future meeting.

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### **Connecting Somerset and Devon Broadband (30 September 2014)**

The Scrutiny Manager presented a report and outlined the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group. A copy of the Foreword for the report, written by the Task and Finish Group Chairman was circulated to members for information.

After a brief discussion members were content to endorse the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group to District Executive.

The Chairman thanked the officers and members involved with the review.

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### **Task and Finish Reviews:**

**Somerset Strategic Housing Framework** - The group has not met for several months as there has been a 12 week consultation period, after which the group will meet to consider the responses.

**Civil Contingencies** - The group have met a couple of times to look at how the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Partnership is structured and how actions are commissioned and delivered. It is felt that there is enough information to form the basis of a report, and there would be little value in holding a further meeting with officers. A final report is due to be made to Scrutiny Committee in December.

**Budget** - The Scrutiny Manager has explained that a different approach is being taken this year, and 10 members are involved in a working group rather than a Task and Finish. The group is meeting fortnightly with a final report due to be made to Scrutiny Committee in December.

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### **Comments to District Executive**

In addition, Scrutiny Committee have considered items on the District Executive agenda each month, and made comments to District Executive at each meeting. Comments made to District Executive can be viewed in the Scrutiny Committee minutes

<http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=141&Year=0>

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