

Scrutiny Committee

At their meeting on 1 March 2016, members of Scrutiny Committee considered the following items:

Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3rd March 2016

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

Yeovil District Hospital report

- Members noted that the reports refer to the problems YDH have encountered since introducing the ANPR parking arrangements and suggested that SSDC bears these in mind when considering implementing similar arrangements.

Transformation Programme

- Members commented on how useful they had found the briefing sessions on this topic. As this represents such a major project for SSDC, Scrutiny felt it was important all members fully understand the decision they are being asked to take and requested that a further session is offered to members between 4 and 6 pm on Thursday 17th March.
- Members noted that this is a complex issue but suggested that a more 'plain English' document is produced prior to Full Council in March to ensure that the key messages are clearly communicated and understood.
- Members sought clarification as to how the Transformation Programme fits with the Strategic Alliance as discussed recently at Full Council and noted the Strategic Director's response closer working with other authorities (including Sedgemoor) in the future will not be dependent on having the same technological systems in place. We would have the same front end – Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) with specific connectivity software between the CRM system and the various back office systems such as Northgate and Uniform.
- Members discussed the governance arrangements should the decision be made to proceed with Transformation and were told that the Programme Board (which will be cross party) would report periodically to DX and there Scrutiny would be able to consider those reports in the normal way.
- It was noted that all expenditure associated with the Transformation Programme would be subject to the usual Financial Procedure and Procurement Rules and that there would be a considerable period of time before services and hardware would be procured as consultation work is undertaken.
- The Transformation Portfolio Holder will lead sessions to identify what members want in terms of service provision and then the shape and form of the structure will be considered.
- Members were informed that whilst the 'Lean Programme' as a separate entity would cease upon the adoption of the Transformation Programme, Lean is essentially a Business Process Re-engineering process and the principles will continue within Transformation although will be applied across the authority rather than on a service

by service basis. All processes would have to be looked at again with a view to utilising technology to achieve efficiencies and reduce duplication.

- Members were re-assured that although within transformation there will be a specific focus on enabling customers to do more via self-service 24/7, the provision of face to face contact and speaking to people over the phone would remain.
- Members were pleased to note that lessons were being learnt from those further down the Transformation route than us and this learning had been reflected in the business case to date and will be in all future work. In particular members noted that CIVICA had already been invited into to SSDC to assess out current platforms to avoid the risk of being told later on that our current systems require further investment prior to commencing Transformation.
- Members sought re-assurance of how the risk of IT failures could be effectively minimised. Officers confirmed they are learning the lessons from other authorities, that substantial assessment work will be done in advance and the legal team will be involved to tie down contracts when looking to procure a service, software and hardware etc.
- Members asked what the timescales are and when the redundancies would come into effect. The Strategic Director and Leader and Portfolio Holder for Transformation explained:
 - o The figures provided were all based on worst case scenario.
 - o As an average there is 5% natural wastage each year (although we may have to advertise external for specific skills related posts).
 - o SSDC is very good at enabling staff to change direction and redirect into areas where greater resource is required.
 - o If we can increase our income and utilise the existing staff skills to do this, this may prevent the need for such significant savings.
 - o Potential opportunities with the ring-fenced arrangement with Sedgemoor.
 - o Applications for voluntary redundancies will be considered
 - o Any redundancies will be phased

District Wide Voluntary Sector Grants

- Members noted that the work of the voluntary sector groups mentioned in the report added great value to the work of SSDC, especially in terms of the Health and Wellbeing of our communities.
- Regarding the Somerset Rural Youth Project, members asked for further information as it appears some of the current SLA Targets are not being met, in particular regarding increasing young people's contribution to community regeneration projects in rural areas.

Quarterly Performance Report

Members noted the explanation that there had been an increase in the number of complaints within Arts and Leisure because the service had been successful in engaging with more customers, hence an increase in complaints – although the majority of complaints were successfully resolved at stage one.

Proposed Amendments to NNDR

No comments – members noted the report, noting the detailed work of the Task and Finish Group on this matter.

SSDC Response to New Homes Bonus Consultation

Members felt this was a very detailed and thorough response and thanked officers for their work on this.

Task and Finish Reviews

Journey of Exploration

The first phase of the Task and Finish work regarding the Journey of Exploration has now been completed with a report submitted to February Full Council. As the implementation of the Solo Business case progresses, the Task and Finish Group will be retained albeit with an amended focus. The membership and Terms of Reference of the group will be revisited in due course.

Homefinder Somerset

The first meeting of the Task and Finish Group established to review the significance placed on 'local connection' with the Home Finder Somerset Allocation policy has been held with another due to take place in April.

Consent for disposal / Rural Lettings Policy

Following on from the consideration of the Call-in at the January Scrutiny meeting, all members have been invited to put their names forward for the Task and Finish Group that is to be established to review our current policy for consenting to the disposal of affordable homes previously owned by SSDC – the review will also encompass a review of some elements of the Rural Lettings policy.

Task and Finish Groups would soon be commencing work to monitor the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to review the Housing Benefit Discretionary Housing Payment Policy; invitations to participate in these will be circulated to members in due course.

Scrutiny Committee requested that a Scoping paper come forward to the next meeting outlining proposals for a review to better understand the role and work of the Community Council for Somerset. It is hoped undertaking this review will identify any areas of potential duplication with the work of SSVCA and SSDC and where communication across the organisations could be improved to benefit the community.

Scrutiny Committee encourages all members to participate in Task and Finish work; it provides an excellent opportunity for members to review an area of work in detail, work with officers and help formulate recommendations for the creation and amendment of policy and

working practice. All Task and Finish groups agree their own scope, project plan and meeting timetable to best suit the group, so should be able to work around existing commitments.

Councillor Sue Steele
Chairman of Scrutiny Committee
