

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th April 2017 at 3.30 pm

Present:

Councillor P H MurphyChairman
Councillor N ThwaitesVice-Chairman

Councillor I Aldridge
Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor J Parbrook

Councillor R Clifford
Councillor B Maitland-Walker
Councillor R Woods

Members in Attendance:

Councillor M Chilcott
Councillor K H Turner
Councillor P Pilkington

Councillor M Dewdney
Councillor A Trollope-Bellew

Officers in Attendance:

Assistant Director - Operational Delivery (C Hall)
Assistant Director - Corporate Services (P Carter)
Corporate Strategy and Performance Officer (R Doyle)
Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny (M Prouse)
Democratic Services Officer (C Rendell)

SC 78 Apology for Absence

An apology was received from Councillor K Mills.

SC 79 Minutes

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 16 February 2017 – circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 16 February 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

SC 80 Declarations of Interest

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL
Scrutiny Committee 20.04.17

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Personal or Prejudicial or Disclosable Pecuniary	Action Taken
Cllr I Aldridge	All items	Williton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr B Maitland-Walker	All items	Carhampton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Murphy	All items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr J Parbrook	All items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr N Thwaites	All items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr A Trollope-Bellew	All items	Crowcombe	Personal	Spoke
Cllr K Turner	All items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke

The following Members declared additional interests:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest
Cllr I Aldridge	SC87	Elected Governor on the Health Trust Board
Cllr M Chilcott	SC88	West Somerset Council Representative on the West Somerset Opportunity Area Board

SC 81 Public Participation

Agenda Item 9 Public Toilet Transfers.

Councillor John Irven, a Member of Watchet Town Council (WTC), spoke in relation to the transfer of the toilets located in Watchet. He had previously spoken at the Scrutiny meeting on the matter and referred to a letter of complaint that had been submitted by WTC to West Somerset Council (WSC). He reported that although progress had been made, some problems had occurred.

Councillor Irven believed that WTC had professionally delivered everything that had been requested by WSC to prepare for the transfer of the toilets. However, due to staffing and procedural issues within WSC, the transfer had not run smoothly. WTC had requested a copy of the risk assessment as part of the transfer conditions, but were told that this had never been carried out due to the results being predetermined as low risk.

However, WSC then requested that WTC complete a full risk assessment which was carried out by their designated Emergency Health and Safety advisor and was deemed inadequate. A fire assessment had also been completed unnecessarily. There were also operational faults that had been reported to WSC prior to the transfer but these had not been rectified in time.

In summary, WTC did not feel that WSC had adequately planned or were resourced to implement the transfer and consequently failed in elements of their duty of care. Councillor Irven requested that Scrutiny assessed the issues to prevent them occurring in the future.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Irven for his comments which would be noted.

SC 82 Cabinet Key Decisions and Actions

(Copy of the Cabinet Key Decisions published 1 March 2017, circulated at the meeting)

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Key Decisions published on 1 March 2017, be noted.

SC 83 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of the Cabinet Forward Plan published 31 March 2017, circulated at the meeting)

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Plan published on 31 March 2017, be noted.

SC 84 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Committee Members for their attendance and participation over the past year and looked forward to working together in the new Municipal Year.

SC 85 West Somerset Council Draft Corporate Plan

The report WSC 43/17 was presented by Councillor Trollope-Bellew.

The purpose of the report was to introduce the draft Corporate Plan for 2017/2018.

The Corporate Plan flowed from the Council's four year strategy which covered the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2020. The 2017/2018 Corporate Plan would be the second year of this strategy.

The Plan described the actions that would be taken throughout the year to ensure the Council's strategic objectives were achieved for the people and place of West Somerset and set out how its progress would be monitored and measured.

The Plan was a key component of the corporate planning and performance management framework.

Not much had changed apart from Theme Four and this was due to the Transformation and Accommodation Projects.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members requested several amendments to the wording of the Plan. *The Corporate Strategy and Performance Officer would amend the wording and send out a revised copy of The Plan.*

- Members queried whether an electoral review would go ahead if the Secretary of State refused the submission made by Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) and WSC to create a new Council?
No, unless the Boundary Commission or WSC requested a review.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee supported the adoption of the Corporate Plan, with amendments, for 2017/2018.

SC 86 **Public Toilet Transfers**

The report WSC 44/17 was presented by Councillors M Chilcott and M Dewdney.

The purpose of the report was to update the Committee following the deadline for the transfers, which had passed on 31 March 2017 and the expiration of the public toilet budget.

Of the thirteen toilets which were originally covered by the Full Council decision, eight had been transferred.

All of the toilets that had not been transferred were closed, with the exception of Porlock Central, which had remained open for the duration of its notice period.

The transfer process had been time consuming for officers, Members, Community Groups and the Town and Parish Councils. The scale of work involved had been delivered within the time constraints set by the budget approval process, but a number of difficulties had been identified along the journey of negotiation that had prevented a smooth delivery.

Officers had delivered the transfers alongside their normal business. This had been a particular pressure within the Asset Management Team where a large number of other projects were also underway. The lessons learnt from these transfers had been to improve pre-decision consultation, to define the resources and fund these and to consider a contingency fund.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members of Cabinet expressed their concern that correspondence between Williton Parish Council (WPC) and WSC had been included in the agenda due to the nature of the document and the ongoing negotiations between the two Councils. An amendment to the wording of paragraph 4.6 of the report was therefore requested.
The Assistant Director for Operational Delivery apologised for the contents of the report that made reference to WPC.
- Members were hopeful that the dialogue was still open with WPC due to the need for the toilets in the village.
- Members requested confirmation of how many toilets had now been transferred?
Nine had been transferred in total now. An additional transfer had been made since the report was written.

- Clarification was requested on what was happening with the toilets that had not been transferred.
- The Portfolio Holder for Environment advised the Committee of all the repair works that had been carried out in preparation of the transfers.
- A comment was made that WSC had asked some of the smaller Parish Councils to take on a big responsibility with regard to the toilet transfers which they were currently not resourced for. It was recommended that they were thanked for the work involved.
- The Chairman had tabled several questions at the Full Council meeting which was held on 22 March 2017, prior to the transfer deadline. This included works at WTC and queried the closure of the toilets in Watchet. The response to these questions was not received until 7 April 2017, a week after the deadline date and subsequently meant that the toilets were closed for that time, which caused inconvenience to the members of the public who had visited the town.
The Leader of the Council explained that the late response was because a decision was needed from Cabinet and that meeting had not been held until 5 April 2017.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) The contents of the report were noted.
- 2) The Scrutiny Committee supported the negotiated position with Minehead Town Council to fund a new facility should the land at Quay Street, Minehead, which included the current toilets, be sold.

SC 87 **Proposals for Improving the Health Scrutiny Engagement Process in West Somerset**

The report WSC 45/17 was presented by the Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny.

The report made reference to the attendance of the South West Ambulance Trust, the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group and the Somerset Partnership NHS Trust at the Scrutiny Committee in 2016. With the recent publication of the Somerset Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), there was a desire from Members to explore further the possibilities to be engaged with, and to ensure, that the Council's Health and Wellbeing responsibilities were discharged in the most beneficial way for local people.

It was recognised that the area of West Somerset faced many challenges in the current environment which related to health and healthcare and that this unique perspective would benefit from a permanent presence on the upper tier health body. The representative would report back to the Scrutiny Committee.

This would be shared with the other four District and Borough Councils so that their interest would be gauged and for a co-opted Member from their respective Scrutiny Committees to be placed on the upper tier health body. The possibility

of a Joint Letter being issued by the five Districts and Borough, could possibly add more impact to the proposal.

It was suggested that a Task and Finish Group was set up to scope out and to consult on policies and proposals that would benefit the local area's health and wellbeing aims.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members queried what would be gained from having a co-opted Member on the health body when they could attend the meetings as a member of the public when local issues were due to be discussed.
- Background information on the STP was given by Councillor Aldridge.
- Concern was raised about the health services in the area and it would be positive to have a local representative to attend the meetings because West Somerset needed a champion to support the local area. However, it would be recommended that the representative always checked the agenda of the meetings because West Somerset was not always listed to be discussed.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Wellbeing raised concerns that health and wellbeing training days had been organised by TDBC and WSC but attendance had been very low.
- Members requested that demography was added to recommendation four as many of the residents in the area were elderly and alone and that rurality was not the only difficulty.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) The proposal to place a co-opted Member of the West Somerset Scrutiny Committee on The Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee at Somerset County Council be endorsed.
- 2) Somerset County Council be approached following the engagement with Somerset's other four District and Borough Authorities to gauge interest and the possibility looked into of the creation of a more impactful Joint Letter.
- 3) The creation of a Task and Finish Group be endorsed to look at the Challenges of Health and Wellbeing in the West Somerset District, taking the document at Appendix A as a reference point in defining the scope of potential topics to consider what would be appropriate for a District Authority.
- 4) Consider these and other appropriate ways to engage in the consultation phase of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan proposed by the Health Authorities to ensure that the challenges apparent in the West Somerset Area such as Rurality and Demography were taken into account.

The report WSC 46/17 was presented by the Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny.

The purpose of the report was to update the Members of the Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Task and Finish Group that was established by the Committee in 2014 to look into the matter of secondary education in West Somerset.

Following on from the findings of the Government's Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission Report in 2016 which showed that West Somerset was a 'coldspot' and was ranked 324th out of 324 Authorities in the country for social mobility, this piece of work was intended to further report on the issues of education in the region, at a time of ongoing change for a large number of Schools in the District.

This was a 'for information' report which was designed to help inform Members of the current situation, encouraged a 'joined up' approach on education in the Council and fed into the work of the Economic Development Team and the West Somerset Opportunity Area (WSOA).

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Concern was raised that rurality was a problem. The main upper school had the largest catchment area in the country.
- Members queried whether funding had already been granted by the WSOA.
The Government had awarded funding based on the Social Mobility Index. Extra funding to help with social mobility had to be applied for and the Members were reminded that this covered from birth to sixteen years of age and was for all education and apprenticeships.
- The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Central Support gave information on apprenticeships. However, unfortunately the opportunities available in West Somerset were limited.
- A Member gave information from the Office for National Statistics which informed the Committee on the movement of the population and reported that there was a high level of people who had moved to the Taunton area. Concern was raised that funding would be given to Taunton and not West Somerset. Scrutiny should be involved in how the WSOA funding was spent.
- Concern was raised on the inequality of opportunity for young people in West Somerset.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

SC 89 Scrutiny Committee Work Plan

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Forward Plan published on 12 April 2017 be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.26pm.