South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in **Council Chamber B, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil on Tuesday 4 April 2017.**

(10.00 am - 11.40 am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Sue Osborne
Amanda Broom	Rob Stickland
John Clark	Linda Vijeh
Val Keitch	Martin Wale
Tony Lock	

Also Present:

Henry Hobhouse	Angie Singleton
Ric Pallister	

Officers

Jo Wilkins	Senior Policy Planner
David Norris	Development Manager
Martin Woods	Director (Service Delivery)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

131.   Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

132.   Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dave Bulmer and David Norris.

133.   Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

134.   Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

136. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The following announcements were made by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman:

- A reminder to members of the Special Scrutiny Committee and District Executive meetings to be held on Tuesday 18 April 2017.
- A reminder of the briefing for all members on 10 April 2017.
- At the Transformation Board held on the 8 March a governance structure had been presented. In future there will be quarterly monitoring reports to District Executive and so Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to comment. The Transformation Board had been re-named. The Scrutiny Chairman and Vice-Chairman were now on the re-named 'Transformation – High Level Steering Group'
- Councillor Mike Beech had resigned from the Scrutiny Committee and the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Joint Scrutiny. Being so close to the end of the municipal year a new appointment to the SRA Joint Scrutiny would not be made until after Full Council in May.

137. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 2 March 2017 (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman noted that the Scrutiny comments had been considered and were included in the District Executive minutes which had been circulated.

138. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 6 April 2017 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 6 April 2017 and made the following comments:

Approval of Local Development Scheme (2017-2020) (Agenda item 6)
- With regard to the Boundary Commission and the current review of the ward boundaries - they need a lot of information will this be manageable with the current resources of the Planning Policy team?
- Scrutiny considered the Risk Matrix and asked what the main threats are, how they would be mitigated and if resources would be required.
- Para 9 on page 5 – What happens if we do not meet the March 2018 target for a review?
- Page 12 table – How are we going to manage the Community Infrastructure Levy until 2018?
- Para 5.4 on Page 16 – How will it be monitored?
- Some members sought clarification that the Inspector's comment about a review for Wincanton was effectively a recommendation rather than a requirement?
- Members also noted that equalities analysis work also needs to be undertaken and have regard to this when contracting consultants to do work also.

Proposal to Establish a Commercial Income Generation Fund (Agenda item 7)

- Query if there is a need to do this now. Some background information would be useful to justify the required amount.

- Why agree this now before the Council Plan and Capital Programme have been agreed? Is there the capital available to be ring-fenced?

- If going into the commercial world then the democracy factor is likely to be a cause of delay. Concerns that we won't be in a position to move swiftly enough.

- Understanding that there will be a need to look at internal processes and officer delegations, Scrutiny Committee would like to help support the work to identify the most effective and efficient process to do this.

- Is there a need to separate out the two funds? Scrutiny Committee recommend District Executive consider the removal of this separation to prevent inflexibility in the future.

- Committee feel that the report is lacking information and it was only because of being able to ask the Portfolio Holder and Leader several questions that the committee have reached a position where they are able to support this recommendation, the content of reports should be understandable for the public!

Business Rates Relief – Spring Budget 2017 Measures (Agenda item 8)

- Scrutiny made no comments and supported the recommendations.

Capital Programme 2017/18 to 2021/22 (Agenda item 9)

- Members noted this item would now be considered at the District Executive meeting on 18 April 2017.

Implementing Charges for Pre-Application Development Control Advice (Agenda item 10)

- Members asked which category residential development on farms would be in, for example, an agricultural worker dwelling?

- Scrutiny sought clarification that the fees indicated are cost-covering rather than profit making. It was suggested that the fees should be reviewed regularly.

- Page 44 – Exemptions – members sought clarity about what was meant by 'community uses' and what it would cover.

- Committee members recommend that this arrangement is reviewed in a years' time in terms of recouping costs and the revaluation of the fees

Community Right to Bid Half Year Report – October 2016 to March 2017 (Agenda item 11)

- Scrutiny made no comments.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

- Members noted some officer contact names needed to be updated.

139. **Disposal of Third Party Properties - Draft Report of the Task and Finish Group (Agenda Item 9)**

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report as detailed in the agenda and provided a brief overview of the Task and Finish work. She explained that members needed to consider endorsing the report for recommendation to District Executive.

Members raised a few comments about the disposal of properties in general, and it was also noted there had been several more disposals since the date of the appendix in the report.

At the end of the brief discussion members were content to endorse the report and recommend it to District Executive.

ACTION: The Scrutiny Manager to forward the report to District Executive.

140. **Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 10)**

Members noted the updates provided the Scrutiny Manager and Task and Finish Group Chairman on each of the Task and Finish groups currently in progress:

Street Trading – The work had finished and the final report would be made to the next Scrutiny meeting for endorsement before being forwarded to the Licensing Committee for consideration.

Council Tax Support - The Revenues and Benefits Manager is currently collecting evidence from South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset Councils. When this information is received we can build a picture of the level of savings that could potentially be made, the impact on recipients and the risks.

Community Council for Somerset – This work had been put on hold. Previously members had requested a presentation on the work of the Yeovil One Team, but because Village Agents were not across the whole district there would always been some disparity. A discussion had taken place with the SSDC Senior Leadership Team about this review and it had been deemed that it was no longer an urgent issue.

The Scrutiny Manager also noted:

Rural Allocations Policy – The Disposal of Third Party properties had highlighted issues with the Rural Allocations Policy and some work needed to be done to review the policy.

141. **Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 11)**

Councillor John Clark referred to a briefing paper that he had circulated to members in advance of the meeting regarding the proposed Somerset & Devon Joint Committee and Productivity Plan (previously referred to as Devolution). He drew members attention to points raised at the Leaders meeting on 17 March and responded to comments raised during a short discussion, and clarified who attends the Leaders meetings both from SSDC and the other authorities.

The Chairman noted she had had a meeting with Chief Executive and Leader and raised concern about the lack of resource to undertake a Scrutiny review on the matter. She noted it was near the end of the Council year and she suggested holding on the consideration of a possible review until the membership of Scrutiny Committee for the coming year was known. Another member also suggested stalling a possible review until the next update report, due in July, had been considered at Full Council.

At the end of discussion it was generally agreed to put a hold on the possibilities of undertaking a Task and Finish review until more information was known and the update report in July to Council had been received.

142. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Manager explained that following the report to Council about Council Tax Penalties, it had been suggested there was monitoring undertaken to ensure that we are not spending more on administration of the penalties than we are actually receiving in penalties. Members agreed for this to be added to the Scrutiny Work Progamme for October.

The Scrutiny Manager requested members to give thought to any performance information they may like to see captured in preparation for the item in May regarding the Review of Performance Indicators. She reminded members that benchmark data would need to be collated in order to manage, and monitor, performance as the authority goes through Transformation.

ACTION: The Scrutiny Manager to add Monitoring of Council Tax Penalties to the Scrutiny Work Programme for October.

143. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 13)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held at 10.00am on 18 April 2017, in the Council Chamber, Brympton Way.

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Chairman