

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT** on **Tuesday 4 July 2017**.

(10.00 am - 1.25 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	David Norris
John Clark	Alan Smith
John Field	Rob Stickland
Carol Goodall	Colin Winder

Also Present:

Ric Pallister	Henry Hobhouse
Jo Roundell Greene	Angie Singleton
Sylvia Seal	

Officers

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Paul Fitzgerald	Section 151 Officer
Catherine Hood	Finance Manager
Colin McDonald	Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Clare Pestell	Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation)
Andrew Gillespie	Performance Manager
Anna-Maria Lenz	Performance Officer
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Becky Sanders	Democratic Services Officer

16. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jason Baker, Tony Local, Paul Maxwell, Gerard Tucker and Martin Wale.

18. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

21. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor John Field to the Scrutiny Committee.

22. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 1 June 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. She confirmed that a report on the Boundary Commission Review would be made to Council in July and quarterly update reports on Transformation had been added to the District Executive Forward Plan.

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

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

Westlands Leisure Complex (Agenda item 6)

- Members requested clarification as to who would be the point of contact in the future for updates on the Westlands Leisure Complex.
- Scrutiny noted that the overspend is not quantified and queried if there was an adequate project contingency to cover the amount. An indication of the overspend figure as a percentage would be useful to context.
- Members were concerned that the overspend may have an impact on other projects across the district or even prevent them.
- Some members were concerned by the list of items causing the overspend (para 15) as it was felt most should have been predicted/anticipated or included within the contingency.
- Scrutiny felt the 'requirement creeps' should have been better managed. Several members noted that in the early stages members had been assured that costings had been based on worst case scenarios and professional advice had been sought. Members wished to make it clear they were not critical of the project outcome but had concerns about the management of the project and felt lessons should be learnt.

SSDC Corporate Peer Challenge and Review (Agenda item 7)

- Scrutiny agreed that the activity had been worthwhile and comments of the Peer team were encouraging.
- It was queried if the costs associated with the resourcing and recruitment referred to in the Action Plan were already reflected in future financial planning?
- Members sought reassurance that timeframes for completion of actions in the Action Plan were on target, and if there was any option to bring forward the review of capacity in Economic Development (bottom of page 36).
- Scrutiny asked if there was a need for a Task and Finish Group to look at car parking charges.
- Members were content that the recommendations go forward.

SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress Report (Agenda item 8)

- Members commented that it was good to see a brief, rather than a lengthy report. Clarification was sought about the purpose of the appendix. Members requested that future reports include detailed monitoring of timescales and savings against the table and programme milestones. Another line at the bottom of the table was requested to clearly show the current position in comparison to targets.
- Scrutiny requested reassurance that any slippage could be picked up.
- Members noted the comments made by the Performance Manager including that:
 - The programme is based on a baseline as at June 2016.
 - A detailed assessment of the skills and knowledge required to deliver Council services and identifying areas where these could be lost was conducted as part of the transformation process to prevent and minimise risk to service delivery.

Affordable Housing Development Programme (Agenda item 9)

- Members noted the updates to the report provided by the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager at the Scrutiny meeting, including progress with regard to rural proofing as recommended in the Scrutiny Disposal of properties Task and Finish Review.
- With reference to recommendation (e) Scrutiny noted the costs for the cookers and raised concern if it may set a precedence for other schemes. It was also queried if there was a policy or minimum specification of what should be provided or expected in properties for which SSDC provides financial assistance.

2016/17 Capital Budget Outturn Report (Agenda item 10)

- Members noted updates to the report provided by the Finance Manager.
- Page 80 – it was queried in the funding allocated for bus shelters would be returned to balances?

2016/17 Revenue Budget Outturn Report (Agenda item 11)

- Members noted updates to the report provided by the Finance Manager.
- Page 91 – table in para 6 – Scrutiny asked for a little more detail regarding the adverse variance for Development Control.
- Page 103 – Fraud and Data – some members were concerned about the comment and asked what was being done to address the resourcing issue.

Prevention Charter for Somerset (Agenda item 12)

- Scrutiny queried who would be responsible for raising awareness of the Charter across SSDC?

CONFIDENTIAL – Exclusion of the Press and Public

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the Committee resolved that the press and public be excluded from the following items in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, i.e. "Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Property Investment Acquisition for Income Generation (Confidential) (Agenda item 16)

Members made a number of comments in confidential session.

24. Performance Management and Reporting (Agenda Item 9)

The Performance Manager provided a short presentation about performance and key points included:

- A reminder of the five themes in the Council Plan 2016 – 2021
- A list of the current key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Priority projects in the Council Plan
- The structure of the Senior Leadership Team
- The annual cycle for performance monitoring and reporting
- Performance indicators for the Transformation programme to monitor financial and non-financial benefits.

Members were asked to consider the data they would like to see collected and in what form. During discussion several comments were made including:

- Need to monitor customers who choose not to access services online and ascertain why.
- Clarification that the existing 39 indicators would be carried forward.
- Need indicators to monitor meeting of delivery objectives, efficiency objectives and customer satisfaction.
- Needs to be some consistency with previous data to show comparison as the authority progresses through Transformation.

In response to comments made by members and the Scrutiny Manager, the Performance Manger clarified that:

- Channel shift would be monitored
- There were challenges in collecting some of the data for the existing indicators
- There needed to be a periodic review of the indicators and they would evolve over time
- Would be unusual to monitor internal customer satisfaction
- There was no timeframe for setting up new indicators but as soon as possible would enable more data to be collected.
- No customer consultation to establish what aspects of Council business customers felt were important had been undertaken.

On hearing comments made, the Scrutiny Manager suggested a separate informal meeting for members to discuss possible performance indicators might be useful and several members agreed.

The Chairman thanked the Performance Manager for his presentation.

ACTION: Informal meeting to be arranged for Scrutiny members with the Scrutiny Manager to discuss possible future performance indicators. A copy of the presentation to be circulated to members as a prompt.

25. **Appointment of Members to Somerset Waste Board Informal Joint Scrutiny Panel (Agenda Item 10)**

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that the report had initially been discussed at the previous meeting where Councillor Martin Wale had tentatively volunteered to be a member on the Somerset Waste Board Informal Joint Scrutiny Panel. It was noted that the date of the next meeting was unknown and the Panel had only met once over the past year.

It was agreed that Councillors Carol Goodall, Martin Wale and Jason Baker be appointed to the Somerset Waste Board Informal Joint Scrutiny Panel. Members did not identify who would be the substitute member, but in the event of a meeting it would be agreed between the three members which two would attend that particular meeting of the Panel.

ACTION: The Scrutiny Manager to inform SCC of the members appointed from SSDC Scrutiny Committee to the Somerset Waste Board Informal Joint Scrutiny Panel.

26. **Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 11)**

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

Council Tax Support – The Revenues and Benefits Manager had agreed with the Portfolio Holder to identify savings in administration costs rather than changing the scheme for 2018-19. The Task and Finish group would meet to review the monitoring information by the autumn. There would be less work for the group to do than in previous years.

Local Discretionary (Business Rates) Relief Scheme - The first meeting took place on 22nd June 2017, and another meeting was scheduled for 6 July.

Homefinder Somerset – There had been no further progress and a response was still awaited from the Housing Team about recommendations made previously.

27. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Manager informed members that the Task and Finish report regarding Street Trading Policy had been agreed by Licensing Committee. The report would now be considered at Council in July.

28. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

There was a brief discussion about the work programme and the Chairman suggested a report regarding progress towards a new Economic Development Strategy would be of interest, but also acknowledged arranging a report might be difficult due to current staff availability within the team.

The Scrutiny Manager reminded members that a member of the public had addressed the last meeting of Council and invited SSDC to become a Fairtrade Authority, and had offered to provide a presentation to an appropriate committee. In response the Portfolio Holder for procurement, said the Council already had a local purchasing policy and he suggested that a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group could look at the wider implications of becoming a Fairtrade Authority.

The Scrutiny Manager asked members if they wished to look at the Fairtrade idea in more detail. Members agreed that currently there was little availability for members to conduct another Task and Finish review. Members were of the opinion that the Fairtrade idea should not be given priority over existing work of the Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish groups.

A recent meeting with the Leader, Chief Executive, Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Chairman and Vice-Chairmen had recently taken place to discuss the role of Scrutiny with the integration of Transformation and Commercialisation. The Scrutiny Manager provided a summary of the meeting and how it was envisaged Scrutiny would be involved in the Transformation process. She agreed to circulate information when available.

ACTION: Scrutiny Manager to make enquires about possibility of a future report regarding the progress of the Economic Development Strategy.

29. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held at 10.00am on 1 August 2017, in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman