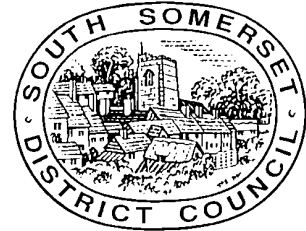


South Somerset District Council

Notice of Meeting



Scrutiny Committee

Making a difference where it counts

Tuesday 30th January 2018

10.00 am

**Main Committee Room, Council Offices
Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT**

(disabled access and a hearing loop are available at this meeting venue)



The following members are requested to attend this meeting.

Chairman: Sue Steele
Vice-chairmen: Dave Bulmer and John Clark

Jason Baker
John Field
Carol Goodall
Tony Lock

Paul Maxwell
David Norris
Alan Smith
Rob Stickland

Gerard Tucker
Martin Wale
Colin Winder

If you would like any further information on the items to be discussed, please contact the Case Services Officer (Support Services) on 01935 462596 or democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk

This Agenda was issued on Monday 22 January 2018.

Alex Parmley, *Chief Executive Officer*

This information is also available on our website
www.southsomerset.gov.uk and via the mod.govapp



Information for the Public

What is Scrutiny?

The Local Government Act 2000 requires all councils in England and Wales to introduce new political structures which provide a clear role for the Council, the Executive and non-executive councillors.

One of the key roles for non-executive councillors is to undertake an overview and scrutiny role for the council. In this Council the overview and scrutiny role involves reviewing and developing, scrutinising organisations external to the council and holding the executive to account

Scrutiny also has an important role to play in organisational performance management.

The Scrutiny Committee is made up of 14 non-executive members and meets monthly to consider items where executive decisions need to be reviewed before or after their implementation, and to commission reviews of policy or other public interest.

Members of the public are able to:

- attend meetings of the Scrutiny Committee except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Scrutiny Committee meetings (limited to up to 3 minutes per person and at the Chairman's discretion usually no more than a total of 15 minutes is allocated for public speaking); and
- see agenda reports.

Meetings of the Scrutiny Committee are held monthly on the Tuesday prior to meetings of the District Executive at 10.00am in the Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

Agendas and minutes of these meetings are published on the Council's website www.southsomerset.gov.uk.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the agenda co-ordinator named on the front page.

Recording and photography at council meetings

Recording of council meetings is permitted, however anyone wishing to do so should let the Chairperson of the meeting know prior to the start of the meeting. The recording should be overt and clearly visible to anyone at the meeting, but non-disruptive. If someone is recording the meeting, the Chairman will make an announcement at the beginning of the meeting. If anyone making public representation does not wish to be recorded they must let the Chairperson know.

The full 'Policy on Audio/Visual Recording and Photography at Council Meetings' can be viewed online at:

<http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/documents/s3327/Policy%20on%20the%20recording%20of%20council%20meetings.pdf>

Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 30 January 2018

Agenda

Preliminary Items

1. Minutes (Pages 5 - 9)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 January 2018.

2. Apologies for absence

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (as amended 26 February 2015), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting.

4. Public question time

5. Issues arising from previous meetings

This is an opportunity for Members to question the progress on issues arising from previous meetings. However, this does not allow for the re-opening of a debate on any item not forming part of this agenda.

6. Chairman's Announcements

Items for Discussion

7. Update Report on Progress with the Scheme to Develop and Refurbish Yeovil Crematorium (Pages 10 - 12)

8. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 January 2018 (Page 13)

9. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1 February 2018 (Page 14)

10. Discretionary Housing Payment Policy Update (Pages 15 - 17)

11. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Page 18)

12. Update on matters of interest (Page 19)

13. Scrutiny Work Programme (Pages 20 - 22)

14. Date of next meeting (Page 23)

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Agenda Item 1

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT on Tuesday 2 January 2018.**

(10.00 am - 12.00 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Rob Stickland
Dave Bulmer	Gerard Tucker
John Clark	Martin Wale
David Norris	Colin Winder
Alan Smith	

Also Present:

Jo Roundell Greene Val Keitch

Officers

Paul Fitzgerald	Section 151 Officer
Nicola Hix	Lead Specialist (Finance)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Specialist
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

93. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

94. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Goodall and Tony Lock.

95. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

96. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

98. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed members that following the meeting in November with the Director of Strategy & Commissioning and the Performance Manager to discuss Performance Monitoring – a follow up workshop for Scrutiny members had now been arranged for 10am to 12 noon on 17 January.

The Chairman noted that at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting a question had been raised about ownership of Foundry House. She noted a detailed response had since been received from the Director of Commercial Services & Income Generation, and she summarised the information for members.

99. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 7 December 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.

100. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 4 January 2018 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 4 January 2018 and made comments including:

Heart of the South West (HotSW) – Joint Committee (Agenda item 6)

- Members generally endorsed the concept of progress with a single Joint Committee.
- Members asked if a formal response had been submitted by SSDC to the productivity strategy consultation and if a copy could be circulated to all members.
- Several members were concerned about some of the assumptions that were detailed in the report including:
 - Assumption that Somerset County Council have adequate resources
 - That initial contributions from member authorities for 2018/19 will be adequate (Rec F).
- Regarding the risk matrix – members queried if the financial risk had been accurately reported in the risk profile matrix 'after officer recommendation'.
- Para 8 on page 5, second bullet point – members sought reassurance that Economic Development within SSDC had the resources and was strong enough to take this forward.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19 (Agenda item 7)

- Scrutiny made no comments as the matter had been thoroughly considered during a Task and Finish Review – the final report of which is included within the appendices for this item.

SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress Report (Agenda item 8)

- It was noted that several times in the past (not necessarily at Scrutiny) members had requested a chart showing people involved with Transformation, including their photos and key responsibilities, but this had still not materialised.
- Scrutiny noted that members had previously been informed that a fortnightly or monthly communication / newsletter would be sent to all members, however this seemed to no longer be happening.
- Scrutiny sought re-assurance that the right level and type of communication was going out to staff.
- The report indicated that the Transformation project is on budget and schedule, however Scrutiny noted the report did not detail the ripple effect on services and any impact on service delivery. Are all services meeting targets?
- Page 34, para 20 – Scrutiny requested that any predicted reductions in service delivery as we progress through Transformation, should be communicated to members and appropriate stakeholders, in order to help manage customer expectations.
- Page 37, Programme status report – Scrutiny noted the table at the top of the page did not define a key and so it looked like a line of ‘number ones’ – it was felt the table needed to be clearer about what it identified.
- Page 39 – under Accommodation, it mentions that the Building Contractor has indicated terminating the contract with SSDC, but the report did not indicate what was being done to address the matter.
- Page 41, Workstream status report – members noted it would be useful if under the ‘Key activities next period’ if the activities could be prioritised or some narrative provided as to the importance of an activity.
- Members queried if there were core posts remaining vacant in the programme, and if so, would it be an additional risk to the programme?
- Page 50 – Members were pleased to note that there will be an external user group. As Scrutiny are commencing a Task and Finish shortly for Customer Accessibility and online services, it was queried if there was an opportunity for some collaborative work?

Annual Review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) (Agenda item 9)

- Members sought assurance that this would cascade down through the new structure.
- Scrutiny queried if the new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) would have any impact on the RIPA?

2018/19 Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan Update (Agenda item 10)

- Members were pleased to note from the Section 151 Officer that the government settlement announced shortly before Christmas slightly improved SSDC’s financial position.
- Members noted that the government were possibly looking to restrict Councils on borrowing for property investment, and queried the implications for SSDC should restrictions be made.
- Members expressed concern that there did not seem to be any in depth reporting of commercial property investments. Scrutiny requested separate more detailed

reporting in the future to inform if investments purchased under the Commercial Strategy are performing as per the expected returns detail in the strategy.

- Business Rates Pooling (page 89) – members queried if any of the pilot schemes should go on to become national policy, would it be a positive impact for budgets in future years? Had any assumptions on pooling been made when calculating the forward budget as detailed in the report?
- Para 7, page 83 – members queried if a figure had been set yet regarding the Council Tax premium on empty properties.
- Para 16, page 86 – members queried what the £10k for strategic management events and sponsorship had been for and why it was an unavoidable pressure?
- Para 27, page 87 – it was queried how the figure of £50k had been derived for a Treasury Risk Management Reserve.

Yeovil Street Markets (Agenda item 11)

Scrutiny raised a number of questions and concerns including:

- The income for the Saturday Market is not included in the report, why? Can some indicative figures be provided?
- Will SSDC still get income from the licensing as it's not clear in the report?
- What is the view of the Yeovil Chamber of Commerce with regard to the influence and impact of the Market?
- Has discussion taken place with Yeovil Town Council, and have they been offered the opportunity to manage the market?
- Is there a charter for the Market, would this form part of the performance management part of an agreement with an operator.
- There are not enough safeguards in the proposed arrangement to ensure effective operation and minimisation of risks. Why is the arrangement proposed so loose and open ended?
- Is it wise to be looking to pursue the option when only one provider was interviewed?
- Para 16 of the report mentions that Markets and Events are key to the overall success of the town centre, how will this proposed arrangement ensure this?

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

- Members noted that an item regarding the Council Plan and Annual Action Plan was scheduled for February – members queried if there would be any consultation with members or opportunity for comments prior to the report coming forward?

101. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 9)

Members noted the updates provided by the Scrutiny Manager on each of the Task and Finish Groups currently in progress or commencing in the near future.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2019 – The Task and Finish group had held their second meeting and were progressing with potential options to reduce administration time for the scheme. At the next meeting members will begin to assess options in detail considering impact.

Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy - No updates since the last update.

Car Parking Charges – Review to commence once resource allows. Members briefly discussed the subject and noted the car parking strategy was also out of date. There was a general opinion that the Car Parking Strategy, in terms of planning future parking provision, should be reviewed prior to a Task and Finish review of car parking charges.

Transformation – Customer Accessibility - the review will commence later in January 2018. The Scrutiny Committee have tasked this group to work with the Transformation Team to identify and deliver Best Practice to provide accessible on-line information and services for all. The group will compile its own project scope and terms of reference, to include meeting times. Volunteers were requested for the group. In response, Councillors Colin Winder, Dave Bulmer and David Norris expressed an interest in being on the Task and Finish Group.

102. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 10)

There were no matters of interest.

103. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The Scrutiny Manager updated members that the report regarding the Innovation Centre would come forward in the next few months, and information on the Innovation Centre may form part of a wider progress report. She also noted that the Portfolio Holder would attend the next meeting, on 30 January, to provide an update regarding the refurbishment of the Crematorium.

Members were asked for any issues they may wish to see added to the future Work Programme. One suggestion put forward related to the increased grant funding awarded (since the original application approved) to a dual-use centre at an Academy without any changes to the community usage being offered. It was suggested that possibly there could be a post-project analysis or look at the wider general remit of grants, funding and dual-use agreements, in particular those to / with Academies. The topic was supported by members.

104. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 10.00am on Tuesday 30 January in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman

Agenda Item 7

Update Report on Progress with the Scheme to Develop and Refurbish Yeovil Crematorium

Executive Portfolio Holder: Cllr, Peter Gubbins, Yeovil Crematorium,
Cllr Ric Pallister, Leader, Strategy and Policy.
Cllr Henry Hobhouse, Property and Climate Change

Ward Member(s) Peter Seib, Sarah Lindsay

Director: Clare Pestell, Director for Commercial Services and Income Generation

Service Manager: Alasdair Bell, Environmental Health Manager

Lead Officer: Alasdair Bell, Environmental Health Manager

Contact Details: alasdair.bell@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462056

Purpose of the Report

1. To report on progress with the scheme to refurbish and develop Yeovil Crematorium. This is an updated report for the Scrutiny Committee to the one that was circulated to members before Christmas.

Forward Plan

2. A version of this report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 7th December. In the event it was just circulated to elected members rather than being presented at committee.

Public Interest

3. The purpose of this report is to update elected members on progress with the scheme to refurbish and develop Yeovil Crematorium.

Recommendation

4. That the Scrutiny Committee notes this report.

Background

5. South Somerset District Council (SSDC) owns an 89% interest in Yeovil Crematorium and Yeovil Without Parish Council (YWPC) owns an 11% interest. Yeovil Crematorium is the only crematorium facility in the immediate area and averages 1,700 cremations a year. The crematorium is managed by SSDC on behalf of Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery Committee and operates as a separate legal entity. Yeovil crematorium was built in 1970 and earlier in the year it was decided to review the existing facility and consider the future need for crematory services in Yeovil and the surrounding area for the next 25-50 years. The aim was to ensure that we provided high quality facilities for families and mourners in the years to come.
6. The existing crematorium is of a seventies design and the chapel is considered by many to be cramped and gloomy. Parking is often a problem. The cremators themselves will need renewing in the near future with more efficient and environmentally friendly equipment and other maintenance costs were increasing due to the age of the facility

7. The use of the crematorium has changed over the years. In the past people used to go to church for the main committal service and only a few people would then go on to attend the actual cremation. These days however most people view the cremation service as the main and only service for their loved ones. The services in the chapel have become ever more elaborate with readings, hymns and now videos. With the introduction of the Wesley audio visual system and with improved technology this is a trend that is likely to continue. Services at the chapel can now be filmed and shown in real time across the world for relatives and friends who are unable to attend. Discussions with local funeral directors suggested that was a need for a larger chapel to cater for larger attendances.
8. Running the crematorium is a commercial business with a turnover of £1.2million and an operating surplus of approximately £400K. We are in competition with both the private and public sector for business. The better and more attractive the facility we can provide the more business we can attract and the more cost effective the facility becomes. If we provided a first class facility with increased capacity it could generate new business. Most recently built crematoriums are of light airy designs with ample seating and parking.
9. With this in mind, in June both the District Executive and Full Council agreed to fund the refurbishment and improvement of the existing facilities to include the construction of a new chapel with greater capacity, the creation of a smaller secondary chapel, the conversion of part of the old chapel into a new waiting room, the installation of new cremators, the provision of extra parking and the creation of a new Garden of Remembrance. Both reports that went to these committees were confidential due to the costing information included.

Report Detail

10. Since the scheme was agreed by the District Executive and Full Council in June 2017 a Project Board has been set up comprised of officers and member from SSDC and YWPC. The Project Board is meeting regularly to progress matters. Within the last three months we have gone out to tender for the Architectural Design role, the Project Manager and QS role, and for provision of the new cremators. We also went out to tender for a new access road and for the relaying of a new electricity service supply. In most of these cases we have had to go down the OJEU (European) tendering route that has slowed up the tendering process.
11. The architects Kendall Kingscott have been selected to carry out the overall design work of the new chapel and the refurbished crematorium. At the time of writing this report the selection of the Project Manager/QS and the contractor to provide the new cremators had not yet been decided
12. We are currently in discussion with the architects to fine tune the new design. There will then be a period for detailed design planning that will result in planning applications coming before the relevant committee. Once the design work is finished and planning permission/building regulation approval etc confirmed the actual building work will then need to be tendered. It is anticipated that actual construction work will start next July with a finish date July-September 2019.
13. Work on the new Garden of Remembrance has already started with a new tarmac path being laid in the lower meadow. Plans are also well advanced for a memorial wall to be constructed for the placing of memorial plaques and flower tributes.
14. Work on the new access road has started along with the felling of several old Leylandii trees. This work should be complete within six weeks
15. Generally the project is on track and everything is going according to plan.

Financial Implications

There is agreed budget for this project and all projected spend is well within budget.

Council Plan Implications

This project will contribute towards the following council aims;

To deliver high quality cost effective services

1. Actively manage assets and resources to ensure the best financial or community return.
2. To seek business opportunities for the council.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

The replacement of the old non-mercury abatement cremators with new state of the art, efficient environmentally cremators will have a very positive effect on carbon emissions and pollution levels.

Equality and Diversity Implications

A full equality assessment report has been undertaken on this project and there are no adverse implications.

Privacy Impact Assessment

There are no privacy implications to this report

Background Papers

Confidential reports to District Executive, 1st June and Full Council on 15th June 2017

Agenda Item 8

Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 January 2018

The Chairman will update members on the issues raised by Scrutiny members at the District Executive meeting held on 4 January 2018.

The draft minutes from the District Executive meeting held on 4 January 2018 have been circulated with the District Executive agenda.

Agenda Item 9

Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1 February 2018

Lead Officer: Jo Gale, Scrutiny Specialist
Contact Details: joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077

Scrutiny Committee members will receive a copy of the District Executive agenda containing the reports to be considered at the meeting on 1 February 2018.

Members are asked to read the reports and bring any concerns/issues from the reports to be discussed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 30 January 2018.

The Chairman will take forward any views raised by Scrutiny members to the District Executive meeting on 1 February 2018.

Please note:

The Press and Public will be excluded from the meeting when a report or appendix on the District Executive agenda has been classed as confidential, Scrutiny Committee will consider this in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under paragraph 3 (or for any other reason as stated in the District Executive agenda):

“Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).”

It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption from the Access to Information Rules outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Agenda Item 10

Discretionary Housing Payment Policy Update

*Lead Officers: Ian Potter, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Tamsin Gold, Benefits Team Leader
Jo Gale, Scrutiny Specialist*

*Contact Details: tamsin.gold@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462081
joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077*

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update in relation to the progress made, and the analysis of results, following the implementation of the new Discretionary Housing Payment Policy that took effect from the 1 April 2017.

Actions Required

That members note the report.

Report Detail

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) were introduced in 2001 and are designed to provide additional support to help top up the difference between Housing Benefit (HB) and the rent charged.

The roll-out of Universal Credit (UC) by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) means support for housing costs is shifting from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit. DHP's can be paid to UC recipients where their entitlement contains a housing cost element. Although UC is administered by DWP, DHP's will remain the responsibility of local councils to administer.

Government funding for DHP's is limited and while councils are permitted to top it up from its' own resources there is very limited scope to do so in the current financial climate. It is therefore important to ensure that support is effectively targeted.

The review sought to ensure there is a clear policy framework that enables officers to make consistent and objective decisions while retaining a sufficient degree of discretion in recognition of the unique circumstances of each applicant.

During the review we looked at the current SSDC Policy and practise and sought advice and guidance from other authorities and expert resources including Shelter and Citizens Advice South Somerset and MIND. We also looked at a number of anonymised case studies of previous DHP applications with members to demonstrate the various circumstances of customers within the SSDC area.

Members focused on establishing a basis for reasonable living expenses which have been detailed in the policy along with the multiplier based on the household factor.

The revised DHP policy was agreed by members in March 2017 and the policy came into effect on the 1 April 2017. It was agreed at this time that an update would be given to Scrutiny Committee on how the revised policy was operating.

Analyis of new policy impact

DHP Statistics

Below is analysis showing the number of Discretionary Housing Payments that have been received and assessed for each financial year from 2016 to date, most recent first. It shows the numbers received, those successful, un-successful and the total value of the awards in relation to the Government contribution. I have also included the breakdown of numbers received in paper format and E Form to show how the numbers received online through our Website is increasing. This percentage increase in those applying online is set to increase further through our channel shift work.

1 April 2017 to 31 December 2017 (9 months)

Total number DHP requests	344
For HB Claims	289
For UC Claims	55
HB DHP successful	238
UC DHP successful	48
HB DHP Un-successful	51
UC DHP Un-successful	7
Total Value of awards	£117,657.37 + £20,057.87 committed
HB DHP award total	£115,580.53
UC DHP award total	£2076.84
Government Contribution	£287,247.00
Paper Form	263 (76% of all applications)
E Form	81 (24% of all applications)

1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 (12 months)

Total number DHP requests	500
For HB Claims	484
For UC Claims	16
HB DHP successful	396
UC DHP successful	10
HB DHP Un-successful	88
UC DHP Un-successful	6
Total Value of awards	£172,816.84
HB DHP award total	£169,510.60
UC DHP award total	£3306.24
Government Contribution	£217,431.00
Paper Form	458 (92% of all applications)
E Form	42 (8% of all applications)

How the new Discretionary Housing Payment Policy is working

The purpose of the new policy was to reassure the authority that the principles of equity and fairness can continue to be upheld and to introduce an evidence based approach as far as possible. It was acknowledged that those officers administering the DHP process are continually asked to make judgments on the expenditure choices of applicants. When applying for a DHP, applicants are asked to provide details of their expenditure and the officers then base their decisions on this information –

previously there were no guidelines as to what constitutes 'acceptable living allowances' and officers could make different judgements – each entirely valid, but not effectively contributing to consistent decision making. Members were also conscious of the strain this could potentially put on officers, asking them to effectively judge the lifestyle choices of applicants.

You will see from the analysis that since the new policy was introduced the officers have continued to award DHP's within the allocated level of funding and the amount of un-successful applications has remained at a similar ratio to successful claims.

The officers administering the DHP's have found the new policy easier to administer following the addition of the 'reasonable expenditure' and household multipliers to the scheme. Whilst also taking into account that they still have the discretion to exceed the trigger point, or actual expenditure where it is reasonable to do so. They have also continued to exercise their discretion meet the physical, psychological and social needs of an individual and to treat each case based upon the personal circumstances of the customer.

Another significant change for the administration of the DHP's has been around the claims from customers in receipt of Universal Credit. These awards have to be reviewed each month in line with the customers Universal Credit. Payments. This is to ensure that if there are any changes to their Universal Credit the DHP is adjusted accordingly. This is to ensure we continue to award the appropriate amount to which the customer is entitled to. This has created more work around the DHP scheme, however, the adoption of the new policy has made this process much simpler. The officers have continued to have support from the Benefits Team Leaders in this process where requested.

Summary

In summary the revised DHP policy has been implemented with great success for both the officers and customers.

We have updated the SSDC Website to include the revised DHP policy along with the online version of the DHP application form.

The outcomes of the DHP's will continue to be reported and closely monitored on regular basis to avoid any potential risk to SSDC finances or impact on the customers.

There is still some work to be done around ensuring all literature produced in connection with the DHP procedure meets the organisational standards in terms of Plain English and accessibility. This will be completed by the 31 March 2018 ready for the new financial year.

We are currently in communication with with Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council regarding the annual review of the reasonable living expense levels for 2018/19. They have indicated they are considering a move away from these in favour of officer judgement in each case. We propose to continue to use the reasonable costs methodology but will consider if an inflationary increase should be applied.

Agenda Item 11

Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews

The Task and Finish Review Chairs or Scrutiny Specialist will give a brief verbal update on progress made.

Current Task & Finish Reviews

- Council Tax Support Scheme 2019
- Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy.
- Transformation – Customer Accessibility

Agenda Item 12

Update on matters of interest

Lead Officers: Jo Gale, Scrutiny Specialist
Contact Details: joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077

Action Required

That members of the Scrutiny Committee note the verbal updates as presented by the Scrutiny Specialist.

Purpose of Report

This report is submitted for information to update members of the committee on any recent information regarding matters of interest to the Scrutiny Committee, and for the Scrutiny Specialist to verbally update members on any ongoing matters.

Scrutiny Work Programme

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Issue for Main Scrutiny Cttee	Budget	Background/Description	Lead Officer/ Lead Member
March 2018	Yeovil Innovation Centre	✓		An update report on the Innovation Centre's performance including progress of phase 2. With a brief overview of the work to achieve the related Economic focussed Council plan targets and related strategies.	David Julian/ Cllr Jo RoundellGreene
TBC March 2018	Council Tax Penalties and Civil Penalties in Housing Benefit			In April 2017 the council agreed to introduce penalties for those who have failed to notify the Council of change of circumstances that has resulted in them continuing to receive a Council Tax exemption, discount, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support award that they are not entitled. Scrutiny Committee agreed at their meeting on 4 th April 2017 for an item to be added to the forward plan for October to monitor the effectiveness of the policy. Figures with regard to the cost of issuing and collecting penalties have been specifically requested.	Ian Potter/Cllr Peter Seib
TBC 3 April pending national fee increase regulation coming in (Jan/Feb)	Monitoring of the implementation of Charges for Pre-Application Development Control Advice	✓		In April 2017 Scrutiny Committee supported the introduction of charging for Pre- Application Development Advice and requested a monitoring report is brought forward to establish the effectiveness of recouping costs and to consider the re-evaluation of fees.	Simon Fox/ Nigel Marsden/ Cllr Angie Singleton
TBC	Troubled Families Programme	✓		Members requested an update report on the progress of the troubled families following a report covering the work of South Somerset Together, Local Strategic Partnership. A specific report request needs to be compiled.	Helen Rutter

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Issue for Main Scrutiny Cttee	Budget	Background/Description	Lead Officer/ Lead Member
TBC	Review of Economic Development Strategy	✓		This Strategy is due for review and Scrutiny members have previously been involved in the review and development of this Policy. The Lead Officer has agreed that Scrutiny involvement will be factored in to the review process and we will be kept informed regarding the most appropriate point for effective Scrutiny engagement.	David Julian / Cllr Jo Roundell Greene.
TBC	Increased Joint Working Between Police Forces			At the meeting of Scrutiny Committee on 30 August 2016, the SSDC representative on the Police and Crime Panel requested that there be a report looking at the proposals for increased joint working between police forces across the South West.	

The Somerset Waste Board and Somerset Waste Partnership Forward Plan of key decisions can be viewed at:
<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=196&RD=0>

Current Task & Finish Reviews

Date Commenced	Title and Purpose	Members
February 2017	Accessible Homefinder Common Lettings Policy A review of the policy to ensure it is accessible for customers/the general public. Phase 1 completed with comments re style, layout and terminology fed back, phase 2 to commence June 2017 or later.	Cllrs Sue Steele, Carol Goodall
October 2017	Council Tax Support 2019/20 Consider the merits/risks of moving towards a discount based policy.	Cllrs Sue Steele, Carol Goodall, David Norris, Rob Stickland, Anna Groskop, Sue Osborne
Due to start January 2018	Working with the Transformation Team to identify, and deliver, Best Practice to provide accessible on-line information and services for all.	Cllrs Dave Bulmer, David Norris, Colin Winder invitation to all members circulated via Full Council.

Date Commenced	Title and Purpose	Members
TBC	<p>Rural Allocations Policy</p> <p>The Disposal of Third Party properties had highlighted issues with the Rural Allocations Policy and some work now needs to be done to review the policy, no start date has been agreed for this as yet.</p>	
<p>If you have any suggested topics for Scrutiny Committee to consider please contact Scrutiny Specialist – joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk</p> <p>(The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are committed to ensuring they have capacity to contribute to the Council's Transformation programme and therefore fewer Task and Finish reviews may be conducted during the Transformation period).</p>		

Agenda Item 14

Date of next meeting

Members are requested to note that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will be held on Tuesday 27 February at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.
