

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 30 January 2018**.

(10.00 am - 12.45 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Alan Smith
John Clark	Rob Stickland (to 12.40pm)
John Field	Gerard Tucker (to 12.05pm)
Carol Goodall	Martin Wale (to 11.40am)
David Norris (to 12.25pm)	Colin Winder (to 12.25pm)

Also Present:

Peter Gubbins	Jo Roundell Greene
Henry Hobhouse	Sylvia Seal
Val Keitch	Mike Lock
Ric Pallister	

Officers

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Netta Meadows	Director (Strategy & Commissioning)
Clare Pestell	Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation)
Alasdair Bell	Environmental Health Manager
Paul Rayson	General Manager, Yeovil Crematorium
Charlotte Jones	People, Performance & Change Lead
Paul Fitzgerald	Section 151 Officer
Nicola Hix	Lead Specialist (Finance)
David Crisfield	Third Sector and Equalities Co-ordinator
Caroline White	Commercial Property, Land and Development Manger
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Specialist
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

105. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 January 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

106. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jason Baker and Tony Lock.

107. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor John Clark declared a personal interest for item 7 on the District Agenda – 2018/19 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets and Medium Term Financial Plan – as he was on the Project Brief Group for the new Westfield Community Centre which was the subject of a request for capital funding.

108. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

Councillor Martin Wale advised members that he had attempted to call in the item regarding Yeovil Markets on the District Executive agenda in January, but had since retracted for a number of reasons. He noted that after discussions with Legal it had been agreed that elements of the Council Constitution would be reviewed as the details about the terms of any call in was not as clear as it could be.

In response, the Scrutiny Manager clarified that a call in would normally be regarding a decision, and on this occasion the points raised didn't refer to the decision but to the subject matter more in general. It had therefore been suggested by Councillor Wale that Scrutiny request a report providing an overview of the Yeovil Refresh including the funding and governance arrangements.

110. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman provided several updates including:

- Outcome of the further meeting held with the Director for Strategy & Commissioning and the People, Performance & Change Lead regarding performance monitoring. The revised Performance Indicators were detailed in a report on the District Agenda.
- Confirmation that the hours of the Scrutiny Officer had been reduced and so members may need to re-prioritise work undertaken by the Committee.
- Task and Finish work by the Committee had featured in the Rural Housing Spotlight newsletter because we had identified the disposal policy as an example of failure to rural proof.

111. Update Report on Progress with the Scheme to Develop and Refurbish Yeovil Crematorium (Agenda Item 7)

The Portfolio Holder for Area South introduced the report as detailed in the agenda, and was happy to answer any questions members raised. The Environmental Health Manager noted the project was all on track and running to schedule and budget. He provided some updates including:

- The project had now gone out to tender for the cremators
- Work had commenced on the Bluebell Road access

Comments made by the Portfolio Holder and Environmental Health Manager in response to comments made during a brief discussion included:

- A scale model of the scheme would be available in the near future – it was currently being modified to incorporate some minor changes that had been made to the design..
- Project was on budget and included the small changes being made to the scheme and the new tarmac paths.
- Plans will be available to view online when they are finalised, but members were welcome to view the current plans on request.

Members were pleased to note the progress and thanked the Environmental Health Manager and the Portfolio Holder for the informative report.

ACTION: That members note the Update Report on Progress with the Scheme to Develop and Refurbish Yeovil Crematorium.

112. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 January 2018 (Agenda Item 8)

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

The Scrutiny Manager noted at the last meeting a query had been raised under the draft budget item, about whether a figure had been set yet regarding a Council Tax premium on empty properties. A response had since been received from the Revenues Team Leader explaining that the change would no longer be taking effect from April 2018 due to required legislation changes. It would be from April 2019 that we could potentially charge 200% for long-term empty properties.

113. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1 February 2018 (Agenda Item 9)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 1 February 2018 and made comments including:

SSDC Council Action Plan 2018-19 (Agenda item 6)

- Para 2.9 – Members were disappointed that rural businesses, land based businesses and agriculture did not feature more prominently in the Action Plan given that so much of the district is of a rural nature.
- Broadband – several members felt this was more a key performance indicator for County and the LEP, as broadband is something that can be promoted by SSDC rather than administered.
- Scrutiny queried what role SSDC was playing in the iAero project.
- Page 12, priority 1 – regarding satisfaction rates, members queried if dis-satisfaction and complaints would continue to be monitored.
- Members sought reassurance that there will be some directly comparable performance indicators, so that we can benchmark against other appropriate local authorities.
- Members asked if data would be available at a district level or whether, in time, it would be possible to drill down to a lower level such as wards and specific service provision.

- Members also sought reassurance that customer service data will continue to be measured in order to facilitate improvements being made or ensuring adequate capacity. eg. How long callers waiting, calls abandoned etc.
- It was noted that customers contacting us by telephone now receive a recorded message indicating the time to be connected to an advisor. It is suggested that if a caller chooses to hang up after the message it should be recorded differently to an abandoned call, as the customer has made an informed choice to hang-up.
- Member suggested that a performance monitor was measured for those activities that SSDC is specifically responsible for with regard to anti-social behaviour and make it clear in any reports – what constitutes anti-social behaviour so the measure is more meaningful to residents.

2018/19 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets and Medium Term Financial Plan (Agenda item 7)

- Members asked for some clarity and further explanation regarding the figures relating to New Homes Bonus within the report.
- With regard to the Government 4 year settlement, Scrutiny queried if there was still doubt about funding for Year 5 onwards?
- Page 21, para 23 – Members found elements of the table difficult to understand. It was suggested a short narrative for sub headings in the table may be useful or possibly to see if there is any alternative way of presenting the information.
- Page 17 - Scrutiny felt the wording of Recommendation 4b was a little confusing as it wasn't clear if the £1.85 for the SRA is part of, or in addition to, the Council Tax increase of £5.
- Scrutiny were content that the recommendations go forward.

2017/18 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 31 December 2017 (Agenda item 8)

- Scrutiny did not raise any queries, and were content that the recommendations go forward.

2017/18 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 31 December 2017 (Agenda item 9)

- Scrutiny did not raise any queries, and were content that the recommendations go forward.

District-Wide Strategic Grants – Proposal for Two-Year Funding Agreements With Access for All, CASS and SPARK 2018-2020 (Agenda item 10)

- Scrutiny sought reassurance about how the performance is measured and reviewed for each of the organisations.
- Members endorsed comments made by the Portfolio Holder at the Scrutiny Committee, and noted the role of CASS was crucial and should continue to be supported by SSDC.
- Scrutiny noted the grants to be awarded would be the same as previous years and so effectively the organisations were absorbing inflation, hence effectively year on year we were granting them less.
- Some members sought reassurance that the funding to CASS was appropriate given that they were now helping more clients especially since the roll-out of Universal Credit.

Loan to Somerset Care & Repair Ltd (Agenda item 11)

- Scrutiny were encouraged by the project as it would help to address the challenges of the new Homelessness Reduction Act. It was also noted how the social attributes of the company complimented the aims of SSDC.
- Members did query if once a unit was rented out to someone whether it would be on a permanent basis or for a defined length of time?

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme – Cost Recovery for Requested Re-Inspections (Agenda item 12)

- Scrutiny sought some clarity about the scheme and queried if re-visits were just for the purposes of a business trying to gain a higher rating?
- Members queried how the £115 fee had been derived at, and whether it would be an SSDC figure or one that would be more widely used.

Commercial Property, Land and Development – Performance Management Indicators (PMI) Report (Agenda item 13)

- Page 140, PMI 1b – Members acknowledged that estimating the spend required would be a big unknown for some properties.
- Members asked for clarification of how information relating to PMIs 1a - 1d would be detailed in the overarching Performance Monitoring.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 14)

- Scrutiny made no comments.

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).

Commercial Services & Income Generation Update (Confidential) (Agenda item 17)

- Scrutiny made several comments in confidential session.

114. Discretionary Housing Payment Policy Update (Agenda Item 10)

The Benefits Team Leader presented the report as detailed in the agenda, which provided an update on progress made and analysis of results following the implementation of the new Discretionary Housing Payment Policy in April 2017.

There was a very brief discussion during which members were pleased to note the progress made. No concerns or issues were raised.

Members thanked the Team Leader for her report.

ACTION: That the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy Update report be noted.

115. 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 or commencing in the near future.

Customer Accesibility – An invitation to participate was issued at Full Council and included in the Full Council Agenda, but no names had come forward and so she would approach the political group leaders. A meeting would be scheduled for mid-February for the group to meet with relevant officers and to collectively discuss the scope of the review in more detail

She explained this would be an important piece of work and integral to the Transformation Programme, and the group would need to work at a pace.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2019 – No updates since the last meeting.

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

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

There were no updates on matters of interest.

117. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

The Scrutiny Manager provided a number of updates including:

- The report about the Yeovil Innovation Centre was due at the following meeting. The Economic Development Manager had asked if members may wish for a tour of the Centre prior to the meeting. Members thanked the officer for the offer of a tour but declined due to concerns about time availability for the Committee meeting.
- As discussed earlier in the meeting it was suggested that there was a follow up report on Yeovil Markets/Yeovil Vision/Yeovil Refresh following concerns raised at the previous meeting and the attempted call-in.

The Chairman also noted that she felt there was a need to look at the rural areas and market towns given the economy focus in the Council Plan.

118. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 10.00am on Tuesday 27 February in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

.....

Chairman