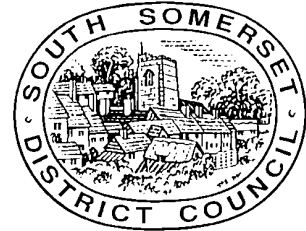


South Somerset District Council

Notice of Meeting



Scrutiny Committee

Making a difference where it counts

Tuesday 1st May 2018

10.00 am

**Chamber B, 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
Mike Lock

Tony Lock
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 Friday 20 April 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 1 May 2018

Agenda

Preliminary Items

1. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 April 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. **Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5 April 2018** (Page 9)

8. **Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3 May 2018** (Page 10)

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

10. **Update on matters of interest** (Page 12)

11. **Scrutiny Work Programme** (Pages 13 - 14)

12. **Date of next meeting** (Page 15)

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 3 April 2018.**

(10.00 am - 11.55 am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Mike Lock
Dave Bulmer	Alan Smith
John Clark	Rob Stickland
John Field	Gerard Tucker
Carol Goodall	Martin Wales

Also Present:

Jo Roundell Greene	Henry Hobhouse
Val Keitch	

Officers

Netta Meadows	Director (Strategy & Commissioning)
Tamsin Gold	Benefits Team Leader
Clare Pestell	Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation)
Caron Starkey	Strategic Lead for Transformation
Andrew Kinghan	Project Manager (Transformation)
Caroline White	Commercial Property, Land and Development Manger
Nicola Hix	Lead Specialist (Finance)
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Specialist
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

132. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

133. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Lock, David Norris and Colin Winder.

134. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

135. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

The Chairman checked with members that they had now received documents regarding the Yeovil Refresh as had been discussed at the previous meeting. Members confirmed that the papers had been received.

137. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman noted that several Scrutiny members had attended an informal Scrutiny meeting with the Strategic Lead for Transformation, who provided an overview of the Transformation Governance arrangements, risk and budget monitoring to improve members understanding. The meeting had been informative and useful.

138. Customer Access Strategy: Outline Approach and Key Principles (Agenda Item 7)

The Director for Strategy and Commissioning introduced the report on behalf of the Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning, Strategy & Commissioning). She provided a presentation which informed members of the Customer Access Strategy currently under development. She explained that the strategy would give structure to the way in which SSDC would be engaging with its customers and communities in the future. It was recognised that the Council wanted as many services as possible available digitally, but it was also acknowledged that this may not always be appropriate to everyone. Work had been done to identify measurable outcomes, but there would be a need to be responsive, and continually develop, improve and change processes when required.

The presentation included information about:

- Why a Customer Access Strategy was needed.
- What was already known?
- What do we undertake to deliver? – Principles and Outcomes
- How will we know we've been successful?

During discussion, the Director and the Strategic Lead for Transformation responded to points of detail, including information about:

- Timeframes regarding preparation of the strategy.
- The suggestion for working with partners regarding training for customers would be investigated further.
- The offer to our customers would need to be right for SSDC and would be tailored to systems. The systems in use, or to be used, were well known known, tried and tested. A system was needed now but processes may change as we gain more customer insight as the authority continued through Transformation.
- Processes would be in put in place to follow up on abandoned, or incomplete transactions / service requests etc.
- Unlikely to be gaining any more data from customers than currently, but information more likely to be held digitally than on paper.

At the end of discussion, members were content to the note the presentation and report. The Chairman thanked the Director for the information and presentation.

139. Civil Penalties Update (Agenda Item 8)

The Benefits Team Leader presented the report as detailed in the agenda, which provided an update on Civil Penalties in Housing benefit which were introduced from April 2017. She updated members that the penalty for 77 cases had now been collected.

During a brief discussion the Benefits Team Leader responded to points of detail including:

- It was not possible for SSDC to apply a similar penalty to Universal Credit claims but it may be possible to apply a penalty scheme to Council Tax.
- Penalties could not be appealed in isolation but would be considered together with the Housing Benefit claim.
- Explanation of the process for informing the customer about applying penalties
- People in debt could be signposted to other agencies for help and advice such as Citizens Advice. People were encouraged to contact SSDC as soon as possible to notify of a change in circumstances in order to prevent getting into an overpayment situation.

Members were content to note the report and thanked the officer for attending the meeting to answer questions.

ACTION: That the report be noted.

140. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 1 March 2018 (Agenda Item 9)

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

141. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 5 April 2018 (Agenda Item 10)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 5 April 2018 and made comments including:

Transformation Project Progress Report (Agenda item 6)

- Some members felt that para 22 (page 8) needed to better reflect Locality working providing input into Council objectives within the Council Plan. Others also felt there should be reference to local democracy.
- Regarding staffing - Scrutiny asked if there were still any unfilled posts within Phase 1?
- In referring to their contact with local Town and Parish Councils – members were concerned that some councils had mentioned that Transformation seemed to be

being used as an excuse for delays in responding to queries within some departments.

- Members sought reassurance that phases 2 and 3 were on track regarding timeframes
- Members also asked for reassurance that while staff were undertaking selection activities that workloads were being managed.
- Members were concerned if the number of staff vacancies throughout the council was having an impact on service delivery.

Asset Transfer Policy revised to: The Asset Disposal and Community Asset Transfer (Agenda item 7)

- Scrutiny asked if there were any Community Asset Transfers currently in progress that might get caught up in the change of policy.
- Members asked if the Disposal Assessment Group (DAG) would meet on a regular or ad-hoc basis.
- Members queried if Community Groups and Town/Parish Councils knew that a policy existed?
- Regarding particular assets purchased for investment – some members queried if an asset under-performed was there an option to withdraw?
- Scrutiny queried who would value or assess assets/properties from an independent perspective.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 8)

- Scrutiny made no comments.
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142. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 11)

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

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

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

Customer Accessibility - This group has yet to meet, it has been delayed pending the presentation of the Customer Access strategy, which was discussed earlier on the agenda.

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

The Chairman had no updates.

Councillor Martin Wale reported that he, and Councillor Carol Goodall, had recently attended a meeting of the Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel. The meeting had included a site visit to an anaerobic digester near Bridgwater which had been very interesting.

144. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 13)

The Specialist (Democratic Services) referred to some notes made by the Scrutiny Specialist, in which she asked if the committee felt a verbal overview or short report regarding Business Rates Retention would be helpful.

During discussion members felt a report on the take up of Business Rates Relief Schemes would be of interest. Some members also queried if there was anything that could be done to support smaller businesses who were struggling to pay their rates.

Reference was also made to a recent email circulated to members regarding the two starring of major planning applications and the possible referral to Regulation Committee. Members asked if the situation, and the process as to how we've got where we are regarding planning appeals, was something Scrutiny could look into as they felt there was clearly an issue. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to await further advice from the Specialist (Scrutiny).

ACTION: Specialist (Scrutiny) to arrange for reports or provide further advice to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting regarding:

- Take up of Business Rates Relief Schemes
- Planning process regarding appeals and the two starring of planning applications.

145. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 10.00am on Tuesday 1 May 2018 in Council Chamber B, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman

Agenda Item 7

Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5 April 2018

The Chairman will update members on the issues raised by Scrutiny members at the District Executive meeting held on 5 April 2018.

The draft minutes from the District Executive meeting held on 5 April 2018 have been circulated with the District Executive agenda.

Agenda Item 8

Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3 May 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 3 May 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 1 May 2018.

The Chairman will take forward any views raised by Scrutiny members to the District Executive meeting on 3 May 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 9

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

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

Agenda Item 10

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	Background/Description	Lead Officer/ Lead Member
JULY TBC 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 Marston/ Cllr Angie Singleton
JULY TBC	Key Performance Targets – presentation of data	Further to Scrutiny Committees' involvement in the review of performance monitoring early in 2018 it was agreed at Scrutiny Committee on 27 Feb 2018 that Scrutiny Committee will consider the layout and presentation of the quarterly performance reports.	Netta Meadows Charlotte Jones
TBC	Draft YIC (Yeovil Innovation Centre) 2018 Business Plan	Following a report of the YIC to Scrutiny Committee on 27 th Feb 2018, it was agreed that the revised draft business will be put before Scrutiny Committee for consideration later this year – This may be a Task and Finish activity	Clare Pestell David Julian/Justin Parton
TBC	Precepting for Somerset Rivers Authority	Scrutiny Committee requested at their 30 th January meeting a progress report on the precepting arrangements for the Somerset Rivers Authority.	
TBC	Overview of Yeovil Refresh	Following a report to District Executive with regard to Yeovil Market at the beginning of January 2018, Scrutiny Committee members raised questions with regard to Yeovil Vision and felt they needed a better understanding of it to effectively scrutinise the governance, investment and strategic impact/relationship with the Council.	Helen Rutter/ Natalie Fortt /Cllr Peter Gubbins
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
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.	Clare Pestell 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	<p>Accessible Homefinder Common Lettings Policy</p> <p>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.</p>	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 Commence February 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, Carol Goodall, Sue Steele.
TBC	Rural Allocations Policy - 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.	
TBC	Review of the rural economy and identifying business needs that SSDC could support or help facilitate to further growth and or diversification.	Agreed at 30 Jan Scrutiny Committee, no project scope has been developed at this stage.
<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 12

Date of next meeting

Members are requested to note that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will be held on Tuesday 5 June 2018 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way, Yeovil.
