

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil on Tuesday 31 July 2018.**

(10.05 am - 11.10 am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Carol Goodall
Dave Bulmer	Mike Lock
John Clark	Tony Lock
John Field	Gerard Tucker

Also Present:

Jo Roundell Greene

Officers

Charlotte Jones	People, Performance & Change Lead
Nicola Hix	Lead Specialist (Finance)
Brendan Downes	Specialist (Procurement)
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

27. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Norris, Alan Smith, Rob Stickland, Martin Wale and Colin Winder.

29. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

30. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

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

No issues were raised from previous meetings.

32. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Tony Lock back to Scrutiny Committee. She also welcomed some graduate interns who were present to observe the meeting.

33. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5 July 2018 (Agenda Item 7)

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

34. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 2 August 2018 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 2 August and made comments as detailed below. Responses to most comments and questions were provided at the Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officer or Deputy Leader.

Corporate Grants Report 2017-2018 (Agenda item 6)

- Page 4, table 1 – Members noted the differences across the four areas regarding the percentage awarded against project costs and the town / parish council contributions. Members asked if the variation in figures was due to the types of grant (e.g. revenue, capital or Service Level Agreement) or if there was another reason, and queried what had been different in Area North to achieve the figures?

2018/19 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30 June 2018 (Agenda item 7)

- Page 13, table 2 – Members queried if the virement of £61,610 to the regeneration budgets for Chard, Wincanton and Yeovil had been evenly split between the schemes?
- Page 17 – Building Control Income – members queried what could be done about the predicted shortfall in fee income, and whether the charges need to be reviewed?
- Page 16 and 28 – Westlands – Members acknowledged there was annual reporting but asked if it would be possible to have a verbal update on how it's going mid-term.
- Page 27 – Some members asked if the income from property investments could be more clearly reported.
- Page 28 – Westlands – members asked for further detail regarding the issue with utilities (as detailed in the comment).
- Appendix C, page 31 – The Closed Churchyards Reserve is showing a positive figure – members queried if this meant no further funding will be available?
- Scrutiny made a general observation that the comments in both budget reports contained several acronyms and some readers may be unsure of their meaning.

2018/19 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 30 June 2018 (Agenda item 8)

- Members sought clarity about the frequency of reporting for the progress of investments (Commercial Strategy)

Corporate Performance Report 2018-19: 1st Quarter (Agenda item 9)

- Some members expressed concern that they had experienced long waits on the telephone when ringing the main number. They acknowledged there was a recorded message encouraging people to go online, but they had concerns about vulnerable people who may not be able to get online or did not have the confidence to do so.

- Page 51, para 12 – The topic titles listed in the table seemed inappropriate for SSDC and seem more applicable to a County Authority.
- Members queried what tolerance levels were being used to give the amber RAG rating e.g. +/- 10%.
- Past performance figures – members queried which figures were being used in this report – is it the previous quarter, the same period last year or an average of the previous year? It was felt a key or brief narrative would be useful.
- Members acknowledged there were better metrics now but noted a number of indicators were in the red, and queried if SSDC were doing enough to explain Transformation to the public in order to manage expectations.
- Members raised several queries regarding specific indicators including:
 - Page 57, indicators 1.12, 1.13 and 1.14 – How do the figures relate to the comment? Is the current backlog of applications excluded or included within the figures? Do the statistics only relate to the process once a planning application has been validated? Members also asked if the backlog of applications awaiting validation was increasing.
 - Page 60, indicator 3.03 – Household recycling rates – members asked for clarity that this indicator was for kerbside recycling only.
 - Page 61, indicator 4.03 – How long is it expected that the Housing Advice Centre will have extended opening hours in order to catch up with case work? Members commented an actual figure as well as a % would be useful for this indicator.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 10)

No comments.

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

There were no updates since the last meeting for any of the Task and Finish reviews.

- Customer Accessibility
- Council tax Support Scheme 2019
- Homefinder Somerset Plain English

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

There were no updates on matters of interest.

37. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

One member suggested an update on the Lyde Road Cycleway as he believed some of the funding may be time limited.

The Chairman reminded members that at a previous meeting a member had suggested that Scrutiny look at the impact Business Rates are having on Yeovil Town Centre and if there is anything that SSDC might be able to do. She asked members if they wished to progress the idea to the scoping stage, which was agreed. During a brief discussion it was suggested that the impact for all of the market town centres in the district should be considered in the scoping report. The Chairman suggested that a draft scoping report be prepared for discussion at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman asked if a date could be arranged for an update regarding the Precepting for the Somerset Rivers Authority as the Bill going through Parliament had been delayed.

38. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 4 September 2018 at 10.00am in Council Chamber B, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman