

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Main Committee Room. Council Offices, Brympton Way on Tuesday 30 October 2018.**

(10.05 am - 12.00 pm)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Mike Lock
John Clark	Tony Lock
John Field	Gerard Tucker

**Also Present:**

Jo Roundell Greene	Val Keitch
Sue Osborne	

**Officers**

Alex Parmley	Chief Executive
Zac Tredger	Specialist (Performance)
Nicola Hix	Lead Specialist (Finance)
Peter Paddon	Lead Specialist (Economy)
David Julian	Economic Development Manager
Karen Chalke	Economic Development Technical Team Leader
Jan Gamon	Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Specialist
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

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**63. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)**

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

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**64. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)**

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

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**65. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

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**66. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)**

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

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**67. Issues arising from previous meetings (Agenda Item 5)**

No issues were raised from previous meetings.

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**68. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)**

The Chairman informed members that she had met with the Peer Review Team the previous week where she had fed back several concerns including:

- The target of 7% returns regarding income generation and investments was very ambitious.
- Regarding general communication to members – it was difficult for members to know who's who in the new structure.
- In her opinion she felt the Areas had all but disappeared.
- Concerns about the plans regarding the office accommodation

The Chief Executive explained that the Peer Team would now write their report, which would take several weeks, after which it would be shared with members.

At the Chairman's request, Cllr John Clark provided an update on the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). He explained that a LEP Joint Scrutiny Committee had now been established and he was a reserve member, and in that capacity he would be able to attend the meetings of both the Joint Scrutiny and the LEP.

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**69. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 4 October 2018 (Agenda Item 7)**

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

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**70. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1 November 2018 (Agenda Item 8)**

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 1 November 2018 and made comments as detailed below. Responses to comments were provided at the Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officer or Portfolio Holder.

**Corporate Performance Report 2018-2019; 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter (Agenda item 6)**

- Agenda page 8 'Targets' – members sought clarity as to when the KPIs without targets would have a target set. Members requested some further information be circulated which was agreed by the Specialist (Performance).
- Page 12 – indicator 12 – members queried if a reason was known for the increase in missed waste and recycling collections. *It was agreed this question would be forwarded to SSDC members of the Waste Board and Joint Scrutiny.*

### **Loan to Queen Camel Community Land Trust for the Purchase of the Old School Site, Queen Camel (Agenda item 7)**

- Members felt it was important that the independent valuation as referenced in paragraph 23 of the report was followed up. The committee were content that the recommendations go forward and supported the proposal to structure the loan in two stages as detailed in paragraph 18.

*(Post meeting note - This item was deferred to a future meeting of the District Executive.)*

### **2018/19 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30 September 2018 (Agenda item 8)**

- Page 44 – members queried if reasons were known for the income being below forecast for car parking and Building Control income.

### **2018/19 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 30 September 2018 (Agenda item 9)**

- Table 3, Page 52 – Some members expressed concern that if the Lyde Road Pedestrian and Cycleway scheme was not pushed forward there may be of risk of losing some of the grant funding. Members felt an update on progress was required.
- Table 4, page 53 – members noted the funding for the Capital Programme was well documented in the report, but the contingency funding was not as detailed. Members felt the contingency funding needed more referencing.
- Page 62 – Gas Control System at Birchfield – Members asked if a date had been set for the project as the situation had been ongoing for several years, and was potentially becoming increasingly urgent, delay could have a detrimental impact on other projects in the same area. Members requested a brief update for the next meeting of Scrutiny Committee.

### **Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision: Lease Between SSSDC and SCC – in Relation to the First Floor of Brympton Way Offices, Yeovil (Agenda item 10)**

- No comments.

### **District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 11)**

- Some members asked if it was possible to include information in the next Transformation update report, regarding the effect of Transformation on our communities, as some parishes were struggling due to the impact of changes within some service teams.

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## **71. Draft Economic Development Strategy (Agenda Item 9)**

The Lead Specialist (Economy) thanked members of the Scrutiny Committee for sending through their questions in advance of the meeting regarding the process to date to source evidence to inform the draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS). He explained that an initial response to the questions had been circulated to members under separate cover prior to this meeting. He introduced Mike Taylor, Managing Director of Chilmark Consulting (the consultancy commissioned to help produce the Economic

Development Strategy), and explained that together, they would address any further questions or concerns.

In response to comments made during discussion, the officers explained that:

- South Somerset is a very diverse area and the draft strategy will include reference to aerospace and high tech engineering businesses. Officers were looking to pick up all different types of businesses in the strategy.
- The EDS will be a higher level action plan which will help form a delivery plan. The delivery plan will be where the detail and specific projects will come forward.
- Officers had engaged with the West of England Aerospace Forum and other aerospace businesses.
- An extensive range of companies across a wide range of sectors had been consulted.
- There was much happening and relationships being formed with colleges and other training providers regarding skills, training and learning. There were many key partners and it was important to work with them.
- Acknowledge little work done to engage with Strode College to date regarding input into the EDS. However the strategy would be flexible and enable SSDC to work with other colleges if required and beneficial.
- The proposed Business Account Programme would be an important element of the strategy as it would provide input and insight.
- Acknowledge that it's difficult to encourage people to stay local, especially if their skills are highly valued further afield. There were a wide variety of reasons making places a suitable area for a person to locate. For example house prices, facilities, family, quality of life etc.
- There has been much discussion about Hinkley Point and whether it's seen as an opportunity or a threat. If we can work with businesses to link to the right people, we will. Understand that many companies have picked up on available opportunities.
- Agree that manufacturing is an important sector.
- A lot is about signposting businesses to the work of partners. An awareness of national, regional and local strategies is needed to ensure everything joined up and that clear support can be provided. People and businesses need to know they have a conduit through SSDC for information and support.
- It's important we know the large companies and their future plans. Regular meetings are held with Leonardo.
- If for some reason iAero doesn't come to fruition as planned, it will be treated as a challenge. If there was a funding gap we would look to how this could be filled, if it couldn't, then we look at a plan B or plan C etc.
- The way Economic Development work from the New Year will be different. It will be a new team that will design and deliver specific delivery plans and projects.
- Unlikely to be a generic plan or policy included within the EDS for a multiple redundancy situation with any businesses in the area, but there will be flexibility to manage this scenario in the form of a specific project.

- Visit Somerset and some of the major visitor attractions in the area have been engaged to inform the EDS and there have been discussions about the wider visitor offer.
- It will be important to catch up with staff who will be leaving the authority at the end of the year in order to gather information on the good work that has been happening.
- The EDS will not provide all the detail but the headings should be there. Detail will be in the delivery plans later on.
- There will be processes to evaluate performance, including the effective use of data and obtaining foresight to review the delivery plan.
- Opportunities to increase the visitor offer associated with Wincanton Racecourse were being considered with Wincanton Regeneration.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development commented that after the draft strategy had been considered by District Executive in December, it would go out to public consultation before going forward to Council for final approval and adoption. Hence there was still further opportunity for people to make comments on the draft EDS.

Members were grateful that officers had attended the meeting and taken time to answer questions in an open discussion. The Chairman thanked the Lead Specialist (Economy) and Managing Director of Chilmark Consulting for attending the meeting.

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## 72. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 10)

Members noted the updates provided by the Scrutiny Specialist on each of the Task and Finish Groups currently in progress.

**Council Tax Support Scheme 2019** – The task and Finish group have agreed their recommendations and the Scrutiny Specialist is in the process of collating all the evidence to draft the report for Scrutiny Committee.

**Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy** - No updates since the last meeting. All the Councils have postponed work on this primarily due to Transformation type related activities.

**Customer Accessibility** – Officers are developing their programmes for all website and portal services and once at a stage for testing the Task and Finish group will be involved.

**Rural Allocations Policy** – This has now been picked up by the Strategy and Commissioning team, they have looked at the work of the previous Task and Finish group and hope to do some work early in the New Year.

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## 73. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 11)

The Scrutiny Specialist had no updates on matters of interest.

There was a brief discussion during which some members raised some issues that may be of interest for the Scrutiny Committee to consider in the future:

- Access to free or subsidised veterinary care – there seems to be little, if any, service available within South Somerset.

- Regarding delays with determining planning applications – are the associated costs and impacts on the wider economy known. Age profiles for applications and values of the projects would be useful information to review and communicate to members.
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**74. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 12)**

The Scrutiny Specialist noted that:

- As the Vice-Chairman would now be attending the LEP meetings it would be beneficial if feedback could be provided to Scrutiny Committee following each LEP meeting. This was agreed.
- Troubled Families Programme – an update will be sought from the Communities Lead.
- A Review of the Rural Economy was still listed as a possible future Task and Finish topic. She reminded members that this was listed as ‘to be confirmed’ as members were awaiting the emerging Economic Development Strategy to see how it featured in there.

Members were content to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

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**75. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 13)**

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

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Chairman