

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Council Chamber - Council Offices, Brympton Way** on **Tuesday 4 December 2018**.

(10.05 am - 12.00 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer	Rob Stickland
John Clark	Gerard Tucker
Alan Smith	Martin Wale



Also Present:

Jo Roundell Greene	Peter Gubbins
Jason Baker	Val Keitch

Officers

Martin Woods	Director (Service Delivery)
Jo Wilkins	Acting Principal Spatial Planner
Peter Paddon	Lead Specialist (Economy)
Leisa Kelly	Specialist – Strategic Planning
Karen Chalke	Economic Development Technical Team Leader
David Julian	Economic Development Manager
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Specialist
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

76. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

77. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Field, Mike Lock, Tony Lock and David Norris.

78. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

79. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

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

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

No issues were raised from previous meetings.

81. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman informed members that she had attended a meeting with Yarlinton regarding rural housing. Yarlinton had been asked to inform parish clerks when a social housing property was to be sold in a parish so that local people could be made aware.

She also noted that the appointment of a partnership governor to Musgrove Hospital was now made by Mendip District Council. However, in November, she had been appointed as a public governor, in her private capacity, to the Board.

At the Chairman's invitation, Cllr John Clark, provided members with a brief update from attending the first meeting of the Local Enterprise Partnership Joint Scrutiny Committee.

82. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 1 November 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.

83. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 6 December 2018 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 6 December 2018 and made comments as detailed below. Responses to most of the comments were provided at the Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officer or Portfolio Holder.

Somerset Waste Partnership Annual Report and Draft Business Plan 2019-2024 (Agenda item 6)

- Scrutiny were content that the recommendations go forward but noted for future reporting that there were several acronyms in the report which were not defined.
- Members sought clarity or reassurance on some specific points including:
 - Page 11 – recylcate risk – that careful budget monitoring would take place
 - Page 13, paras 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 – are SWP financially contributing to the development of the Resource Recovery Centre at Avonmouth?, and do SWP have any control of the facility?

Heart of the South West (HotSW) – Joint Committee – Council Update (Agenda item 7)

- Page 33, para 3.3 – Members queried if we are confident that the aerospace sector within South Somerset is being supported through the LEP.
- Members noted the timescales regarding the Local Industrial Strategy and acknowledged there is no direct input by local authorities. It was felt that local authorities needed to be kept informed at an early stage so that could scrutinise.

- Page 32 – e – Members asked when the Housing Task Force were anticipating reporting back on the packages.
- Page 37 – Points 1 and 6 – Some members noted that the appendix referred to the Great South West Partnership, but there had been little reference to it elsewhere. For future reporting it was also noted that some acronyms such as WECA were not defined.

Commercial Assets Update Report (Agenda item 8)

- Para 17 - With regard to the paragraph under Marlborough Residential Development, a member asked if clarification could be provided around whose local contractors were being used – is it the Marlborough or SSDC area, and if it is SSDC has the carbon footprint been considered?
- Some members were surprised how few schemes in the South Somerset area had been considered given that SSDC is focussed on improving the local economy and reducing environmental impact.
- One member thought the income target was 3.5 million not 2 million and clarity was sought regarding the figure.
- Top of page 46 - A member asked if he could be updated regarding Amphora House as he was aware several businesses had bid for the property but it was still empty.

Draft Economic Development Strategy (2019-2028) (Agenda item 9)

- Page 55, para 15 and Page 56, para 18 – some members felt the wording was a little ambiguous, and it would have been useful to indicate how many businesses had engaged or responded rather than detailing those who had been invited.
- The Strategy (supplement) – one member felt wording for some of the Year One Key Milestones under the Priority Themes could be a little more specific rather than general statements. It was also noted that it would be good to cross refer to the Regeneration Boards and project where appropriate.
- Some members queried how the actions would be performance monitored, and how would it be known how successful year one has been?

The ‘Making’ of the East Coker Neighbourhood Plan (Agenda item 10)

- Members were content with the recommendation. (During discussion some comments were raised about the process and Neighbourhood Plans in general which were addressed by the Strategic Planning Specialist)

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 11)

- No comments.

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

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 final report is currently being drafted for consideration by Scrutiny Committee.

Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy – a reminder that all Councils have postponed work on this primarily due to Transformation type related activities.

Customer Accessibility – Good progress is being made with the new website and portal services. Once at a stage for testing the Task and Finish Group will be involved. It's acknowledged that some councillors have raised concerns about terminology.

Rural Allocations Policy – This has now been picked up by the Strategy and Commissioning Team who have looked at the work of the previous Task and Finish Group. They hope to do some work early in the new year.

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

The Scrutiny Specialist provided some updates on matters of interest including:

- At the previous meeting, members had asked if the associated costs and impact on the wider economy were known for delays with planning determinations. A response had been provided by the Planning Lead Specialist which had been circulated by email to members of the Scrutiny Committee.

There was a brief discussion during which reference was made to a members briefing prior to the full Council meeting held in November. Some members expressed concern that their questions about performance of the planning service and the impact of Transformation had not been answered.

The Scrutiny Specialist advised members that a way forward could be for members to complete a report request template, asking for specific information to be included in the next report on Transformation in addition to the routine information contained within the Transformation update report. She also advised that members may need to ask for more performance information.

Members briefly discussed further and referred to some specific examples of delays within their wards. They expressed concern that information provided in reports seemed to differ from the experiences being told by members of the community. Of most concern were delays with non-residential applications. Members queried if more support was needed for the planning service.

At the end of discussion, the Chairman requested that members email her with their concerns, and she would then make an appointment to meet with the Chief Executive to discuss, and report back to members.

- At the previous meeting when considering the Capital Budget Monitoring Report, an update on the Gas Control system at Birchfield had been requested. A comprehensive report regarding the current situation had been circulated by email to all members on 14 November.
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86. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The Scrutiny Specialist noted that the report regarding planning pre-application charges would be delayed as the Income & Opportunities Manager would be looking at fees and charges across the authority, which would be a large piece of work and take some time to complete.

She also informed members that there would be a short workshop for members after the meeting in January regarding the Council Plan.

During discussion it was agreed to remove some items from the Work Programme:

- Increased Joint Working Between Police Forces – the member who had put the item forward suggested that it be removed as several mergers of neighbouring forces were no longer being progressed.
- Review of Rural Economy Task and Finish – a member suggested that this be removed from the work programme as it was reflected in the new Economic Development Strategy.

87. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 8 January 2019 at 10.00am in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman