

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room - Council Offices** on **Tuesday 4 June 2019**.

(10.00 am - 11.55 am)

**Present:**

**Members:** Councillor Crispin Raikes (Chairman)

Robin Bastable	Robin Pailthorpe
Nicola Clark	Jeny Snell
Brian Hamilton	Mike Stanton
Charlie Hull	Rob Stickland
Paul Maxwell	Gerard Tucker
Sue Osborne	



**Officers**

Jan Gamon	Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Charlotte Jones	Lead Specialist (People, Performance & Change)
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Specialist
Becky Sanders	Case Services Officer (Support Services)

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

A member of the public addressed members and raised some concerns and queries including:

- How many of those present had managed to travel to the meeting by public transport? He couldn't travel by bus as there wasn't a service. With reference to climate change he felt more could be done to encourage the use of buses.
- How many members of the Committee had used the main number of 462462 – there was much delay faced by residents and the situation seemed to be getting worse. He referred to several experiences of contacting SSDC, and noted sometimes it had taken multiple attempts and a lot of time to get through on the

main contact number. He also referred to a particular enquiry for which he tried to use the website, this had then taken him to the Waste Partnership but there website referred him back to SSDC. Reference was also made to contacting SSDC about a particular Environmental Health issue which he felt had not been addressed adequately or a thorough explanation provided.

Members acknowledged the comments made. The Chairman explained that buses where not under the control of SSDC but the authority would continue to pressure the County Council. He also noted he would liaise with the relevant departments to enquire about the due process regarding the Environmental Health concerns raised.

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

No issues were raised from previous meetings.

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

The Chairman welcomed members to the Scrutiny Committee. He hoped members of the Committee would have a constructive approach and that everyone had read the Statutory Guidance document circulated.

He wished to place on record his thanks to Sue Steele, for her previous chairmanship of Scrutiny Committee over many years.

One of the Vice-Chairmen commented that Scrutiny not only had a role as a critical friend but also to amplify the voice of the public. He was pleased to see a member of the public present at the meeting raising their concerns.

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## **7. Review of Work Practices, Reflecting on Scrutiny Committee Members Training, and Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local & Combined Authorities (Agenda Item 7)**

The Chairman introduced the report which asked members to agree the working practices of the Scrutiny Committee and the date and timing of future meetings of the Committee.

During a discussion about meeting arrangements, it was agreed to keep to the same days but to trial holding the meetings in the early afternoon starting at 1.30pm, with a confidential briefing for Scrutiny members beforehand at 1.00pm.

The Scrutiny Specialist explained that members needed to consider the Work Programme, and the methods to identify and select items to be included in the future. It was also noted that members should consider the standing items they wished to see on the agenda. For clarity, the Scrutiny Specialist explained her role and responsibility, and reminded members of the statutory responsibilities of the committee.

The Chairman noted that the District Executive items would always be important but there was a need for Scrutiny to also come up with its own suggestions for the Work

Programme. He suggested leaving the Work Programme for a few weeks and asked members to send through any ideas to the Scrutiny Specialist.

During discussion some ideas put forward for inclusion in the Work Programme included:

- Just set up a trading company – feel its performance should be reviewed later in the year.
- Clarification of role with commercialisation and trading companies
- Need to monitor how Transformation is performing.
- Following the climate change motion at Council in May – the developing strategy will cover a large subject - Scrutiny could support and provide input, but need to be clear about Scrutiny role.
- Overview of customer service – may need to look at elements separately. In particular telephone response times, customers not understanding what to request, empathy, speed, and detail of response.
- Need to do more identifying of areas to be explored.
- Could wider use of local by-laws be investigated.
- Need to be mindful not to duplicate work of the Audit Committee. Scrutiny should focus on processes not detailed figures.
- Some subjects would be better suited to Task and Finish groups, but could this new committee start with a ‘clean slate’.

It was suggested, and agreed during discussion, that the following items be standing items on future agendas for the Scrutiny Committee:

- District Executive items and Forward Plan
- Budget reports
- Performance reports.

In response to some of the comments and suggestions made, the Scrutiny Specialist explained that:

- there were two distinct elements to Scrutiny and provided a brief overview with examples.
- how over the years the Committee had moved to pre-decision scrutiny.
- over the last year several concerns had been raised about timeframes available to the Scrutiny Committee to review the District Executive agenda reports due to agenda publication timeframes.
- regarding Task and Finish groups, the new committee could start afresh if wished, and reiterated the different approaches Scrutiny work could take.
- A revised Council Tax Support scheme for the coming year would be coming forward. The previous Scrutiny Committee had recommended Scrutiny support the development of this with a Task and Finish Group, and this would commence in the near future.

The Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning) noted there had been discussions about involving Scrutiny more in the shaping process rather than decisions, for example with the climate change item and also open spaces. The team also wanted to share knowledge about the Communities of Practice and how they would work at SSDC. She also briefly explained how the climate strategy was being developed, the teams and officers involved, and also joint Scrutiny work with Somerset County Council and the members appointed to that group.

In summary, the Chairman noted a number of ideas and comments had been raised. He suggested that the Vice Chairman and he meet with the Scrutiny Specialist to discuss the items raised, and to formulate a suggested way forward.

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**8. Appointment of Scrutiny Committee Members to Joint Scrutiny Panels (Agenda Item 8)**

Two members were appointed to the Joint Scrutiny Panels as follows:

<b>Joint Scrutiny Panel</b>	<b>Members Appointed</b>
Somerset Waste Board Joint Scrutiny Panel	Cllrs Charlie Hull Brian Hamilton.
Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel	Cllrs Paul Maxwell Sue Osborne.

During a brief discussion, a query was raised regarding appointment of representatives to the Heart of the South West (LEP) Scrutiny Panel. The Scrutiny Specialist explained that representatives were not appointed from each authority in Somerset, but only from two authorities, of which South Somerset wasn't one in the current cycle. She advised there was a need to clarify how and when the representatives would feed back to each authority.

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Chairman