

Scrutiny Committee

This report summarises the work of the Scrutiny Committee since the last report to Full Council. The Committee met on 4 December 2018 and 8 January 2019 to consider:

4 December 2018

Reports to be considered by District Executive on 6 December 2018

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 – recycle 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.
- 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.

Task and Finish reviews

Council Tax Support Scheme 2019 – The Task and Finish report is included in this agenda as an attachment to Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20 report.

Homefinder Somerset Plain English Policy – 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 customer account. Once at a stage for testing the Task and Finish Group will be involved, considering layout, function and 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.

Scrutiny Work Programme

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.

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.

8 January 2019

A summary of the Scrutiny meeting held on 8 January will be reported to the next meeting of Council.

Cllr Sue Steele
Chairman of Scrutiny Committee