

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held by video conference using Zoom meeting software **on Tuesday 29 September 2020.**

(10.30 am - 11.40 am)

Present:

Members: Gerard Tucker (in the Chair)

Robin Bastable	Paul Maxwell
Nicola Clark	Robin Pailthorpe
Brian Hamilton	Jeny Snell
Mike Lewis	Mike Stanton



Also Present:

Peter Seib	Jason Baker
Linda Vijeh	

Officers

Kirsty Larkins	Director (Strategy and Commissioning)
Netta Meadows	Director (Service Delivery)
Jo Nacey	Section 151 Officer
Barry James	Interim Planning Lead Specialist
Brendan Downes	Specialist (Procurement)
Cath Temple	Specialist (Performance)
Stephanie Gold	Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)
Michelle Mainwaring	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)

173. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 September 2020 and 8 September 2020 were approved as correct records and would be signed by the Chairman.

174. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlie Hull, Sue Osborne, Crispin Raikes and Rob Stickland.

175. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

176. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

178. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

There were no announcements from the Chairman.

179. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 3 and 10 September 2020 (Agenda Item 7)

There were no verbal updates on reports considered by District Executive at the September meetings.

180. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1 October 2020 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 1 October 2020 and raised comments as detailed below. Responses to most questions and comments were provided at Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officers – except those marked by an asterisk.

Corporate Performance Report: 1st Quarter (Agenda Item 6)

- Members acknowledged the current strange and difficult times due to the Coronavirus pandemic, and recognised the good work going on.
- Page 11, PCS 11 -14, members congratulated the planning team on performance targets.
- Some members suggested a measure for reporting performance on tree works applications would be useful.
- *Page 11, PCS 14, members noted the figures and that the Q1 figure was well below the 10% threshold. Members queried if there was still a need to two-star major applications with referral to Regulation Committee where an Area Committee was minded to go against an officer recommendation of approval.
- *Page 14, EN5, it was acknowledged the figure was for countywide, Members queried if the wording of the measure and description was still correct as it was understood that South Somerset residual waste no longer went to landfill but went to Avonmouth Resource Recovery Centre.

Update Report on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Council (Agenda Item 7)

- Page 19, para 19, some members queried if there had been much take up for pavement licences.
- Page 18, para 12, members asked if match funding would be required for the bid regarding a new house of multiple occupation and when the outcome of the bid would be known?
- The report makes several references to the word 'numbers' but no figures or statistics are provided. e.g para 5. In future reports it would be useful to have actual figures as well as percentages stated.

- *Page 25, planning (bottom of list) – members noted the figures and queried what was being done to rebalance the time of planning staff? Why were backlogs increasing? Does enforcement have enough resources?
- Members noted in the report there were some acronyms that needed expanding or a glossary provided.

Planning Appeal Performance (Agenda Item 8)

- *Members queried if any analysis had been done for the appeals such as large or small developments; residential or other; full, householder or listed building etc; what sort of appeals are being lost and costs awarded etc.
- *Members acknowledged that the data / spreadsheet containing information on the appeals would be circulated to members following the meeting. Without the data, members commented it was difficult to understand the report.
- Members were concerned that the way the report was written seemed to infer that they were being put on 'the naughty step'.
- Para 16 – regarding possible costs being met by an area committee – some members sought clarification about whether this was something new.
- Para 17 – some members noted the changes in risks outlined in the risk matrix and queried what had brought about the change to risks
- *Several members noted that we were being told to be consistent with our decision making, however the same did not seem to apply to the Planning Inspectorate / Inspectors, which was having an impact on SSDC. Members felt quite strongly that the matter should be highlighted, and recommend the District Executive consider raising concerns with the Planning Inspectorate.
- It was noted that planning is an emotive subject and members recognised the improvements being made.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 9)

- Some members noted there was an expectation that a further item would be on the Forward Plan to consider the outcome of the unitary bids, both Stronger Somerset and One Somerset. It was acknowledged that a timeframe wasn't known at the current time.
- Some members suggested that given the Planning Re-Imagined work being undertaken internally and the planning white paper, that a report regarding the Planning Service should feature on the Forward Plan?

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

The Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) provided an update on the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group. She noted that public consultation had commenced for a proposed banding scheme.

She also informed members that some Task and Finish work for the Environment Strategy was likely to commence soon, and that the Productivity Analysis group work was likely to reconvene in mid to late October.

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

There were no updates on matters of interest.

183. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

During a short discussion some members suggested a discussion about superfast broadband would be of interest. The Chairman noted he would discuss with the Chairmen and the Specialist (Scrutiny and Member Development) regarding what was required about broadband information for the Committee.

184. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 3 November 2020 and was likely to be held as a virtual meeting using Zoom.

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Chairman