

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee (Informal)** held by video conference using Zoom meeting software **on Tuesday 11 May 2021.**

(10.30 am - 11.45 am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Gerard Tucker (Chairman)

Robin Bastable	Robin Pailthorpe
Brian Hamilton	Oliver Patrick
Charlie Hull	Crispin Raikes
Paul Maxwell	Jeny Snell
Sue Osborne	Linda Vijeh



Officers

Jan Gamon	Director (Place and Recovery)
Cath Temple	Specialist (Performance)
Jill Byron	Monitoring Officer
Stephanie Gold	Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

1. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Karl Gill and Mike Lewis.

2. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public question time (Agenda Item 3)

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

4. Issues arising from previous meetings (Agenda Item 4)

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

5. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman of Scrutiny Committee expressed his thanks to Councillor Crispin Raikes for all his work and leadership during his term as the Chairman of the committee.

6. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 1 April, 15 April and 30 April 2021 (Agenda Item 6)

There were no updates for reports considered by District Executive at the April meetings.

7. Reports to be considered by District Executive Members on 13 May 2021 (Agenda Item 7)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 13 May 2021 (Informal Consultative meeting) and raised comments as detailed below. Responses to most questions and comments were provided at Scrutiny Committee by the relevant officers or Portfolio Holder – except those marked with an asterisk.

Approval of Somerset Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy (Agenda item 5)

- A member asked who would be signing off this strategy, in light of the recruitment of a new CEO.
- Para 8 – it was queried if it was known how the 46% of carbon emissions had been derived and whether it was a figure we could directly influence. Was the emissions figure directly related to the M5 and A303 travel corridors? *
- A member asked if there was a formula used as to where charging points were being, or would be, located and the quantity? *
- Para 16 – when would the results of the Co-Cars study be known as the findings would be of interest to Scrutiny. *
- A member queried whether rapid charging points for commercial vehicles would also be looked into for the future? *
- Members sought clarification that we would be looking at the installation of a variety of chargers as there were different types depending on the vehicle. *
- A member asked what the council is doing to encourage more 'active travel' in the district. i.e walking and cycling.
- Members queried the use of 'precious metals' in the manufacturing of batteries. Has this been considered and are we looking at any alternatives? *

Corporate Performance Report 2020-21: 4th Quarter and End of Year Achievements Report (Agenda item 6)

- With reference to the Environment KPI's and SWP in particular. One member raised a query about difficulties some customers had recently experienced regarding renewal of green bins including a long wait time on the phones and that online some postcodes were not being accepted. He had recollections of some similar issues last year.
- Page 15 – key at bottom of page – red – a member queried what was deemed to be significant?
- Page 17, PCS 7 - A member expressed concern about the timeframes for Housing Benefit claims. The response of the officer to the comment was acknowledged, and members asked if an explanatory sentence could be included about DWP lead times?
- Page 17, PCS 9 – a member acknowledged that the process for Council Tax new claims had changed and queried if the process change was starting to have a positive impact on timeframes?

- Page 18, PCS 14 – a member noted the target was 10% for the appeals. It was queried if the target should be slightly reduced so that we could react sooner should the need arise.*
- Page 19, PCS 15 – some members noted the indicator was difficult to interpret as the target showed as 100% - and this could be read as wanting to have 100% of applications with extensions of time. *
- A member asked the Performance Specialist when they would be reviewing these KPI's, as the DX forward plan suggested this was going to come to committee in May 2021.
- Some members suggested the KPI's regarding planning and building control, which are largely positive, did not reflect the customer experiences within their wards.
- A member noted there were no measures / indicators for planning enforcement and felt it was an area of performance that should be considered. *
- A member queried if more 'active travel' plans should also be implemented and measured across the district.
- In addition to the above, a member asked what could be done to put pressure on county to plan for and promote more 'active travel' plans across the county? *
- Members congratulated staff on all the work achieved during what has been a difficult and challenging time.

SSDC Trading Company: Elleston Services Ltd (Agenda item 7)

- A member queried the loan originally agreed to the company as it looked like an amount was still outstanding. Was / is interest still being received on that loan?
- Para 23 - a member commented they felt there was also a negative reputational risk if the company was unable to trade again in the future, or should any of the funding be lost.
- Members sought clarity on the role of the Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation) with the company in the near future, as she would take on the role of CEO for SSDC. Members sought reassurance that there would be no conflict of interests.
- Some members agreed that given the unavoidable position the council is in, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this decision to temporarily cease trading was the correct one to make.
- Page 39. Rec C – refers to ring-fencing. A member asked how long this would be for and would be useful if included within the report.
- Acknowledging the situation regarding the future of local government in Somerset, a member asked If it was possible for the company to be transferred to a new authority?

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 8)

- A member noted an item was scheduled for June – 'Creating a future strategy for Chard' - and queried why this was needed when we already have the Chard Regeneration and CEDA programmes in place. She also asked if ALL Area West members would have the opportunity to feed into this? It was queried if similar strategies were planned for the other towns? This item has since been added to the Area West agenda for 19th May 2021.

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

The Chairman advised members that Councillor Charlie Hull wished to step down from Somerset Waste Board Joint Scrutiny Panel and, that Councillor Sue Osborne wished to step down from the Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel.

Councillors Paul Maxwell and Brian Hamilton noted they were happy to continue on their respective Joint Scrutiny Panels.

During a brief discussion it was agreed that the following members would serve on the Joint Scrutiny Panels:

Joint Scrutiny Panel	Members Appointed
Somerset Waste Board Joint Scrutiny Panel	Robin Bastable Brian Hamilton
Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel	Paul Maxwell Robin Pailthorpe.

The Chairman thanked those members who were standing down from the Panels for their time and work on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee.

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

The Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) provided a brief verbal update on the progress of Task and Finish groups including:

Productivity Analysis – no update since the previous meeting,

SSDC Environment Strategy – the group were looking into green energy procurement. There was an opportunity for the Council to transfer to a renewable energy supplier with minimal cost,

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

There were no updates on matters of interest.

11. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

The Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) suggested that as the Corporate Performance reports came to Scrutiny Committee when considering the District Executive agendas, that the Corporate Performance item could be removed from the Scrutiny Work Programme. This was agreed by members subject to the relevant officer attending the Scrutiny Committee meetings when the item was to be considered.

Some members suggested that an update would be useful regarding the latest position with high speed broadband across the district. In response, the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) commented she would liaise with officers for an update.

Members were content to note the Scrutiny Work Programme.

12. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of members of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 10.30am on Tuesday 1 June 2021, with meeting arrangements to be confirmed.

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Chairman