

Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 3rd August 2021

For ease of reference for those using the ModGov App - Please find attached the draft minutes for the Scrutiny Committee meetings held on:

13 April 2021
11 May 2021
1 June 2021
29 June 2021.

Agenda Item 1

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held by video conference using Zoom meeting software on Tuesday 13 April 2021.

(10.30 am - 12.05 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Crispin Raikes (Chairman)

Robin Bastable	Sue Osborne
Nicola Clark	Oliver Patrick
Brian Hamilton	Jeny Snell
Charlie Hull	Gerard Tucker
Mike Lewis	Linda Vijeh
Paul Maxwell	



Also Present:

John Clark	Tony Lock
Sarah Dyke	Martin Wale
Val Keitch	

Officers

Kirsty Larkins	Director (Service Delivery)
Jan Gamon	Director (Place and Recovery)
Peter Paddon	Lead Specialist (Economy)
Lynda Pincombe	Specialist - Strategic Planning
Jill Byron	Monitoring Officer
Stephanie Gold	Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

259. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Louise Clarke and Robin Pailthorpe.

260. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

261. Public question time (Agenda Item 3)

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

262. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 4)

The Chairman advised that following the death of HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, the previous week, a two minute silence would be observed to recognise his life, service and in memory and honour of the Duke.

A two minutes silence was observed by those present in the meeting.

263. Reports to be considered by District Executive (Special Meeting) on 15 April 2021 (Agenda Item 5)

Members considered the reports within the Special District Executive agenda for 15 April 2021 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 by an asterisk:

Consultation on Local Government Reform – Response to One Somerset Proposal (Agenda item 6)

- One member noted that many people were querying why this is happening now given the situation we are in with the pandemic. It would be useful if there was wide communication to provide clarity about the position we are in.
- Some members felt there was subjective language within the report with use of 'maybe' and 'perhaps' and there also seemed to be an assumption that a primary base would be located in Taunton. Are we content that the content is as objective as it can be?
- One member expressed concern about the economic profiling and lack of reference regarding unauthorised encampments and homelessness.
- What dialogue has the Stronger Somerset and One Somerset teams had with the MHCLG regarding potential modifications or to whichever proposal is accepted.
- Mixed opinions were expressed about the document – some felt it was comprehensive but another felt it was a negative report.
- One member raised several specific queries including:
 - The PA consulting document does not appear to be responding the final version of the One Somerset proposal that was submitted to the Secretary of State.
 - SSDC report para 6.9 and A1c – Inaccurate assumption that One Somerset proposes a top-down, centralised authority based in Taunton, no reference to Local Area Networks.
 - SSDC report para 6.9 and A2 – Incorrect statement that One Somerset proposal overlooks local services in relation to housing and planning.
 - SSDC report para 6.11 – Local Area Networks and Children's services are already established in many areas across the county.
 - SSDC report para 6.14 and Q3 – Misleading statement regarding difficulties around Police & Fire dealing with one unitary council.
 - SSDC report para 6.16 - Inaccurate information regarding the position of the SCC reserves.
 - SSDC report section 6.20 - Unfair assumption that a unitary authority would not be successful in a large rural county like Somerset. If this were true how do other large rural counties succeed under a unitary authority i.e Durham, Northumberland, Herefordshire.

- Q6 A6b – Untrue statement Ipsos Mori survey used by the district councils was selective and leading. Evidence of this has been shared with the Secretary of State.
- SSDC report page 14 section 7.6 – Inaccurate statement regarding the One Somerset residents survey not being published. It has been published and is an appx in the One Somerset Proposal.

Local Referendum on the Future of Local Government in Somerset (Agenda item 7)

Cllr Vijeh had submitted multiple questions to the Portfolio Holder and report author in advance of the meeting (but not in capacity as a Scrutiny member) – a response had been provided to Cllr Vijeh and the Leader of Council went through each question/response as she felt it would be of interest to other members (the questions and responses are attached to the minutes of Scrutiny Committee as Appendix A)

- A member sought clarification about whether this would be a poll or referendum as they understood they are different things.
- *A member understood that all the Leaders of each Somerset district had recently received a letter from the Secretary of State about the matter. It was queried if the letter would be circulated to all councillors in advance of a decision being made at full Council.
- Are there any GDPR implications with sharing the electoral register with a third party?
- A member queried the costs detailed in the report and asked what was being done regarding any contingency? - as other authorities seemed to be asking for a contingency amount to be agreed at the same time as this report.
- A non-scrutiny member noted that at a previous meeting of Council he thought members had been advised that a poll would not be held. He queried how much notice of the poll would be taken into consideration as the outcome wouldn't be known until after the closing date of the consultation? What was the purpose of the poll at the current time and why had it been left so late? He felt it needed to be made clear to the public that the outcome of the poll would not be binding.
- Some members asked what level of response would be considered acceptable and representative, and what level were we anticipating?
- Some members expressed concern that the detail of local government reform was not easy to understand by the general public. If people had not looked into the issue before, were they likely to now and respond to a poll?
- Some members felt the poll was a positive thing and it was important to gather the opinion and views of residents.
- A member referred to a recent leaflet drop to residents giving people the option to respond to the MCHLG consultation – she queried the purpose of the leaflet and whether people would want to respond again via a poll?
- It was queried why there was no risk matrix for the report? Some members felt there could be reputational risks.

(Note – the item was deferred at the District Executive meeting and not considered.)

Appointed Leisure Facilities Provider (Agenda item 8)

- It was queried why members were seeing the report now as the amount under consideration was a large increase to that agreed in the budget?

- A member asked how the Freedom Leisure contract would impact community-led leisure facilities such as parish councils and local sports clubs. Would funding and support be included in this new contract?
- A member sought clarity about some aspects contained within the confidential appendix. In particular, there was reference on page 58 to a table at the end of a section within the report but then there was no table. Was this an error or omission? –should the text refer to the table in the previous section on page 56?
- *Table on page 56 (confidential) – a member noted the figures only went to 15 years but some costs seem to be for a 25 year period – was this to do with the contract and borrowing timeframes?
(it was noted that Finance would be asked to provide a written response and this is attached to the minutes of Scrutiny Committee as Appendix B.)

(Note – Scrutiny Committee did not go into confidential session.)

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 9)

- No questions or comments.

264. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 6)

The Specialist (Scrutiny and Member Development) reminded members that a report about remote meetings after 7 May 2021 had been circulated for information which would be considered at Full Council on 15 May 2021. Members were asked if they wished to raise any questions about the report from a Scrutiny perspective.

During a brief discussion the Director (Service Delivery) and the Monitoring Officer responded to points of detail including:

- The court case regarding online / remote meetings was due to be heard on 21 April however a potential date of the outcome was currently unknown.
- It was for individual Town and Parish Councils to make their own decisions about meeting and decision making arrangements after the 7 May. Officers could notify the town and parish councils of how SSSDC were looking to overcome the issue regarding remote meetings as a suggested way forward in the short term.
- Since the report for the Council agenda had been published, MCHLG had confirmed their support to continue with virtual meetings.

No questions or comments were raised to be forwarded to Full Council.

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Chairman

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

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee (Informal)** held by video conference using Zoom meeting software on **Tuesday 1 June 2021**.

(10.30 am - 12.00 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Gerard Tucker (Chairman)

Robin Bastable
Karl Gill
Brian Hamilton
Paul Maxwell

Sue Osborne
Robin Pailthorpe
Crispin Raikes
Linda Vijeh



Also Present:

John Clark
Sarah Dyke

Tony Lock

Officers

Jill Byron
Kirsty Larkins
Jo Wilkins
Robert Orrett
Stephanie Gold
Becky Sanders

Monitoring Officer
Director (Service Delivery)
Specialist (Strategic Planning)
Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager
Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)
Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

13. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlie Hull, Oliver Patrick and Jeny Snell.

14. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

15. Public question time (Agenda Item 3)

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

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

17. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Karl Gill who is a new member on Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman advised members that the Scrutiny Chairmen had now attended all four Area Committees and gave a brief overview of what had been discussed. It had been suggested that the Scrutiny function could be more transparent, and so going forward, a trial would take place whereby responses from District Executive members and officers to comments raised at Scrutiny Committee would be circulated to all members for information.

18. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 13 May 2021 (Agenda Item 6)

There were no updates on reports considered by District Executive members at the May meeting.

19. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3 June 2021 (Agenda Item 7)

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 3 June 2021 (Informal Consultative meeting) and raised comments as detailed below. Responses to most questions and comments were provided at Scrutiny Committee (Informal Meeting) by the relevant officers or Portfolio Holder – except those marked with an asterisk.

Relocation of Emergency Accommodation (Agenda item 5)

- Regarding the Homes England grant – is there any update about the outcome or when the outcome may be known? Also would the outcome of the Homes England grant impact the funding figure detailed in the recommendation at paragraph 5?
- Members sought clarification about provision of emergency accommodation for females and also provision for anyone with pets.
- Financial implications - Members asked if agreeing this funding would impact on other projects coming forward?

Dealing with Planning Applications: Our Approach to Negotiation (Agenda item 6)

- Members queried the suggestion that amendments to planning applications would result in an extension of time, and is the intention of this to ensure applications stay within the 8-9 week timeframe and amendments are discouraged.
- Members sought clarification about charges for pre-application advice – do charges apply to small applications as well as larger ones?
- One member expressed his frustration with the planning service provided which he felt was poor. He felt the whole situation with the planning service was very concerning with little on the ground seeming to change.
- Another member noted that he felt things were getting better and that supportive comments were being expressed by some parishes.

- A member noted that it was important at the pre-application stage for officers to be candid about the information being provided.
- Members asked if there was a replacement Lead for the planning service?
- Members noted it was acknowledged by the team and officers that the planning service isn't fixed and work was ongoing to streamline processes and improve the service.
- The Chairman noted that new processes were being trialled and it would be good to receive some feedback at a later date about how effective the changes have been or the lessons learned.

The 'Making' of the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan (Agenda item 7)

- No comments.

The 'Making' of the Martock Neighbourhood Plan (Agenda item 8)

- A member asked how many other neighbourhood plans were currently going through the process.

Investments Assets Update Report (Agenda item 9)

(Scrutiny did not go into confidential session)

- Members acknowledged an update from the Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager that the graph '20/21 Performance Against Budget' would be moved from the confidential appendix into the public report.
- Para 9 in confidential appendix – referring to the coloured table, it was observed that there are a number of investments that seem to be showing as a nil or negative return in the future, members asked for some further explanation on the reasons for these assumptions.
- Some members suggested a briefing or workshop for members to help understand in more detail the approach for our investments (what and where) would be useful
- Members sought clarification about delivery of commercial investments going forward as the current director would be Chief Executive in a few days. Members sought reassurance that there would be no conflicts of interest – especially regarding our directorship in some of the companies.
- Members requested an update regarding the Marks & Spencer (M&S) store as it was believed the company were reviewing their land holdings.
- Members also requested an update regarding Yeovil Town Football Club and what the current status was.
- Members congratulated the team on their work, especially during current circumstances.
- It was noted there was some budget remaining for investment – some members queried if this would be impacted by the unitary decision in a few months time?

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 10)

- August – Review of Commercial Strategy – it was noted Clare Pestell's name was detailed for the report. Members queried if this was correct given that Clare would be CEO in the near future.
- Some members queried if there should be a report added for around July due to the pending decision from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding local government reorganisation in Somerset?

20. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 8)

The Chairman provided a brief verbal update on the progress of Task and Finish groups including:

Productivity Analysis – no update.

SSDC Environment Strategy – the Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development) is meeting with the budget manager shortly to discuss the switch to R.E.G.O (Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin), based on the recommendations from the task and finish group members. This would mean our current provider will only source electricity from renewable sources for the rest of the contract.

21. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 9)

The Chairman reminded members that meetings would continue to be held virtually until the end of July.

22. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 10)

During a brief discussion about the Work Programme, members made the following suggestions for items to be included in the future:

- There had recently been a major technical issue with members accessing their tablets and emails. A report was requested about what had happened, why, rectification and lessons learned etc.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – a date needs be confirmed. It would be useful to have an update on funding received and distributed, and whether the scheme is as effective as Section 106 obligations.
- Broadband – the item has featured on the work programme for some time – a date needs to be confirmed for an update.

At the end of discussion, the Chairman advised members that there would also be a discussion with the Performance Specialist at the next Scrutiny meeting regarding Key Performance Indicators.

23. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted that the next meeting of members of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 10.30am on Tuesday 29 June 2021, and was likely to be held as an informal virtual meeting using Zoom.

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Chairman

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee (Informal)** held by video conference using Zoom meeting software **on Tuesday 29 June 2021.**

(10.30 am - 12.50 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Gerard Tucker (Chairman)

Robin Bastable	Sue Osborne
Karl Gill	Robin Pailthorpe
Brian Hamilton	Oliver Patrick
Charlie Hull	Crispin Raikes
Mike Lewis	Jeny Snell (to 11.50am)
Paul Maxwell	Martin Wale



Also Present:

Jason Baker	Peter Gubbins
John Clark	Tony Lock
Sarah Dyke	

Officers

Cath Temple	Specialist (Performance)
Kirsty Larkins	Director (Service Delivery)
Peter Paddon	Lead Specialist (Economy)
Joe Walsh	Specialist (Economic Development)
Natalie Fortt	Regeneration Programme Manager
Karen Watling	Interim Section 151 Officer
Paul Matravers	Lead Specialist (Finance)
Jill Byron	Monitoring Officer
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Stephanie Gold	Specialist (Scrutiny & Member Development)

24. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 1)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Linda Vijeh - Councillor Martin Wale was in attendance as substitute.

25. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

26. Public question time (Agenda Item 3)

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

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

There were no issues raised from previous meetings.

28. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman noted that the trial of circulating the responses from District Executive members and officers to comments raised at Scrutiny Committee appeared to be being quite well received, and the trial would continue.

29. SSDC Key Performance Indicators Review - Verbal Update (Agenda Item 6)

The Performance Specialist provided members with a brief verbal update regarding the review of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and referred to the draft list of KPIs which had been circulated to members for information. She highlighted the new KPIs and explained that some other indicators remained the same but the targets had changed.

The Council Tax and Benefits indicators would remain the same and the indicators for planning (development management) were still with senior officers to finalise the measures and targets. It was noted that measures and figures for waste and recycling were only available for the whole county and not broken down by district due to collection routes. The Performance Specialist asked if members felt the county-wide data was still relevant and useful for the district?

During discussion members raised several queries and suggestions, some of which included (responses from the Performance Specialist and Director (Service Delivery) are shown in italics). :

- PCS14 - Appeals Lost - understand if more than 10% of appeals are lost then will come under the scrutiny from central government - so shouldn't the target be less than 10%?
(planning indicators are being reviewed by senior officers - it was taking some time as want to ensure it's accurate)
- Indicators for waste should still be measured and reported, and available for districts to scrutinise even if data is at a county-wide level. Data is still useful in order to see trends and issues or concerns can be raised with Somerset Waste Partnership or via the Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel.
- One member wanted to stress the importance of measure for planning in performance reviews.
(planning indicators are being reviewed by senior officers - it was taking some time as want to ensure it's accurate)
- Regarding waste - feel it would be useful to know what's going in and out of Dimmer as the contract is changing. There is a need to monitor the amount of vehicle movements.
(will raise the issue with the Somerset Waste Partnership regarding figures)
- EN 1 - Land management (environment indicator) - how would this be recorded and down to what level? Will it include species monitoring, nature conservation management, flora and fauna? And at site level such as Ham Hill or Chard Reservoir?
(The environment team are working on this and these new KPI reports will show that level of detail moving forward.)

- How do we record information about Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and our response rates?
(FOIs and complaints will be an area that's looked at separately from KPIs as it's an important area and needs to be transparent. Acknowledge it's an area that needs to be improved.)
- E4 digital connections - the measure state 'various', which is a catch all. What specific measures will be included in this?
The measures are Gigabit vouchers facilitated per premise, broadband connections facilitated per premise and additional mobile coverage facilitated per premise. This KPI is still under review.)
- EN5 - Waste to landfill - understand that a lot of waste is now going into the 'Energy from Waste' incinerator at Avonmouth. Is this data online now? What % of waste from South Somerset goes to this incinerator?
(The Performance Specialist will check the latest position on this.)

At the end of discussion the Chairman thanked officers for their updates, and the Performance Specialist acknowledged the comments made and would feedback the suggestions to the relevant officers.

30. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 3 June 2021 (Agenda Item 7)

There were no updates on reports considered by District Executive members at the June meeting. The Chairman referred members back to his comment made under Chairman Announcements (item 5) regarding responses circulated to members.

31. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 1 July 2021 (Agenda Item 8)

Prior to considering the District Executive agenda, the Chairman referred to storm flooding that had occurred in the Chard area the previous evening. He thanked all staff who had helped with the response or were offering support and advice to the community, and he asked the Director (Service Delivery) to convey thanks on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members considered the reports within the District Executive agenda for 1 July 2021 (Informal Consultative Meeting) and raised comments as detailed below. Responses to most questions and comments were provided at Scrutiny Committee (Informal Meeting) by the relevant officers or Portfolio Holder – except those marked by an asterisk:

Planning Reimagined Update (Agenda item 5)

- A member suggested it would be useful to have some local and national context to help better understand how SSSC are doing compared to other authorities.
- Some members expressed concern about ward member involvement and ensuring that ward members are 'kept in the loop' especially regarding applications going forward to Regulation Committee.
- Members also expressed concerns regarding timeframes and processes for notifying parish / town councils and receiving their comments.

- Some members noted the report referenced a technical lead position in the team as well as a Lead Specialist. Members sought clarification whether an appointment had been made to the technical lead role, and also if the position was an additional role at additional cost?
- One member asked about the use of the phrase “bolstering the team”, what does this mean exactly?
- Several members expressed concern about enforcement which was often a controversial subject at parish meetings.
- The report refers to a training video – would this be for members or parishes?
- A member suggested that more briefings for members on technical elements would be useful, including how people can report enforcement issues.
- A members asked if a breakdown was known regarding how many enforcement queries were submitted through the website, member portal, post or by phone? *The Director for Service Delivery informed Scrutiny members that she would share this enforcement data with them.**
- Some members queried if the planning re-imagined workshops would be reconvening in the near future?

Review of Priority Project 1 of the Council’s Annual Action Plan 2021-2022 (Agenda item 6)

- A member noted the report referred to ‘subject to funding’ (pages 18 and 19) and asked for clarity about the purpose, amount and sources of such funding.
- Members asked if we were still engaging with education providers to assist with our economy and recovery?
- *Page 19, Q3 – a member sought clarity about how much progress had been made with the health and well-being framework – what and when etc.
- Page 18 – outcomes – refers to digital infrastructure – a member commented that some more detail or information would be useful.
- Regarding the imminent decision due regarding the future of local government in Somerset – and the possible associated statutory instruments likely to be in place – how would all this work / projects be achieved? One member suggested this was a very ambitious priority project.
- Regarding the work detailed under Q1 on page 18 – a member asked how many of the elements were carried over into Q2 or were still ongoing?

2020/21 Revenue Outturn Report Period Ending 31 March 2021 (Agenda item 7)

- Page 24 – Commercial Investments – it refers to a property re-gear. Members asked what re-gear meant and also sought reassurance that it was just for the one property in our portfolio?
- Table 1 – page 23 – members noted there is a large variation on spend associated with the Chief Executive (Directorate) – members queried where the budget had gone as it had effectively doubled, and noted a breakdown would have been useful. *Members noted a response would be circulated via email by the Lead Specialist (Finance) to Scrutiny Members.**

2020/21 Capital Outturn Report Period Ending 31 March 2021 (Agenda item 8)

- Para 16 on page 49 – a member sought clarity on the meaning of the paragraph, and remarked that the wording did not seem entirely professional.

- Para 20 on page 50 – members asked if there was any update regarding the Arlingclose review of external borrowing options? Members asked if when the outcome was known if it would be something that could be circulated to Scrutiny members for information?
- Members noted that some additional training regarding capital and interest payments would be useful.
- A member asked why the council was barred from utilising Public Works Loan Boards for low interest borrowing, was this because the council makes large property investments?

Financing the Yeovil Refresh (Agenda item 9) *(Scrutiny did not go into confidential session)*

- Members noted that there had been various regeneration projects over the years and queried if the Yeovil refresh was cross-referencing with the older visions and schemes?
- Some members expressed concern regarding the amount of funding and the possible pay off time of 50 years with associated borrowing costs.
- A member sought clarification about aspects of funding for the Yeovil Refresh including whether there would be developer contributions / obligations, the amount of high street funding and the amount of potential funding from the business rates pooling.
- A member asked what would happen if the funding detailed in the report recommendation was not agreed? How much of a scale-back would have to be made? How many businesses might cease to come to Yeovil?

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 10)

- The chairman suggested it would be useful to compare and align the Scrutiny Work Programme with the District Executive Forward Plan where appropriate. Is there anything on the District Executive Forward Plan that Scrutiny could pick up for a debate on their own agenda?
- Members asked when the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding and allocation report would be coming to Council, as it is very overdue.
- Members asked about the status of the current Local Plan review, and when an update would be coming to committee?
- Regarding the A358 Taunton to Southfields duelling, what role did SSDC have in supporting the parishes affected?

32. 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:

SSDC Environment Strategy - meetings are ongoing and gathering data. Confirmation was awaited regarding changing the remaining contract with our existing energy supplier as there was a financial implication.

Productivity Analysis - no update.

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

The Chairman reminded members that meetings would continue to be held virtually until at least the end of July. Depending on coronavirus restrictions, the August meetings may be in person.

A representative on the Somerset Waste Board Joint Scrutiny Panel noted that at a recent meeting the driver shortage had been discussed, and the impact it was having on waste collections.

Regarding the Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel, a meeting was due to be held on 2 July.

In response to a query raised, a member on the Appointments Committee advised they were due to meet on 5 July to interview shortlisted candidates for the CEO role.

34. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 11)

During a brief discussion about the Work Programme, the Chairman noted the following:

- Member briefings regarding Broadband had been arranged for 13th and 14th July depending on Area.
- Rural Transport - he would follow up on a particular enquiry.
- Local Plan Update - a report or update is due to be made to the next Scrutiny meeting.

A member asked about an update regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - they also noted that they thought each authority had to keep list of each receipt and queried if we had such a list, if it was published and when was it reviewed? In response the Lead Specialist (Economy) advised that there was likely to be a workshop for Scrutiny members in August or September. He noted there was a need to agree the CIL governance structure in order to spend any receipts.

Members were content to note the Work Programme.

35. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 3 August 2021 - with meeting arrangements to be confirmed nearer the time depending on coronavirus restrictions.

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Chairman