

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 September 2014 at 3.30 pm

Present:

Councillor P H MurphyChairman
Councillor B HeywoodActing Vice Chairman

Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor K J Ross

Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor J Freeman
Councillor D J Sanders

Members in Attendance:

Councillor K Kravis
Councillor T Taylor

Councillor K Mills
Councillor K H Turner

Officers in Attendance:

Assistant Director – Corporate Services (R Sealy)
Assistant Director – Resources (P Fitzgerald)
Legal Services Manager (R Pinney)
Corporate Transformation Programme Manager (K Batchelor)
Finance Manager (S Plenty)
Retained HR Manager (M Griffin)
Media and Public Relations Officer (D Rundle)
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)
Administrative Support (A Randell)

Jim Butterworth – Member of the Public.

SC17 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors R Lillis and A H Trollope-Bellew.

SC18 Minutes

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 7 August 2014 – circulated with the Agenda.)

Agreed for apologies from Councillor B Heywood to be added to the minutes.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 7 August 2014 – as amended - be confirmed as a correct record.

SC19 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Personal or Prejudicial or Disclosable Pecuniary	Action Taken
Cllr P N Grierson	All Items	Alcombe	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K J Ross	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr P H Murphy	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K H Turner	All Items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke

An additional interest was declared by Councillor S Dowding as a Member of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).

SC20 Public Participation

Mr Jim Butterworth made a statement around the item on the Forward Plan in respect of secondary education in West Somerset. He requested that this item be considered by the Committee before the December date shown on the Forward Plan. .

He had raised concerns over the exam success rates at the West Somerset College being amongst the lowest in the country. A petition to remove the college principle and bring in Ofsted to overhaul the school had so far received 400 signatures.

The Committee noted the comments from Mr Butterworth.

SC21 Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points

(Copy of Notes of Cabinet Decisions/Action Points, to be circulated after the meeting.)

RESOLVED that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points from the meeting held on 19 August 2014, be circulated and noted at a later date.

SC22 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of the Cabinet Forward Plan published 19 August 2014, circulated with the agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Plan published on 19 August 2014, be noted.

SC23 Joint Management and Shared Services – Update of Progress

(Report No WSC 123/14, circulated with the agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update of the Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) programme as detailed in the Business Case which had been approved in November 2012.

Kim Batchelor, presented the report giving the background information, indicative timescales and progress to date and a savings and costs update.

During the course of discussion the following points were made:-

- It was considered how any perception of Taunton Deane taking over a smaller authority should be challenged. Proposals for the joint venture remained inclusive of staff across both organisations.
- Members discussed the greater benefits of having additional Assistant Directors than was the case previously.
- TUPE and staff terms and conditions were questioned. The retention of WSC staff terms and conditions were also discussed. This would depend on where staff were based along with which terms and conditions they wished to adopt. It was debated if and when a review would be undertaken on terms and conditions for them to deliver additional savings.
- Projected savings and savings already achieved were discussed along with the possibility of further devolving services to Parish Councils.
- The development of shared services were discussed. It would be a Member decision to devolve services further.
- Assurances were given to Members that work would continue to gain and achieve maximum savings to close the budget gap. Any savings and efficiencies delivered would be passed onto both authorities.
- The effect of any relocation of The Deane House was considered along with the future of the Williton office. Members considered whether further consideration should be given to sharing the Williton offices before 2017 if there was capacity.
- IT changes had been implemented to enable working across both sites in each authority. Members were informed that in relation to the IT spend, value for money was being achieved and prices quoted in relation to IT work had been at a competitive price.
- Members wondered whether there would be a possible delay in terms of IT spend with the proposed County Hall move proposal being a consideration when assessing future investment.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

SC24 **Reviewing the process of the making of Executive Decisions by Individual Members of Cabinet**

(Report No WSC 124/14, circulated with the agenda.)

The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to review the proposed process of Executive Decisions being made in the future by individual members of Cabinet.

During the course of the discussion the following points were raised:-

- Councillors would still be as publically accountable for any Executive decisions made under these proposals. It was considered that this process would reduce bureaucracy and stop unnecessary debates at meetings.
- The same responsibility would fall upon Councillors individually as that of a committee in relation to Executive decisions.
- Where considered appropriate decisions would be taken at the lowest level to increase operational efficiency and to focus energy on big decisions

- The driver for change was to ensure that West Somerset and Taunton Deane procedures operated in similar ways.
- The principles of challenge were detailed along with any decisions being susceptible to challenge. Decisions would be recorded and subject to a call in procedure.
- To ensure best practice, a list of Executive decisions made would be held on record.
- Councillors requested to be notified when decisions are publicised to provide the opportunity to input.
- Councillors wanted the importance of public scrutiny of decisions made by Cabinet Members to be recognised and matters debated where there was a need for it.
- It was requested that the new procedure was checked and Councillors provided with assurance that the proposed procedure followed local government best practice.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the comments made be reflected in the report to Full Council.

SC25 Scrutiny Committee Work Plan.

(The Scrutiny Committee work plan, circulated with the agenda was considered.)

The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to consider the meeting timetable for 2014/2015.

Councillors were requested to consider and comment on the proposed Work Plan submitted.

During the course of the discussion the following points were raised:-

- Nominations for the proposed Task and Finish Group on Secondary Education were received from Councillors K Ross, P Murphy and J Freeman. The composition of the Group would be finalised in due course.
- Members were requested to consider the work of the Task and Finish Group before any further action was explored in relation to the proposed review. It was agreed that until this was done, the item be withdrawn from the Forward Plan.
- Agreed that the Voluntary Sector Update Report would be included as part of the Forward Plan.
- Agreed that the Rhynes and Waterways item be re-scheduled for a future meeting once a report has been through the Environment PAG.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be adopted.

The meeting closed at 5.30 pm.