

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 June 2011 at 4.30 pm**

**Present:**

Councillor K J Ross .....Chairman  
Councillor R P Lillis .....Vice-Chairman

Councillor A M Chick  
Councillor M O A Dewdney  
Councillor J Freeman  
Councillor D R Ross

Councillor M J Chilcott  
Councillor G S Dowding  
Councillor P N Grierson

**Members in Attendance:**

Councillor H J W Davies  
Councillor K V Kravis  
Councillor P H Murphy  
Councillor T Taylor  
Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor A F Knight  
Councillor E May  
Councillor D J Sanders  
Councillor K H Turner

**Officers in Attendance:**

Corporate Director (B Lang)  
Principal Accountant (S Plenty)  
HR Consultant (M Griffin)  
Meeting Administrator (H Dobson)

**SC1      Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

**SC2      Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 March 2011**

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 21 March 2011 – circulated with the Agenda).

**RESOLVED** that, subject to including Councillor G S Dowding in apologies for absence, the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 21 March 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

**SC3      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:

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL  
Scrutiny Committee 13.6.11

Name	Minute No	Description of Interest	Personal or Prejudicial	Action Taken
Cllr K J Ross	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr P N Grierson	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Murphy	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D Westcott	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke
Cllr K Turner	All Items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke

**SC4 Public Participation**

No member of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

**SC5 Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points**

**RESOLVED** that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points for 1 June 2011 be noted.

**SC6 Cabinet Forward Plan**

(Copy of Cabinet Forward Plan No. 1, - July 2011 to July 2012 - circulated with the Agenda).

Members noted that:

- Somerset West Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy would be presented to Cabinet in December and Council in January,
- Draft Economic Strategy would be presented to Scrutiny in August, Cabinet and Council in September, and
- Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) – Final Report would moved to later in the year.

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet Forward Plan No. 1, July 2011 to July 2010, be noted.

**SC7 Scrutiny Committee Workplan 2010/2011**

(Copy of the Scrutiny Committee Workplan, circulated with the Agenda).

The Chairman advised the Committee of the training scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011 when the Committee would have the opportunity to populate the workplan.

**RESOLVED** that the Scrutiny Committee Workplan 2010/11 be noted.

**SC8 Remuneration Committee**

(Copy of Report No. WSC 76/11, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to provide further information to Members on the possible creation of a Remuneration Committee as well as maintaining the status quo.

The HR Consultant outlined the details in the report and advised that the alternative would be to continue with the current arrangements provided within the Constitution. The only authority, to date, in the South West to consider the creation of a Remuneration Committee was the Isles of Scilly.

Members expressed concern regarding the potential cost incurred in order to change the current arrangements when there were already other financial pressures concerning the Council. Also, if the current system was already operating effectively there would seem to be no reason to change.

The report confirmed that the Corporate PAG had considered the matter and placed on record their reservation/disagreement with the principle of creating a Remuneration Committee.

In response to a question the HR Consultant advised that external advice and data was sought through the South West Provincial Employers in relation to matters concerning senior officer pay.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet be recommended to consider the following comments on the alternatives, set out in the report, from the Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) That to change the current system would incur costs during a financially difficult time.
- (ii) If the current system was already operating effectively there would seem to be no reason to change it.
- (iii) Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that a Remuneration Committee was not adopted.

## **SC9 Review of Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders 2011**

(Copy of Report No. WSC 78/11, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was for the Scrutiny Committee to offer comment on proposed changes to Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders for 2011.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support Services advised that the Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders had undergone quite a major review last year. The latest changes had been tracked for ease of reference. Recommendations made by Internal Audit were listed in 4.1.1 of the report, attached to the agenda, and had been put forward for implementation.

During the course of the debate the following points were raised and addressed:

- Procedures were in place to follow up any non-payment of debts, which were reported through budget meetings and the quarterly report.

- Training would be made available should any future major construction project be necessary.
- Concern was expressed that the asset register did not provide enough information on individual plots in order to gauge their worth. The Principal Accountant advised that regular meetings were held with the Asset Management Group and a full reconciliation was conducted every year after the accounts had been audited.
- It was noted that although the Council did share some services with other authorities, such as electric, it would be prudent to remain open to further opportunities, including working in partnership on such issues as insurance cover.
- The authority was currently looking at how to deal with the issues that will be raised once cheques have been phased out of use.
- Security procedures were in place and were checked by Internal and External Auditors, regarding BACS payments over a specific amount.
- Last year creditors had been paid quite quickly, however, due to the savings to be made by the Council and the reduced capacity in the finance team creditors were currently paid under terms and conditions set by the supplier. The Principal Accountant advised that he would check the suggestion that creditors be offered to be paid earlier in return for receiving a discount.

**RESOLVED** that the changes to the Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders 2011 be noted and supported for implementation.

**SC10**     **Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review**

Members noted the historical reasons for this item being included on the agenda twice.

**RESOLVED** that the Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review be included as the last item only, on future Scrutiny Committee agendas.

The meeting closed at 5.26 pm.