

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 January 2012 at 4.30 pm

Present:

Councillor K J Ross.....Chairman
Councillor R P LillisVice Chairman

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

Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor P N Grierson

Members in Attendance:

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

Councillor K V Kravis
Councillor T Taylor
Councillor D J Westcott

Officers in Attendance:

Corporate Director (B Lang)
Group Manager – Resources and Central Support (G Carne)
Group Manager – Housing and Community (I Timms)
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)
Efficiencies and Performance Manager (K Batchelor)
Administrative Support (H Dobson)

Prior to the start of the meeting the Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points, relating to Item 5, was circulated.

SC71 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A M Chick and J Freeman.

SC72 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 December 2011

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12 December 2011 – circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12 December 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

SC73 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	Action Taken
Cllr P Grierson	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K J Ross	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K H Turner	All Items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D J Westcott	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

SC74 Public Participation

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

SC75 Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points

(Copy of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points, circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points for 11 January 2012, be noted.

SC76 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of Cabinet Forward Plan No. 8, February 2012 – February 2013, circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Plan No. 8, February 2012 – February 2013, be noted.

SC77 Current Financial Standing and Budget 2012/13

(Copy of Report No. WSC 6/12, circulated after the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to inform the Scrutiny Committee of the current status of the Council's financial planning, including the budget 2012/13.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support informed that the report set out the Council's latest financial planning. Savings will need to be made in excess of £1.1m over the next four years. The Council will have to meet the budget gap, which could mean stopping all discretionary/non-essential services straight away and reducing some statutory service provision. Such drastic savings would be very hard and therefore minimal savings have been suggested over the next few years while other ways of increasing income are explored.

The latest MTFP, table 1 of the report, displayed the impact that Hinkley Point could have. Members noted an error in the table: the word '(deficit)' was to be replaced with '(surplus)'. It was necessary for assumptions to be built into the budget and these were listed in 4.5 (viii) of the report.

In response to questions regarding the assumption relating to the neutral impact of Business Rates Retention until 2021/22 when Hinkley Point C may commence to produce electricity, the Group Manager – Resources and Central

Support advised that the figure of £500,000 was the best estimate that could be made from the information available at present.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee expressed concern that the figures were based on a lot of assumptions. Further, by including the impact of Hinkley Point within the Medium Term Financial Plan the resulting figures could be skewed.

RESOLVED that the Council's financial standing and budget 2012/13 be noted and that, in future reports, the Group Manager – Resources and Central Support be requested to present the figures in a way that most clearly displays the financial impact of Hinkley Point C.

SC78 Draft Service Plans – 2012-2013

(Copy of Report No. WSC 18/12, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to provide the Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity of scrutinising the draft Service Plans for 2012/13 prior to their approval in the light of the strategic long-term vision and refreshed Corporate Priorities recently approved by Council.

The Leader of the Council reported that the five Service Plans were each under the control of a member of the Corporate Management Team and outlined the details in the report. Within the Corporate Strategy, appendix A to the report, changes had been made: added to each corporate priority was a statement advising of how the priority could be achieved with a deadline and, key measures were listed showing how the success at delivering the priority could be tracked.

In response to a question the Group Manager – Housing and Community confirmed that the 80 affordable homes to be delivered by 31 March 2013 took into account the report delivered by Magna and that any development of Seaward Way was likely to be included in the plan for 2015-16.

In response to concerns regarding key task 7.1, 'consult with people and communities to establish if and how service delivery can be changed', the Corporate Director advised that although it was not known yet how the key actions would be undertaken/measured in detail, it was possible to monitor the deadline by which they should be undertaken.

During the course of the debate the Committee made the following comments:

- Members complemented the vision for being succinct, however, concern was raised that it was difficult to follow the priorities through to the service plans.
- Cross-referencing was very difficult and hard to follow. It was suggested that the service areas in the Appendices could be arranged in the same order.
- Concern that the performance target relating to overall staff satisfaction was predicted to fall from 94% in 2011/12 to 85% by 2013/14.

RESOLVED that the comments of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft Service Plans for 2012/13 be taken into consideration and that any further comments/ideas for improvement be forwarded to the Corporate Director who will feedback to appropriate members and officers.

SC79 **Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review**

(Scrutiny Committee Workplan, circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Workplan be noted and that a Task and Finish Group relating to Fraud Investigation be added to March 2012.

The meeting closed at 5.54 pm.