

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 July 2012 at 4.30 pm**

**Present:**

Councillor K J Ross.....Chairman

Councillor M O A Dewdney  
Councillor D D Ross

Councillor B Heywood

**Members in Attendance:**

Councillor K V Kravis  
Councillor P H Murphy  
Councillor T Taylor

Councillor E May  
Councillor D J Sanders  
Councillor D J Westcott

**Officers in Attendance:**

Corporate Director (B Lang)  
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)  
Group Manager – Housing and Economy (I Timms)  
Group Manager – Environment and Community (S Watts)  
Group Manager – Resources (G Carne)  
Principal Accountant (S Plenty)  
Efficiencies & Performance Manager (K Batchelor)  
Administrative Support (H Dobson)

**SC12 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Chilcott, G Dowding, P Grierson and R Lillis.

**SC13 Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2012**

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2012 – circulated with the Agenda).

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

**SC14 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 K J Ross	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Murphy	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D J Westcott	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

**SC15 Public Participation**

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

**SC16 Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points**

(Copy of Notes of Cabinet Decisions/Action Point, circulated at the meeting)

**RESOLVED** that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points for 4 July 2012, be noted, ~~and that the document be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee~~

**SC17 Cabinet Forward Plan**

(Copy of Cabinet Forward Plan No. 2 - June 2012 to June 2013, circulated at the meeting).

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet Forward Plan No. 2 - June 2012 to June 2013, be noted.

**SC18 Corporate Performance Report, April – March 2011-12**

(Report No. WSC 96/12, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update on progress in delivering the corporate priorities, performance of council services including budgetary information and customer satisfaction covering the period from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

The Leader presented that part of the report relating to quarterly performance. He praised officers for the increase in the number of completed actions and advised that the summary page for each group included achievements for the quarter. The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the financial information contained in the report and highlighted the underspend for the end of the year, 2011/12.

During the course of the debate the points raised included:

- It was confirmed that the collection of outstanding Council Tax debts were rarely written off. Collection was an ongoing effort and officers had to balance pursuing the debt with the return. The amounts outstanding were relatively small. It was a matter that would be looked at in detail and reported to the Audit Committee. The Group Manager – Resources and Central Support confirmed that he would advise of the outstanding Council Tax and Business Rates Debts for 2011/12 at a later date.

- It was confirmed that the 'forecast variant from budget' for quarter 1, 2 and 3 figures were predicted end of year figures and that the quarter 4 figures were actual.
- It was noted that for future end of year quarter 4 performance reports, members requested an additional column in the table in which the following year's targets could be added for comparison.
- A query was raised relating to KPI 62 - total number of evidence packages produced using material captured by CCTV: were the packages generating convictions? It was confirmed that when the Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group looked at the figures, West Somerset had some of the best rates in the county, around 70% and therefore, it seemed that the use of CCTV as a deterrent was having some effect.
- The Group Manager - Environment and Community advised that clarity was needed as to what was a justified fly-tipping complaint and SWAP had been requested to look at that.
- The Group Manager - Resources confirmed that he would confirm the number of legal services hours used for the year 2011/12.
- The Corporate Director advised that although KPI 126 (% hours availability of HR service) was not on target, in practice a member of the HR service had been available to be contacted whenever it was needed.
- Concern was expressed regarding the issues using the public wi-fi zone in the Chamber and Members' Room. Members noted that work was still being undertaken to address the issues.
- The Group Manager – Resources confirmed that he would address the questions raised regarding E-billing: was the service being promoted, was the public information secure, how many staff had taken advantage of the service?
- In response to concern regarding KPI 26 (% of calls answered within 20 seconds) the Group Manager – Resources advised that officers were working to provide a more useful indicator.

The Leader advised that with regard to 9.3.4 (shared management/services) the other Somerset Councils understood West Somerset Council's situation and would like to help. A request had been made of the LGA to visit the Council and lead an investigation to look at its' finances. Further, he had requested a meeting with Bob Neill, MP, to be held in the autumn – a change to the original plan of May when it was considered that the information would not have been available at that time.

Members expressed their thanks to the Scrutiny & Performance Officer and Efficiencies & Performance Manager for the huge amount of work that they had invested in improving the report. Further thanks were also expressed to be passed on to the finance team.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the progress in delivering the corporate priorities for 2011/12, be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the performance against Group and Service Indicators, including the Budget Monitoring Indicators, be noted.

At this point the Chairman left the meeting and Councillor D Ross chaired the remainder of the meeting.

**SC19 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) – 2013-2016**

(Report No. WSC 95/12, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to present the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2013-2016 to Scrutiny Committee for consideration and comment, and to provide the context and framework for the budget for 2013-14.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support outlined the details in the report and advised that it was important for Scrutiny Committee to challenge and test the assumptions made in the MTFP. The assumptions included: New Homes Bonus would not be new money; reserves would remain at £500,000; no increases in fees and charges.

During the course of the debate the points raised included:

- Historically the council tax rate had been capped at 3.5% and an assumption was made that this would continue, and was reflected in the MTFP. It would be for members to decide how to address the £1.2m budget gap for the life of the MTFP (3 years). Table 5 of the report, attached to the agenda, showed the closing reserves, again it would be for members to decide how to use the reserves.
- Concern was expressed that the underspend would be adversely affected by the capitalisation of specific costs. Members were advised that while it was possible to do so, it seemed a sensible approach to move funds in this way.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the Medium Term Financial Plan 2013-2016 be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the budget gap of £928,000 for 2013-14 and £1.28m for the life of the MTFP (3 years), be noted.

**SC20 Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review**

(Scrutiny Committee Workplan, circulated with the Agenda).

The Scrutiny & Performance Officer advised that Minehead Area Panel had requested that representatives of the Somerset Primary Care Trust attend their meeting scheduled for 12 September 2012 with regard to the Somerset GP Out of Hours Service. The trust had requested that if possible perhaps the meeting with the Scrutiny Committee could also be held on the same day.

A request was made of the Scrutiny Committee that reviewing the Section 106 process could be a new item in the workplan.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny & Performance Officer arrange a mutually agreed date with the Somerset Primary Care Trust to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee with regard to Out of Hours GP Provision.

**RESOLVED (2)** that Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny & Performance Officer consider the timescale for the Scrutiny Committee to review the Section 106 process.

**RESOLVED (3)** that the Workplan be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.18 pm.