

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 December 2013 at 3.30 pm

Present:

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

Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor J Freeman
Councillor B Heywood

Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor P N Grierson
Councillor P H Murphy

Members in Attendance:

Councillor E May
Councillor T Taylor

Councillor D J Sanders

Officers in Attendance:

Executive Director (Interim) (A Dyer)
Monitoring Officer (B Lang)
Deputy Monitoring Officer (I Timms)
Section 151 Officer (S Campbell)
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)
Planning Manager (A Goodchild)
Administrative Support (H Dobson)

Also in Attendance:

Brendan Cleere, Strategic Director, Taunton Deane Borough Council (agenda item 8 only)

SC79 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M J Chilcott.

SC80 Minutes

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 18 November 2013 – circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 18 November 2013, be confirmed as a correct record.

SC81 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 P H Murphy	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K J Ross	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted

SC82 Public Participation

No members of the public requested to speak on any items on the agenda.

SC83 Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points

(Copy of Notes of Cabinet Decisions/Action Points, circulated with the agenda).

RESOLVED that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points for 4 December 2013, be noted.

SC84 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of the Cabinet Forward Plan published 5 December 2013, circulated with the agenda).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Plan published 5 December 2013, be noted.

SC85 Scrutiny Committee Work Plan

(Scrutiny Committee Work Plan, circulated with the Agenda).

Councillor P Murphy requested that an item to consult on the Council Tax Rebate Scheme for 2015/16 be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in January 2014. This would ensure that the consultation could be included with the council tax bills due to be sent in February 2014 and would reduce the cost to the council.

The Corporate Manager confirmed that work had commenced on the report and consultation, and that the Scrutiny Committee's view would be welcomed.

Concern was raised that the Magna half yearly report had been removed from the Scrutiny Committee Work plan for December 2014. The Chairman responded that the report had been reported to area panels and that it might be more appropriate to report to the Housing PAG. The Committee would be able to scrutinise specific work issue/s should the need arise.

RESOLVED (1) that consultation on the Council Tax Rebate Scheme for 2015/16 be scheduled for the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held on 20 January 2014.

RESOLVED (2) that the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan be noted.

SC86 Hinkley Point C Project – Resource Update

(Report No. WSC 1528/13, circulated with the Agenda).

On 25th January 2012 Council approved the allocation of funds from the Hinkley Point C Site Preparation Works (SPW) s106 Agreement, part of which related to the recruitment of various members of staff to fill stipulated positions. The purpose of the report was to provide members with an update on the re-allocation of these funds, as agreed with EDF Energy, to mitigate the impact of the on-going delay being encountered in work to deliver the project.

The Executive Director (Interim) presented the report and reviewed the events with regard to the delay in the commencement of Phase 2 work and the knock on effects relating to EDF funded staff. Since the agreement of the 'strike price' further meetings with senior staff of EDF were held and a way forward was agreed, for as long as possible for work to continue before EDF funded staff contracts came to an end. With the agreement of EDF the Council was spending the 106 money in a different way but with the same objective. Appendix A to the report sets out the EDF funded posts and results of the aforementioned discussions. EDF had a high regard for the current team in place.

The Executive Director was pleased that the Council were in a position to deliver its priorities due to the pragmatism and flexible approach from EDF and an excellent Hinkley team would help deliver the Hinkley corporate priority.

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

- The Executive Director advised that with the agreement of the 'strike price' and positive discussions with EDF the council was able to employ the team up until the Hinkley works commenced. If the works did not start by December 2014 the Council would have to review the situation.
- In response to concern regarding 'state aid' delaying progress, the Planning Manager advised that the issue was not new and that he was confident that the matter would be satisfactorily resolved and that work would commence in the autumn of 2014.
- Concern that some EDF posts appeared not to be contributing to the project. The Executive Director confirmed that those posts had worked to benefit the council. A lot of preparatory work had been completed to put in place various projects that would allow the Council to start implementation of those projects as soon as the Hinkley work commenced.
- It was confirmed that the performance of the planning team had not dropped since the departure of the Deputy Planning Manager. Currently, the Planning Manager's involvement with Hinkley has reduced freeing up time to work more in development control and the service area. Once the Hinkley works commenced the authority would re-assess the impact.
- With regard to General Fund Reserve these will be adversely impacted in the sum of £76,327 following the withdrawal of contributions from EDF towards the cost of employing existing staff in 12/13 and 13/14 and detailed in paragraph 6.4 of the report. The associated cost in 14/15 of £38,438 will impact on the base budget for the year not General Fund Reserves. The

cost of extending the employment of Hinkley appointed staff will be fully met from the Section 106 agreement.

The Executive Director advised that throughout the year he had discussions with EDF and the Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Council had been congratulated by the Secretary of State on the way that the Hinkley Point issue had been dealt with.

Councillor Grierson sought assurance that Cabinet had been kept informed and were aware of the financial risks as appropriate.

The Leader advised that assurance could be given in general and that information such as that contained in Appendix A, to the report, was an example of that which the informal cabinet would have been made aware of.

RESOLVED that the actions that have been taken and those proposed in order to maintain the Council's readiness to respond in an appropriate timely manner to mitigate the impacts that a recommencement of work on the development will have on local communities whilst continuing to meet the high level of expectations from EDF Energy and Central Government, be noted.

SC87 **Section 106 & Planning Obligations Task & Finish Group – Recommendations following attendance at Planning Obligations Group**

(Report No. WSC 166/13, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to report to Members of Scrutiny Committee, observations by the Members of the Task & Finish Group following their attendance at the September meeting of the Planning Obligations Group.

The Scrutiny and Performance Officer presented the report and advised that the recommendations of the report had arisen from the Task & Finish Group attending a Planning Obligations Group meeting held 2 September 2013.

In response to a question the Corporate Manager advised that he was confident that the recommendation at 3.2 of the report was already being taken on board.

Members were supportive of the suggestion that the Scrutiny Committee review the process to ensure the recommendation was working.

RESOLVED (1) that when considering project applications and the allocation of funding, consideration be given to as wide a range of project applications as is appropriate within the scope of the Section 106 agreement, and that the process be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee in, approximately, six months' time.

RESOLVED (2) that it be noted that the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Central Support attends the Planning Obligations Group meetings as any subsequent reports are in their name and that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval that consideration be given to the Shadow Portfolio Holder also attending on a similar basis to ensure political balance and obviate the potential

for the perception of any undue influence on the process by any individual Member.

SC88 **Asset Management Review - Progress Report**

(Report No. WSC 167/13, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to update the Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the review of Asset Management.

The Scrutiny and Performance Officer referred to the report and advised that the group would be holding a meeting with the portfolio holder before submitting their final report and recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee in January 2014.

Members wished to thank the Scrutiny and Performance Officer for her support and work throughout the year.

RESOLVED that the progress made by the Task and Finish Group on the Review of Asset Management, be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm.