

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2012 at 4.30 pm

Present:

Councillor K J Ross.....Chairman
Councillor G S DowdingVice Chairman

Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor J Freeman
Councillor B Heywood
Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor P N Grierson

Members in Attendance:

Councillor E May
Councillor T Taylor
Councillor K V Kravis
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 – Resources (G Carne)
Principal Accountant (S Plenty)
Administrative Support (H Dobson)

SC1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R P Lillis and D D Ross.

SC2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 May 2012

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 9 May 2012 – circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that, subject to amending the item ‘Apologies for Absence’ to include Councillor M J Chilcott, the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 9 May 2012 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:

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 D J Westcott	All Items	Watchet	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

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

RESOLVED that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points for 30 May 2012, be noted, ~~and that the document be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee~~

SC6 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of Cabinet Forward Plan No. 1, June 2012 – June 2013, circulated at the meeting).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Plan No. 12, June 2012 – June 2013, be noted.

SC7 Finance System Review – Procurement Process

(Report No. WSC 83/12, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to allow members to review the procurement process to date in respect of the Finance Computer System.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support introduced the report, and advised that the finance system, which cost a large amount of money, was to be considered for renewal. The contract was reviewed in 2008 and was consequently renewed for three years. The Council had now acquired a one year extension to allow time to review which system the authority required.

The Principal Accountant presented the report and advised that it provided a review of the procurement process of the finance computer system undertaken so far. The Council had procured the services of Consilium Technologies (CT), the current provider, since 2000 and had negotiated a saving of £15,000 for this year, during which the review will be conducted.

Consilium Technologies currently carried out the maintenance, up grades and out of office hours work. One option for consideration was to bring that work back in-house which may be better and could save the Council the cost of CT hosting it. An initial project team was set up with five officers, meeting on a weekly basis. The flowchart, at appendix A to the report, set out the project stages and a different specification document was produced in line with the requirements of the system that were identified by users. With the current system holding a lot of data and changes to working practices etc, the current provider was invited to ascertain if there was any way the system could be used differently that would be more efficient and effective to the Council.

The review team would present its' findings to Corporate Management Team and then to Cabinet. A decision would be required by August 2012.

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

- The Group Manager – Resources advised that Financial Regulations stipulated that the full tendering process was required on quotes of £50,000 and above, and that he would need an indicative price from suppliers to determine as to whether that process was followed. He agreed that the flowchart should be amended to reflect that possibility.
- A question was raised as to how the service and price that the Council received had changed over the last 12 years, bearing in mind how Computers had developed in that time and their cost reduced. The Principal Accountant advised that work was still being conducted on obtaining some of the prices. Initially the servers were situated on-site and IT used to carry out all the back-ups and up grades, this was now carried out externally by CT, including out-of-office hours work. The service had cost the Council £70,000 per annum for the previous three-years. Before that time period he was unsure of the cost and would check on how the price had changed since 2000.
- Although the report was appropriate for the Committee, a request was made for more detail explaining exactly what it was that the Council would be getting for their money.
- It was noted that benchmarking was being undertaken and was useful when comparing the Council's spending with similar authorities and that it should be carried out before changes were made. The Group Manager – Resources confirmed that he had more detailed information with small districts and could look at what they spend. From other research with other providers the figures were quite a lot higher. He noted the request to include benchmarking, and comparative costs and functionality in the report.
- Members requested that if additional functionality led to savings (spend to save) then it would be worth investigating.
- The Group Manager – Resources confirmed that the suppliers would be able to quantify the amount of time saved against the provision of extra functionality. However, there was a balancing act between automating everything and having control over actions.
- The Principal Accountant noted the request that training be included in the cost. He advised that if the Council decided upon another system training would be provided on the use of the new system, it would also have to take account of how the current information would be archived. The suppliers were aware that interfaces would have to be written so that all the systems could 'talk' to each other. He confirmed that there would be a document with the same specification for each of the suppliers.

RESOLVED (1) that the progress undertaken to date be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that suggestions to enhance the procurement process as suggested in the body of the minutes, be noted.

SC8 Community Safety – Scrutiny Review – Final

(Report No. WSC 77/12, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to advise members of Scrutiny Committee about the work of the Community Safety Task and Finish Group and to make

recommendations with regards to the work in order to secure improvements to the working arrangements in West Somerset.

Councillor K Ross presented the report, which provided Members with the opportunity to discuss the report and make any further recommendations or amendments. He confirmed that Councillor T Taylor, Leader of Council, was the Council's representative on the Shadow Police and Crime Panel. He highlighted paragraph 4.13 of the report, attached to the agenda, which listed the points that members of the Committee believed needed to be included in the review of the Safer Somerset Group and how it would proceed in the future.

The review was able to confirm that the CCTV system in Minehead did provide value for money and was a good example of partnership working between Minehead Town Council, Avon and Somerset Police and this Council.

The Chairman invited members of the Committee to propose any further recommendations to the report.

Councillor J Freeman proposed an additional recommendation to request that Cabinet be requested to review the process of people not employed by this Council issuing documents using Council headed letter paper.

In response, the Group Manager for Housing and Economy confirmed that an incident had occurred when a letter was sent out that should not have been and steps had been taken to ensure that it would not happen again.

During the debate the following points/concerns included:

- The possibility that there may be people who still have some authority that might have existed for years, but for some reason the Council were not aware of.
- The large resources needed to conduct a review that would involve numerous partnerships.
- Work on key partnerships were reported to audit in March and included checking some of those partnerships.

On being put to the vote the proposed additional recommendation was CARRIED and it was

RESOLVED (1) that the Scrutiny Committee invite the Council's representative on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel to update the Scrutiny Committee later in 2012 or early 2013 on progress relating to the Panel and any issues that are of interest to the authority.

RESOLVED (2) that the Safer Somerset Group review the governance arrangements relating to the delivery of the range of services under the auspices of the group and that the group ensure that this structure is simplified and made 'fit for purpose'.

RESOLVED (3) that, in the light of the proposed changes by the Government in this area of work, the Scrutiny Committee request that as part of the review of the Safer Somerset Group, the provisions surrounding Anti-Social Behaviour

should be addressed and should be checked to ensure that they are delivering an efficient service.

RESOLVED (4) that in order to discharge its scrutiny functions relating to community safety the local police inspector be invited to deliver an annual report, in partnership with the Council's relevant officers for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED (5) that Cabinet be requested to review the process of people not employed by this Council issuing documents using Council headed letter paper.

Noted: that the Chairman left the meeting at this point.

SC9 Visit to Greater Manchester Waste Treatment and Recycling Facilities Update

Councillor J Freeman provided a verbal report on his visit to Greater Manchester with the Somerset Waste Board and representatives of the other Somerset Councils to look at waste treatment and recycling facilities.

Councillor Freeman reported that the facilities dealt with the disposal of the waste. In Somerset all the waste that was not collected or recycled was disposed of using landfill sites, a process which was becoming very costly. The visit looked at plants operated by Viridor using a process called Mechanical and Biological Treatment (MBT), which sorted out the waste in black bags to extract some further use from it, instead of using landfill sites. As a result of the treatment not many of the waste streams could be described as 'clean', however, by separating them they could claim diverting up to 90% from going to landfill.

The Anaerobic Digesters were massive. The surrounding area produced a lot of waste and the waste stream was very low grade. There was some energy recovery, which reduced landfill waste further. They were fortunate to be situated close to railway sidings reducing highway traffic that transported the vast quantities required.

The visit also included a visit to a huge combined heat and power plant being built at Runcorn. Its' feedstock would be from the plants already mentioned and would be material that was organic and likely to be flammable. On completion the plant would provide electricity and high pressure steam for neighbouring businesses. However, it was confirmed that the energy it took to build the plant would never be recovered by the energy it would produce in one lifetime, that was not part of the Public Financing Initiative.

Observing the operations had confirmed that Somerset's method of collection was the right one for the area. Councillor Freeman saw some interesting mechanised processes for what possibly might be the right way for Somerset's black bag waste.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and Councillor J Freeman be thanked for his efforts.

SC10 Williton Hospital – Update

Members noted the letter received from Judith Brown, Director of Community Health Services, in response to the letter, attached to the agenda, requesting an update on Williton Hospital.

Members expressed the following concerns:

- The Williton Hospital League of Friends were concerned that it appeared that nothing had happened except for the change to car parking arrangements which were costed into last year's budget and activities.
- People who were able to be treated in a minor way should be treated locally rather than traveling to Musgrove, particularly for the elderly.
- Concerns were raised that it appeared that more patients were going to Taunton. Therefore, there was a need for more facilities in Williton so that local residents would not have to travel so far.
- Staff at Williton Hospital had been redeployed and it seemed that doctors were now being taken from the local surgery to make up the difference, reducing the surgery capacity to below 50%.
- The out-patients' clinic was under used as a result of patients being sent to Minehead. This would lead to a drop in the figures and an assumption could be made that there was no need for the out-patients' unit; a similar chain of events had led to the close of the Stroke Unit.

Councillor Taylor advised that he was a member of the "patients' group" and confirmed the order of events contributing to the current shortage issues at Williton surgery. Initially, arrangements had been made to re-deploy two doctors, however, after that decision was made one doctor had left and another was on long term sick leave.

The Committee recognised the importance in representing the local people in this matter and agreed to enquire about the timescales relating to funding arrangements for the scheme, as set out in the reply letter.

Councillor Dewdney confirmed that he would continue communicating with the Hospital's League of Friends and would report on developments in the future.

RESOLVED that the Committee keep the matter under review.

SC11 Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review

(Scrutiny Committee Workplan, circulated with the Agenda).

Members of the Committee raised concerns regarding the out of hours GP provision across the whole of the district and requested that the provision be investigated as soon as was possible.

In response the Scrutiny and Performance Officer advised that she would be attending the Minehead Area Panel, to be held later in the week, when they would be discussing 'Medical Emergency Cover in West Somerset – arrangement of meeting with the Somerset GP Out of Hours Service provided

by South Western Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust, and the Somerset Partnership', which may provide useful information.

RESOLVED (1) that the report of the Fraud Task & Finish Group be moved to 20 August 2012 on the Scrutiny Committee Workplan.

RESOLVED (2) that scrutinising out-of-hours GP provision be progressed as soon as possible.

RESOLVED (3) that the Council's representative on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel be requested to provide the Scrutiny Committee with an update on progress relating to the Panel at the Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 16 July 2012.

RESOLVED (4) that, the local police inspector be invited to deliver an annual report relating to community safety, as previously agreed at this meeting (see minute no. SC8), at the meeting scheduled for 17 September or 22 October 2012.

RESOLVED (5) that the Workplan be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.12 pm.