

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 November 2013 at 3.30 pm

Present:

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

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

Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor J Freeman
Councillor B Heywood

Members in Attendance:

Councillor K M Mills
Councillor K H Turner

Councillor T Taylor

Officers in Attendance:

Interim Executive Director (A Dyer)
Monitoring Officer (B Lang)
Deputy Monitoring Officer (I Timms)
Corporate Manager Environment, Customer and Community (S Watts)
Section 151 Officer (S Campbell)
Principal Finance Accountant (S Plenty)
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)
Performance and Efficiencies Manager (K Batchelor)
Planning Manager (A Goodchild)
Administrative Support (H Dobson)

Also in Attendance:

Dr Rosie Benneyworth, Clinical Lead for Urgent and Emergency Care, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

SC66 Apologies for Absence

No apology for absence was received.

SC67 Minutes

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 October 2013 – circulated with the Agenda).

Members noted the response of the Interim Executive Director that with regard to the future of EDF funded posts, EDF had been very flexible and pragmatic in their discussions and that he would report on progress once he was able.

There was no impact on the current base budget. Further, due to the sensitivity of the information the report may have to be held in closed session.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 October 2013, be confirmed as a correct record.

SC68 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 H Murphy	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K J Ross	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr H J W Davies	All Items	Somerset	Personal	Spoke
Cllr K H Turner	All Items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke

In addition:

Councillor K J Ross expressed a personal interest in Item 11, MTFP Savings Options - he and his wife were involved with one or more of the organisations included in the list of savings options, he spoke and voted;

Councillor S Dowding expressed a personal interest in Item 8, GP Out of Hours - he was a first responder, he spoke;

Councillor T Taylor expressed a personal interest in Item 8, GP Out of Hours, - he was involved in a health forum, he spoke.

SC69 Public Participation

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

SC70 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 6 November 2013, be noted.

SC71 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of the Cabinet Forward Plan published 30 October 2013, circulated with the agenda).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Plan published 30 October 2013, be noted.

SC72 GP Out of Hours

(Letter and Primary Care Out-of-Hours Service Specification from Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to receive an update regarding the operation of the GP Out-of-Hours Service in Somerset from Dr Rosie Benneyworth, Clinical Lead for Urgent & Emergency care, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Chairman welcomed Dr Rosie Benneyworth, Clinical Lead, to the meeting and invited her to present the update.

Dr Benneyworth thanked the Committee for the opportunity to provide an update. She was a GP in Taunton and was leading the work that was currently reviewing the out-of-hours service in Somerset. She referred to the letter and Primary Care Out-of-Hours Service Specification, attached to the agenda, setting out the context and progress of the review of the out-of-hours service and NHS 111.

The Commissioning Group were looking to provide a more integrated service, more expert advice early in the patient's pathway and to obtain better outcomes longer term. Therefore, the Out-of-Hours and NHS 111 services will be jointly procured and it was envisaged that the new services would be in place from April 2015.

During the course of the debate the following issues raised included:

- Concern that residents living in, for example, Porlock would have to travel more than 30 minutes to access a treatment centre.
- Concern that shifts locally were unfilled leading to doctors travelling long distances. Response that NHS Somerset have explored the issues in depth and were working to rebuild relationships.
- The current service had changed very much from years gone by and was not improved.
- Concern that GPs were not required to provide a weekend service.
- Concern that GPs use the ambulance service more than is thought reasonable.
- Concern that GPs were not available at night.
- Concern that West Somerset had the highest figures in Somerset for poor health and households with no access to a car or van. Many residents had the added difficulty of there being no bus service after 8pm.
- A flexible model was needed that would match capacity against demand.
- Concern that emergency response transport was not available after hours.
- Concern that very few members of the public attended meetings whereby health professionals and members of the public discussed relevant issues.
- Concern that only two service requirements appeared to be directly related to the public.

In response, Dr Benneyworth advised that a doctor's practice had changed considerably since 2004 and that most doctors worked 12-14 hours per day. There has been an increase in the amount of work coming from the hospitals and a growing number of elderly people with medical needs. A huge amount of information has been gathered: who is calling the service, how many people call 111, where they go to, who go to A&E etc. This information can provide a daily picture enabling the service to predict busier days and act accordingly.

She believed that health and social care services should be more joined up and discussions with Somerset County Council were being held. The Primary Care

Out-of-Hours Service Specification was based on what patients and health professionals of Somerset wanted to see implemented. The new provider must work very closely with the Accident and Emergency units and integrate more closely with the minor injury units.

She confirmed that she would pass on the suggestion to the Ambulance Service that they have a base in Williton, which could reduce travelling time from Bridgwater.

Dr Benneyworth encouraged the members to pass on any areas of concern in order that they can be investigated and learnt from to improve care. She confirmed that members of the public can feedback their experiences via patient participation groups, health forums etc.

It was suggested that perhaps patients/public should be asked about their experience rather than be expected to volunteer information. If the experience has not been positive there can be various reasons as to why that information is not passed on.

The Chairman thanked Dr Benneyworth for attending the meeting and hoped that she would be able to pass on their concerns.

Dr Benneyworth thanked the Committee for inviting her and confirmed that she would take their concerns back with her so that they could be taken into consideration.

RESOLVED that the update regarding the operation of the GP Out-of-Hours service in Somerset from Dr Rosie Benneyworth, Clincil Lead for Urgent & Emergency Care, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, be noted.

Note: With the agreement of the Chairman this item was brought forward on the Agenda.

SC73 Review of the Pre-Application Planning Advice Charging Scheme

(Report No. WSC 152/13, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to provide Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to provide observations and input into a review of the pre-application planning advice charging scheme which was introduced in April 2013 – a copy of the current scheme is attached at Appendix A. The intention of the review is to ensure that any changes to the scheme can be introduced and factored into the budget for 2014/15 and particularly the fees and charges setting process to be introduced in April 2014. Based on the recommendations a revised charging schedule which will need to be approved when setting fees and charges was provided at Appendix B.

The Planning Manager presented the report and advised that the scheme was introduced earlier in the year with an estimated annual income target of £20,000. The first 6 months were almost on target, however, since April 2013 the provision of advice has been confirmed as a VAT rated service and so the actual income received is 20% less than would have otherwise been the case. Application advice sought in October had generated quite a lot of income and

so the financial picture was now quite different to that shown in the table at paragraph 5.5 of the report, attached to the agenda.

In response to questions the Planning Manager advised that there was no like for like scheme in order to compare the service. Further, that the requirement of the Planning team to now rely on 'standing advice' notes for smaller scale projects, once undertaken by Highways, had not seen a significant increase in officers' time and was in line with the requirements of other organisations such as the Environment Agency.

Members proposed that VAT should be charged on top of the agreed fee in order to avoid loss of income and that the suggested recommendation to Cabinet at (1) be amended to read, 'that fees are increased by the current rate of VAT...'

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the Scrutiny Committee suggest the recommendations below to provide observations and input into the production of a report to be presented to Cabinet in December 2013.

- (i) That fees are increased by the current rate of VAT to accommodate the fact that the provision of advice is VAT rated
- (ii) That the Council positively consider increasing the fee for Type 2 Minor Developments and above which will be paid to the County Council to enable the provision of timely and effective Highways advice in accordance with an agreed Countywide approach
- (iii) That Town and Parish Councils contemplating development to provide community related facilities are given a 50% fee reduction
- (iv) That the fee schedule be amended to remove the option to seek pre-application advice without a site visit
- (v) That the Major development categories (Types 1, 2 and 3) is amended to include the provision of written advice and 2 meetings within the initial fee
- (vi) That where work is proposed which falls into two categories on the same site the fee payable is the higher of the two categories and not the combined fee for the two categories
- (vii) That accompanying information makes it clearer that the initial fee is payable on submission and will not be invoiced upon the provision of the advice.

SC74 Corporate Performance Report April – September 2013-14

(Report No. WSC 154/13, 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 and customer satisfaction covering the period from 1st April 2013 to 30th September 2013.

During the course of the debate the following issues were raised:

- Key Action 5.1.2. - In response to concern regarding tenants being able to downsize to properties with fewer bedrooms if necessary, members noted that the Council was working to assist tenants in realizing their options and trying to manipulate the stock in the best possible way. Further, the Silvermead development would provide some small properties.

- Members noted that key action 5.1.3 – support and enable Magna to deliver a portfolio of garage sites delivering 38 bed spaces – would be removed as no affordable housing would be delivered on the sites.
- Key Action 5.2.1 – deliver 25 empty properties in the Quantock panel area - Noted the request that the number of bedrooms be included for each property.
- Key Action 5.3.2 – delivering 40 disabled facilities grants – it was requested that members be advised of the number of schemes approved and the number completed.
- KPI 86 - % of waste recycled and composted – the Corporate Manager agreed with the suggestion that the target be reduced to 41% to reflect the national trend.
- KPI25 – abandoned call rate % - it was explained that the description ‘abandoned calls’ was misleading as it was not possible to differentiate between calls that were abandoned and calls that had been properly dealt with by using the automated number options provided in the recorded message. The PI would therefore be reviewed to see if it could be made more useful and meaningful.
- KPI92 - % of applications determined within agreed timescales (3 days) – noted that to change the KPI to ‘% of applications registered within agreed timescales (5 days)’ would be more meaningful.
- KPI94 – dangerous structures: % of incidents responded to within 24 hours – noted that the PI would be reviewed as to whether it was a useful PI to retain.

RESOLVED (1) that the Scrutiny Committee recommends the suggested mitigation actions, as listed above, be implemented;

RESOLVED (2) that the progress in delivering the corporate priorities for 2013/14 be noted;

RESOLVED (3) that the performance against Group and service Indicators be noted.

SC75 Financial Monitoring Report April – September 2013-14

(Report No. WSC 143/13, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to provide updated in year financial information on a range of issues including budgetary monitoring and business rate retention together with an updated Medium Term Financial Plan.

In response to concern regarding an overspend relating to housing (temporary accommodation) the Corporate Manager advised that due to efficient management of the homelessness issue there has been no tenant occupation. The Council were working to find a solution to mitigate the overspend.

Members expressed concern regarding the overspend relating to public conveniences. In response the Interim Executive Director suggested that the situation could be reviewed during the budget setting process in January 2014.

The Corporate Director advised how the raising of funds for coast protection for the Blue Anchor Hotel was progressing and the various partners who might be involved along with the Council i.e. the Environment Agency, Somerset County Council, the hotel proprietor etc.

Members noted that the Earmarked reserves figure would change due to partnership working with Taunton Deane Borough Council.

RESOLVED that the current financial standing of the Council together with the estimated position at the end of the financial year be noted.

SC76 **MTFP – Savings Options**

(Report No. WSC 151/13, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to ask Scrutiny Committee to consider savings options identified by Officers.

The Section 151 Officer presented the report and advised that the actuarial review of the pension fund was worse than was expected and will have to be factored in. Members noted that a report would be presented to the next meeting of the Audit Committee scheduled for 3 December 2013.

The Interim Executive Director advised that the long list of savings did not include staff savings that would result from shared management and services with Taunton Deane Borough Council.

Members noted that some of the savings in the list of other savings options might change due to shared services with TDBC and suggested that if further savings could be identified in the short term it would help with the amount of savings to be identified in later years.

RESOLVED (1) that the Scrutiny Committee recommend to Council the savings totalling £121,027 for 2014/15, as set out in Table 3 of the report, attached to the agenda, to balance the budget;

RESOLVED (2) that the identification of the preferred savings options for 2015/16 and 2016/17 be deferred and that a Members Seminar be arranged in order to identify saving options for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

SC77 **Car Parking Services – Review of Income and Shoppers Permits**

(Report No. WSC 149/13, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to review the West Somerset Council (WSC) car parks 2013/14 mid-year financial position in the light of the new Shoppers Permit initiative.

The Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development presented the report and advised that there was no detectable loss of income received from the meters due to the Shoppers Permit scheme. She believed that it would be inappropriate to increase car park fees as many members of the public were of the opinion that such an act would be detrimental.

On consideration of the report it was suggested that the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement for car parks might increase the income generated in West Somerset.

In response to a question the Lead Member advised that it was difficult to gauge whether the introduction of the scheme has had a positive or negative effect on the car park income. However, it was important to forecast as accurately as possible, and that there was an affordable solution for the public to use car parks as charging too much had an impact on the 'high street'.

RESOLVED (1) that the car parking services 2013/4 mid-year financial position of £292,500 against a projected income of £302,600 for this period be noted;

RESOLVED (2) that it be noted that the Shoppers Permit scheme has provided an income of £8,600 and has not to date had a negative impact on the income received from the current permit structure.;

RESOLVED (3) that the continuation of the Shoppers Permit trial for a further 12 month period from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 be supported;

RESOLVED (4) that the current structure of car park fees and permit charges for 2014/5 be supported.

SC78 **Scrutiny Committee Work Plan**

RESOLVED (1) that the Community Safety report be moved to the Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled for 20 January 2014;

RESOLVED (2) that the Magna half yearly update report be removed from the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan at its meeting scheduled for 16 December 2013.

RESOLVED (3) that, if possible, the Assets Task and Finish Group report to the Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled for 16 December 2014;

RESOLVED (4) that the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.49 pm.