

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 February 2012 at 4.30 pm**

**Present:**

Councillor K J Ross.....Chairman  
Councillor R P Lillis .....Vice Chairman

Councillor M J Chilcott  
Councillor J Freeman  
Councillor D D Ross

Councillor G S Dowding  
Councillor P N Grierson

**Members in Attendance:**

Councillor H J W Davies  
Councillor K V Kravis  
Councillor D J Sanders  
Councillor T Taylor  
Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor A F Knight  
Councillor E May  
Councillor M A Smith  
Councillor K H Turner

**Officers in Attendance:**

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

**SC80 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A M Chick and M O A Dewdney.

**SC81 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 January 2012**

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2012 – circulated with the Agenda).

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

**SC82 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

**SC83 Public Participation**

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

**SC84 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 1 February 2012, be noted.

**SC85 Cabinet Forward Plan**

(Copy of Cabinet Forward Plan No. 9, March 2012 – March 2013, circulated with the Agenda).

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet Forward Plan No. 9, March 2012 – March 2013, be noted.

**SC86 Corporate Performance Report April – December 2011/12**

(Copy of Report No. WSC 36/12, circulated after 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 December 2011.

The Leader presented that part of the report relating to quarterly performance. He highlighted the performance summary at the beginning of each service plan performance report, which provided further detail relating to any missed milestones. The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the financial information contained in the report.

During the course of the debate and in response to questions the following points were raised/addressed:

- Although the service standard of 60 days was allocated to deal with an Environmental Health request from start to finish some were more complicated than others. Members suggested that perhaps the target could be more realistic and reduced.
- This year's budget was being performance managed based on the structure of four directors. WSC now has only 3 directors and budget heads have been re-allocated. The IT element was one of the significant discrepancies.
- The implementation of CPE had been delayed. Until the cost of the scheme was discussed and approved by Council the Council would not be signing

an agreement. If the Council decided not to sign then Somerset County Council could implement CPE for on-street parking. The target date for implementation was June 2012.

- The additional savings expected via the Devolution/Delegation programme related to Blenheim Gardens and Grounds Maintenance, which relied on successful discussions with Minehead Town Council and SCC, respectively.
- The setting of the car park charges had relied heavily on member involvement. At the time of setting the fees it had been very difficult to find any trend in data and, therefore, the reduced income for the end of December 2011 was likely to be a result of the recession and reduced tourism figures and not over pricing.
- Concern was raised about how May Gurney had implemented Sort It+ in rural areas and dealt with subsequent complaints. A new IT system had been installed with the contractor that would enable the Council to interrogate data more efficiently.
- The complexity of some Freedom of Information requests could skew the figures. However, the requests were being analysed to ascertain if the information could be put onto the Council's website as 'Frequently Asked Questions', thereby reducing the number of requests and officer time.
- Members noted the figures relating to the number of fraud cases that go to investigation, and that the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to set up a task and finish group to look into this service.

In response to concerns, the Section 151 Officer advised that as the Council was a small authority even limited changes to finance could have quite an impact, and moving from a 1% overspend position at 30 September 2011 to a 1% underspend position at 31 December 2011 demonstrated detailed monitoring conducted by finance officers and managers. Further, he confirmed that expenditure to the end of the year was forecast and therefore budget figures were open to adjustments.

During the course of the debate Members made the following requests:

- The title of table 6 of the report, 'Investments', be changed to a more accurate description of the content.
- The tables contained in the report be amended to contain the words 'actual' or 'forecast', where appropriate.
- An explanation on how the Council received payment for liability orders.
- An explanation as to the cause of the increase in debt, over 1 year, shown in table 8, of the report.

The Chairman praised the finance team for being successful in obtaining capitalisation of redundancy costs during the third quarter of 2011/12.

**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.

**SC87 Final Report of the Community Safety Task & Finish Group**

Councillor J Freeman informed that the Community Safety Task & Finish Group had completed its work. However, as the draft report was not ready in sufficient time to allow relevant officers and members of the Scrutiny Committee to have proper sight of the report before this meeting, it had been decided that the report would be deferred to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held on 12 March 2012.

**SC88 Verbal Update on the Meeting of the 'Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel' held on 9 January 2012**

(Notes of the Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel held on 9 January 2012, circulated with the Agenda).

Councillor R Lillis reported that he had attended the Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel with Councillor J Freeman, on 9 January 2012. Many issues were raised one of which was the May Gurney contract and its renewal. He outlined the details in the report and advised that it was likely the Anaerobic Digester referred to would be operating in a year or so.

Councillor J Freeman advised that the proposed use of the Anaerobic Digester Viridor would have sufficient capacity to recycle all food waste. Further, he reported that he had attended a site visit with other members of the waste board and Scrutiny Panel to look at alternative methods for recycling general waste in Avonmouth. The machine on the site mechanically sorted waste that resulted in putting less than 10% back into landfill sites. As landfill costs were rising, alternatives would have to be considered and this appeared to be a very good alternative.

**RESOLVED** that the verbal update be noted.

**SC89 Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review**

(Scrutiny Committee Workplan, circulated with the Agenda).

Councillor R Lillis expressed his concern regarding the proposed changes to youth and community services provided by Somerset County Council (SCC). SCC was proposing to withdraw all direct services for the youth service by 2014 and hand over to the voluntary sector. Funding would be reduced from £3m to £814k by 2014 and would impact heavily on youth clubs in the district. Central Government would advise in March whether the youth service should become a statutory obligation.

During the course of the debate Members raised the following concerns:

- SCC provided supporting services such as payroll, health and safety etc. Volunteers would struggle to provide such services.
- Some of the youth clubs provided support for young people who exhibited vulnerable behaviour; withdrawal of the service could result in community safety issues. Had the SCC conducted equality impact assessments on the proposals?

- The Leader offered to make enquiries and take advice from SCC and report back to the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman expressed his appreciation that Sedgemoor District Council had invited other authorities to their Scrutiny meeting, which had highlighted the issues discussed in this item.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the Workplan be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that an update on the proposed withdrawal of the youth service provision by Somerset County Council be presented to the Scrutiny Committee to be held on 12 March 2012.

**RESOLVED (3)** that a final report of Community Safety Task & Finish Group be presented to the Scrutiny Committee to be held on 12 March 2012.

**RESOLVED (4)** that the draft Terms of Reference and committee membership for the Fraud Task and Finish Group be presented for consideration to the Scrutiny Committee to be held on 12 March 2012.

**RESOLVED (5)** that the final report of the Fraud Task and Finish Group be scheduled to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee to be held on 9 May 2012.

The meeting closed at 6.53 pm.