

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 January 2013 at 3.30 pm

Present:

Councillor K J RossChairman
Councillor G S Dowding.....Vice-Chairman

Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor P N Grierson
Councillor D D Ross

Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor B Heywood

Members in Attendance:

Councillor K V Kravis
Councillor I R Melhuish
Councillor D J Sanders
Councillor K H Turner

Councillor E May
Councillor P H Murphy
Councillor M A Smith
Councillor D J Westcott

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive (A Dyer)
Corporate Director (B Lang)
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)
Section 151 Officer (S Campbell)
Administrative Support (H Dobson)

SC62 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Freeman and R P Lillis.

SC63 Minutes

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17 December 2012 – circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17 December 2012, be confirmed as a correct record.

SC64 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:

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL
Scrutiny Committee 21.01.13

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Personal or Prejudicial or Disclosable Pecuniary	Action Taken
Cllr P N Grierson	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K J Ross	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr P H Murphy	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke
Cllr K H Turner	All Items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D J Westcott	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

SC65 Public Participation

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

SC66 Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points

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

RESOLVED that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points for 9 January 2013, be noted.

SC67 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of the Cabinet Forward published 7 January 2013, circulated with the agenda).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward published 7 January 2013, be noted.

SC68 Financial Standing and Budget Setting Process 2013/14

(Report No. WSC 12/13, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to inform Scrutiny Committee of the latest status of the Council's financial planning, including the latest Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the processes involved in its drafting.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and advised that it provided the Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to ensure that the assumptions made in the MTFP were as realistic and deliverable as possible and that the Corporate Plan, Service Plans and Financial Planning were satisfactorily integrated.

During the debate the following points were made:

- Specific comments relating to the report:
 - i. Certain elements of table 1 including references to rate support grant and contribution from/to reserves to be made clearer, and
 - ii. The drafting of a business case to be included in any reference to the proposed working with Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- Comments relating to the proposed list of savings:
 - i. Consideration be given to making more savings than those currently listed,

- ii. Questioning whether the proposed increase in car park charges will actually deliver the anticipated increase in income,
- iii. That the possibility of deriving extra income for the provision of pre-application of planning advice be progressed as soon as possible,
- iv. That the various options for providing face to face contact in Minehead be continued to be explored in the shorter term.
- Comments regarding the process by which Scrutiny is currently asked to view the budget process:
 - i. Scrutiny Committee were unable to fully scrutinise the budget as the budget had not yet been set, and that in future consideration be given to giving greater detail of the proposed budget possibly at cost centre level.
- Other comments:
 - i. The committee be provided with a report on action being taken by the Building Control service to generate increased income.
 - ii. That the committee be provided with details of income generated from excess car parking notices issued during 2012/13 to date.
 - iii. That it be noted that the committee were very aware of the difficult pressures currently facing staff at the council in terms of the available capacity to meet demands placed upon them.

RESOLVED (1) that Committee note the financial funding process as set out in the report;

RESOLVED (2) that Cabinet be advised of the points raised by the Committee as set out above.

SC69 **The Financing of Local Government – Impact of the Business Rate Retention Scheme**

(Report No. WSC 11/13, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to provide Scrutiny Committee with details of a request from Cabinet for the Committee's assistance in reviewing the impacts of the new Business Rate Retention Scheme.

The Chief Executive presented the report and advised that changes to the scheme were still being made, such as, spreading the cost of write offs over five years.

Members suggested that the Council make representations to government that the scheme puts West Somerset at a disadvantage, in that, it was difficult to drive growth to gain an increase in business rates as two thirds of the district fell within special landscape designations.

Comment was also made that a business rate recovery resilience plan be in place to help prevent businesses building up unrecoverable debt over time, which would adversely affect the Council financially.

RESOLVED that a Task and Finish Group be formed comprising of all members of the Scrutiny Committee to initiate a review of how the new business rate retention scheme is going to impact on the Council from a financial perspective and whether there are any measures that could be taken

to mitigate and or monitor the impacts and report back to the Scrutiny Committee.

SC70 **Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review**

(Scrutiny Committee Workplan, circulated with the Agenda).

Members noted that the Council's capital spend for 2012/13 would be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED (1) that a date of 22 April 2013 be scheduled for the Task and Finish Group reviewing the Business Rate Recovery process to report back to the Scrutiny Committee;

RESOLVED (2) that a provisional date of 18 March 2013 be scheduled for the Task and Finish Group reviewing the S106 process to report back to the Scrutiny Committee;

RESOLVED (3) that the Workplan be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.38 pm.