

## MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on Monday, 26 June 2017 in the Council Chamber at Mendip District Council, Shepton Mallet commencing at 6.30 pm.

### COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Damon Hooton (Chair), Eve Berry, Steve Henderson (Vice Chair), Dick Skidmore, Graham Noel, John North, Des Harris and Roy Mackenzie.

### OTHER COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Tom Killen, John Parham, Nigel Taylor, Philip Ham, Nigel Woolcombe Adams, John Carter, Peter Bradshaw, Danny Unwin, Alan Townsend and Harvey Siggs

### OFFICERS:

Tracy Aarons	Lead Officer of the Scrutiny Board
Ian Bowen	Group Manager Housing Services
Caroline M <sup>c</sup> Cafferty	Committee Officer
Jenny Pitcher	Senior Economic Development Officer

### OTHERS PRESENT:

Keith Thomas	Per Consulting
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Agenda Item	Subject	Actioned By
1	<b>Chair's Announcements</b>  The Chair explained the procedures in the case of an emergency and asked that all mobile devices be switched to silent. Hearing aid users were asked to switch their devices to position 'T'.	
2	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Apologies were received from Councillors Shane Collins and Terry Napper.	
3	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  There were none.	
4	<b>Public Participation</b>  <b>Items on the agenda:</b>  There was a request to speak by a Glastonbury Town Councillor who had not formally registered to speak. The Chair allowed his written statement to be passed to the	

	<p>Senior Economic Development Manager for an in depth answer via email.</p> <p><b>Items not on the agenda:</b></p> <p>None.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Previous Minutes</b></p> <p>The Chair changed the order of items 8 and 9</p> <p>The minutes of the Scrutiny Board meeting held on 27 March 2017 were accepted as an accurate record.</p>	<b>Caroline M<sup>c</sup>Cafferty</b>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Somerset Growth Plan</b></p> <p>The Deputy Leader of the Council presented a report which stated that the Somerset Growth Plan set the vision for economic growth between 2017 and 2030; it would attract and guide investment, to overcome barriers and maximise sustainable growth from local opportunities, benefitting Somerset's communities, businesses and residents. The Growth Plan had been developed in partnership with Somerset Local Authorities, business representative organisations and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>It was a refresh of the initial plan which was published in February 2014 and took into account various influencers such as the Somerset County Plan and the vision projects; the Heart of the South West Productivity Plan consultation and the Government Industrial Strategy consultation.</p> <p>As the reports to items 6 and 7 fed in to each other, comments were captured at item 7.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>Scrutiny Board noted and endorsed the Somerset Growth Plan 2017-2030.</p>	<b>Jenny Pitcher</b>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Draft Mendip Economic Development Strategy</b></p> <p>The Senior Economic Development Officer introduced a report which stated that the previous Economic Development Strategy for Mendip was approved by Cabinet in January 2013 and guided the Council's activities in supporting economic growth across the District between 2013 and 2016.</p> <p>The Mendip Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020 sought to build on this work, and would form the strategic framework for the delivery of future growth activities across the District, in a rapidly changing economic landscape.</p>	<b>Jenny Pitcher</b>

	<p>An Enterprise Mendip Guide was available, which may be useful for Members unfamiliar with some of the content.</p> <p>During the discussion that followed, Members agreed that a County University was critical to delivering the growth plan, and ensuring that young people with the required skills remained in the County. It was clarified that the strategy would also encourage an apprenticeship culture which could feed into higher education. In response to questions regarding the prospectus of a university, it was clarified that there was recognition of the value of the natural environment and that broader energy bases were on the county agenda. One Member informed the Board that Bridgwater and Taunton colleges were in discussions to provide a range of courses, and that Hinckley Point were promoting a college in Cannington to promote future skills. He suggested a working group to provide target dates for the commencement of these projects.</p> <p>In response to queries regarding future funding, the Senior Economic Development Officer explained that there was currently no established funding framework and that this may be via direct government funding, the devolution programme, or unlocking opportunities by the Council.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader of the Council stated that the strategy aimed to create an environment where businesses would prosper and grow, with places to operate, the availability of skills, and assistance with such areas as exporting. He concluded by explaining that the proposed University would not be a bricks and mortar new build university, but one which delivered courses through existing colleges in Somerset.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>Scrutiny Board noted and endorsed the Draft Mendip Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020</p>	
<p><b>8 – taken as item 9</b></p>	<p><b>Future of the Scrutiny Board</b></p> <p>Following concerns from across all parts of the Council regarding the effectiveness of the Council’s Scrutiny process, work had been carried out to identify ways in which the Council could make Scrutiny an integral part of the actions and business of the Council.</p> <p>A Member workshop enabled Councillors to identify what was currently working well, what was not working as we had hoped and what a ‘good’ scrutiny process might look like. This information was collated and used to develop the proposals with this report.</p>	<p><b>Tracy Aarons</b></p>

The proposals sought to increase the size of the Scrutiny Board and make better use of the wider skills of elected Members. The main board would meet quarterly, but in between meetings, four working groups would be tasked to take forward actions around the areas of:

- Policy and strategy
- Working with Town Councils
- Performance management
- Project working

The leads of these working groups would report back to the main Scrutiny Board meeting. By enabling Scrutiny actions via the working groups, using the main board meetings to hear feedback on this work, and then spending extended time focusing in depth on a specific service or function, Councillors would be able to better understand the activities and performance of the Council and offer their views and opinions. It was also hoped that with this wider working, more Councillors would become actively involved in working of the Council.

The Leader of the Council stated that Scrutiny had not functioned well with regard to policy development and wished to gain an early input from the Scrutiny Board on policy formation. He further stressed the need to define the role of a District Councillor with regard to Town Councils. The new Scrutiny Board would comprise 13 Members, with the 4 working groups comprising 3 Members, with the ability to call in expertise plus a Cabinet Assistant.

In response to queries from Members, the Deputy Chief Executive clarified that the recommendations would be taken to Cabinet and then Full Council, and if approved, the changes would be implemented following training. The quarterly Scrutiny Board meeting would look at quarterly performance, focus on the spotlight item and receive 4 short verbal reports on each working group.

Members generally welcomed the report and were keen to be involved. It was noted that it was crucial to appoint the right skill sets to each working party. Members also felt that the new arrangements could be revisited if necessary.

One Member was unhappy that the failure of the Scrutiny Board had not been noticed prior to the Peer Review, and felt that Cabinet may dominate the new structure.

Councillor Mackenzie abstained from the vote.

**RESOLVED**

	<p>Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Considered and commented on the information contained within this report</li> <li>2. Recommended to Cabinet that it take these proposals forward for approval by Full Council.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>9 – taken as item 8</b></p>	<p><b>Outturn Report</b></p> <p>The Section 151 Officer introduced a report which outlined the Budget Outturn position for 2016/17 and requested for earmarked reserves as part of the year end process. The figures, once approved would form an important element of the Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>During the discussion that followed, the Section 151 Officer explained that the level of debt had decreased year on year, but had increased by 10% over the last quarter, largely due to one invoice from YMCA who were working with the Council to form a repayment plan. He stated that the YMCA debt should decrease in just over 2 years.</p> <p>Members requested that the headings be made larger and clearer on financial appendices in future.</p> <p>In response to queries, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Corporate Services clarified that the underspend was planned, in order to cushion the fall off of funding from Central Government.</p> <p>Members were happy with the Capita arrangements.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>Members noted the contents of the report, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the final Net Revenue Outturn position for the year showing a surplus of £28k and the implications for the authorities reserves position.</li> <li>• the achievement against the 2016/17 budgeted savings proposals in year.</li> <li>• the Capital Outturn figures showing a £455k underspend.</li> <li>• the level of Aged Debt as at 31 March 2017.</li> <li>• the in-year collection levels for both Council Tax and NNDR.</li> <li>• The levels and return on the cash investments.</li> </ul> <p>Members approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the virements actioned in quarter 4</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paul Deal</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the specific revenue earmarked reserve requests totalling £5,414k.</li> </ul> <p>Approval to drawdown the identified amounts anticipated to be spent in 2017/18 budget would be included within the quarterly budget monitoring reports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carrying forward Capital Approvals totalling £614k where the capital spend is planned in later years.</li> </ul> <p>Approval to drawdown the identified amounts anticipated to be spent in 2017/18 budget would be included within the quarterly budget monitoring reports.</p>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Forward Plans</b></p> <p><b>Mendip District Council Forward Plan</b> The Council Forward Plan was noted.</p> <p><b>Scrutiny Forward Plan</b> The Chair commented that The Scrutiny Forward Plan was now redundant and would be looked at in the style of the new board and re published.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<p><b>Urgent Business</b></p>	

The meeting finished at approximately 8.55pm.