

## MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 15 February 2022, in the Council Chamber, Mendip District Council, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5BT, commencing at 6.30 pm.

### SCRUTINY BOARD COUNCILLORS:

Councillors Alison Barkshire, Nick Cottle, Michael Dunk (online), Damon Hooton, Chris Inchley (Chair), Barbi Lund (Deputy Chair)(online) and Janine Nash (online)

Councillor Edric Hobbs substituted for Councillor Adam Boyden

### OTHER COUNCILLORS PRESENT (online):

Councillors Michael Gay, Lindsay MacDougall and Alan Townsend

### OFFICERS PRESENT:

Tracy Aarons	Deputy Chief Executive
Helen Bowen	Democratic Services Officer
Claire Dicken	Democratic Services Officer
James Ellis	Principal Information Governance and Performance Officer
Julie Jackson	Performance and Improvement Officer
Kelly Knight	Principal Sustainable Travel and Tourism Officer and Scrutiny Lead Officer
Emma Plummer	Project and Improvement Officer
Julie Reader-Sullivan	Head of Planning Services
Sara Skirton	Head of Corporate Services

### ALSO PRESENT:

Ian Byworth, Chief Executive Officer, Citizens Advice Mendip  
Sarah Cummins, Voluntary Sector Advisor, SPARK Somerset  
Sharon Hale, Voluntary Sector Advisor, SPARK Somerset

Agenda Item	Subject	Actioned by
1	<p><b>Chair's Announcements</b></p> <p>The Chair of the Scrutiny Board welcomed everyone to the meeting and set out the procedures the meeting would follow.</p> <p>The Chair reminded Members to switch their mobile phones to silent and reminded those present that the proceedings were being live streamed.</p>	

2	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Councillor Adam Boyden, Philip Ham, Terry Napper, Sam Phripp, Lois Rogers, Lucie Taylor-Hood and Nigel Woollcombe-Adams.</p>	
3	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>With regard to item 10 Performance Review for Citizens Advice Mendip Voluntary Sector Partnership Funding 2021-22, Councillor Damon Hooton declared that his wife was Chair of the Citizens Advice Mendip.</p>	
4	<p><b>Public Participation</b></p> <p><b>a) Items on the agenda:</b></p> <p>None.</p> <p><b>b) Items not on the agenda:</b></p> <p>Mr Nick Hall was invited to speak. He said he lived in Pilton. He said the Glastonbury Festival organisers intended to increase the festival attendance to 210,000. He said the Council needed to provide residents with assurances that the festival organisers had met the licence requirements.</p> <p>In additional to this he said he believed there had been two more planning breaches in the last two weeks including someone not constructing a pond to collect surface water, thus possibly causing flooding and someone not planting trees before building works started. He has recently been made aware that the festival organisers intended to use a cattle barn as part of the festival which would be a breach of the licence conditions. He suggested that the organisers may think the Council did not have the capacity or the will to ensure that the festival complied with its licence conditions.</p> <p>He said the residents were looking to the new Council to provide a suitable level of planning enforcement, a licensing policy which included consultation with residents, an improved complaints process and a community network which addressed the local issues.</p>	

	<p>He said he was disappointed to say that the new Somerset Council could not come soon enough for the residents of Pilton.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Hall for his comments. He said his comments would be passed to the relevant Officers.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Previous Cabinet Minutes</b></p> <p>The Scrutiny Board considered the minutes of the meetings held on 24 January 2022.</p> <p>Councillor Damon Hooton proposed that the minutes of the meeting be approved. This was seconded by Councillor Nick Cottle. This was put to the vote and declared to be carried unanimously.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the approval of the minutes of the meetings held on 24 January 2022 be approved.</p>	<b>Claire Dicken</b>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Glastonbury Town Deal Assurance – Request for Task and Finish Scrutiny Group</b></p> <p>The Head of Planning Services had prepared a paper which requested that a Task and Finish Group be agreed in order to support with the assurance process for the 12 Glastonbury Town Deal Business cases. This work must all be completed by June 2022.</p> <p>The paper requested that a Task and Finish Group be established to review the Glastonbury Town Deal projects in advance of them being presented to Cabinet and that 4 members from Scrutiny Board be identified to form the Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>In response to queries the Officer explained that the Task and Finish Group would be given details of the consideration that had been given to the business cases to date. She assured Members that the information would be made transparent and clear.</p>	<b>Julie Reader-Sullivan</b>

	<p>However, it was necessary for the meetings to be held in quick succession, between March and May 2022. Ideally the Group should be made up of Members from the Scrutiny Board.</p> <p>Councillor Damon Hooton proposed that a Task and Finish Group be formed to support the Glastonbury Town Deal Assurance Process. This was seconded by Councillor Nick Cottle, and carried unanimously.</p> <p>Members agreed that the Task and Finish Group should be made up of Councillors Alison Barkshire (or Nigel Woolcombe-Adams), Nick Cottle, Chris Inchley and Lucie Taylor-Hood.</p> <p>The Officer would ask Councillor Nigel Woolcombe-Adams if he wished to join the Group, otherwise Councillor Alison Barkshire would sit on it.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To agree to the formation of a Task and Finish Group to support the Glastonbury Town Deal Assurance Process.</li> <li>2. That the following members of the Scrutiny Board make up the Task and Finish Group; Councillors Alison Barkshire (or Nigel Woolcombe-Adams), Nick Cottle, Chris Inchley and Lucie Taylor-Hood.</li> </ol>	
7	<p><b>Corporate Performance Management Report Quarter 3 2021-22</b></p> <p>This report provided a summary of the high-level priorities that supported the delivery of the Corporate Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Additionally, the Corporate Performance Management report provided performance information in relation to Quarter 3 2021/2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate complaints and praise,</li> <li>• Freedom of Information (FOI) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)/DP (Data Protection) requests</li> <li>• Finance</li> </ul>	Julie Jackson

- Human Resources (HR) statistics
- 5 Councils Partnership (Land Charges)
- Housing Services (homelessness, temporary accommodation, Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs))
- Planning and Growth (Major, Minor and Listed Building consent)
- Neighbourhood Services (Fly tipping, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance)
- Community Health Services (service requests, enforcement)
- Somerset Waste Partnership (Waste and Recycling)

The report stated performance management had interdependencies with governance matters, such as those reported to Audit Committee. We were working corporately to ensure transparency and integration of performance and governance information.

The Scrutiny Board was asked to:

1. Consider and comment on the information contained within the report.
2. Identify any issues or performance exceptions that the Committee wished to highlight as a concern to Cabinet.
3. Where performance exceptions were identified, consider whether the proposed actions are adequate and appropriate to address concerns and improve performance to the desired level.
4. Consider the content, level of detail and the format of the report and make any recommendations for improvements.

The Chair raised the issue of asset and land devolution. In response to queries the Deputy Chief Executive explained the council had a duty to the new Council. Any new applications for the devolution of assets would need to have consideration of the new Council.

As the discussion continued Members were pleased to note that Mendip's level for dealing with planning applications was above the national average and Officers should be commended for this.

	<p>There was some concern about the levels of planning enforcement. Though Members were pleased to note that the Council had recruited Officers to its Enforcement Team. The Chair said Scrutiny would receive a report about the complaints system at the next meeting.</p> <p>In response to queries the Council's adoption of Neighbourhood Plans was marked green where it referred to Quarter 2. These actions were now part of the Council's operational service delivery.</p> <p>Due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), Cabinet had agreed to focus on specific actions by setting a new Corporate Delivery plan to run until April 2023.</p> <p>Appendix C of the report set out for completeness the Corporate Plan priority actions and projects to detail whether they were either: complete; being carried forward as business as usual (i.e., part of operational service delivery); had been superseded by the LGR programme; or now featured as an action within the Corporate Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Going forward the operational service delivery would be managed and monitored by Heads of Service.</p> <p>Items related to the LGR would be monitored by the LGR Programme Board.</p> <p>As the discussion continued Councillor Dunk requested evidence that the new windows which had been fitted to the Council offices were proven to be saving energy.</p> <p>The Board welcomed the Corporate Performance Report. The Chair of the Scrutiny Board asked that his appreciation and thanks be passed to Officers who were continuing to perform despite additional pressures.</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive said that the Scrutiny Board and the Officers had worked well together and this had been noticed by the LGA as an example of best practice.</p>	
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	<p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the Corporate Performance Management Report Quarter 3 2021-22 be noted.</p>	
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Report of the Scrutiny Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage Working Group</b></p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive had prepared a report explaining that the Scrutiny Deprivation Working Group had been formed in 2019 with terms of reference to look at what was happening in our most deprived areas, understand the gaps in interventions that could help improve the quality of life for those within these areas and make proposals around how these gaps might be addressed.</p> <p>Following a period of research, the Working Group made a series of recommendations to Cabinet for action. This Action Plan was approved by Cabinet and implemented over the following year.</p> <p>With the completion of these actions the Group reviewed their achievements and identified that much focus had been on supporting people living in deprived circumstances, but very little work had been carried out to address mechanisms to support people to escape from disadvantage.</p> <p>As a consequence of this, the Working Group recommended to Scrutiny that the focus of the Group should be reshaped to focus on supporting movement out of disadvantage.</p> <p>In line with the previous approach of the Working Group a period of research and consultation had taken place and the Group now came with a new set of actions that it proposed be taken forward.</p> <p>During the discussion of the report Members wished that the Council was able to do more to provide insulation for residents to reduce the cost of energy. Also, Members said it was important that young people had access to a good bus service in order take up opportunities in work and education.</p> <p>Members were interested to know what the average wage was for the residents of Mendip.</p>	<p><b>Tracy Aarons</b></p>

	<p>They noted the Somerset Intelligence Network website provided such information.</p> <p>Councillor Damon Hooton proposed that the Scrutiny board recommend to Cabinet that they approve the delivery of the recommended areas of focus and action plan. Councillor Edric Hobbs seconded the proposal which was carried unanimously.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the work that has been undertaken by the Scrutiny Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage Working Group.</li> <li>2. To recommend to Cabinet that they approve the delivery of the recommended areas of focus and action plan.</li> </ol>	
	<p><b>The Chair altered the order of items as follows:</b></p>	
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Performance Review for Citizens Advice Mendip Voluntary Sector Partnership Funding 2021-22</b></p> <p>This report stated that during the financial year of 2021/22 the Council had allocated core funding of £110,000 and a one-off payment of £50,000 to support additional casework due to the pandemic, to our strategic voluntary sector partner Citizens Advice Mendip.</p> <p>Ian Byworth, Chief Executive Officer of Citizens Advice Mendip was invited to give a presentation. It gave service performance for the year to date, including the continuing impact of the pandemic.</p> <p>The presentation explained the aims and objectives of the Citizens Advice Mendip.</p> <p>He said that on average each client had been seeking advice on several issues, including employment, benefits, debt and housing.</p> <p>He explained how the Council's grant was spent. He further set out where the service had helped clients to make claims and savings.</p>	<p><b>Emma Plummer</b></p>

	<p>He said that the drop-in service had ceased because it had proven more effective to use a freephone advice line and online advice provided nationally. Locally, video appointments were available and face to face appointments were still available by pre-arrangement.</p> <p>In response to queries Mr Byworth explained that the service intended to set up access points. This would hopefully come to Glastonbury Library within the next three months, as well as Wells Town Hall. Going forward, such access points could be set up anywhere.</p> <p>Members were interested to learn how the Citizens Advice had been able to adapt and carry on throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>Mr Byworth said it had been important for Citizens Advice Mendip to have the assurance that the service would be funded for three years. With such security they had been able to plan the service going forward.</p> <p>Mr Byworth said they relied on their volunteers and it was key to support them. It was also important for the Citizens Advice to engage with other agencies who came into contact with potential clients of their service.</p> <p>The Project and Improvement Officer was invited to speak. She said that in her opinion the Citizens Advice Mendip represented good value for money. She explained that the Council had introduced a longer lasting funding agreement. Such a three year agreement had been made by each of the districts within Somerset.</p> <p>Councillor Alison Barkshire proposed that a recommendation be made to Cabinet that the Citizens Advice Mendip have a rolling three year agreement for funding. Councillor Chris Inchley seconded the proposal. The final wording of the recommendation was delegated to the Lead Officer of the Scrutiny Board in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Board.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Citizens Advice Mendip for their presentation. It was noted that the Council benefitted from a good working relationship with the service.</p>	
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	<p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the report and presentation be noted.</li> <li>2. That a recommendation be made to Cabinet that the Citizens Advice Mendip have a rolling three year agreement for funding. The final wording of the recommendation was delegated to the Lead Officer of the Scrutiny Board in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Board.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Performance Review for SPARK Somerset Voluntary Sector Partnership Funding 2021-22</b></p> <p>This report stated the Council had allocated core funding to our partner SPARK Somerset of £31,500 for the financial year 2021/22.</p> <p>Sarah Cummins and Sharon Hale of SPARK Somerset were invited to give a presentation.</p> <p>The presentation set out the service performance for the year to date including the ongoing impact of the pandemic.</p> <p>The began by setting out their key objectives. Their aim was to inspire strong and sustainable communities through voluntary and community action.</p> <p>Within the last year, the service had supported 61 groups throughout the Mendip district.</p> <p>They had been particularly busy during the pandemic, including supporting Covid Community Champions and vaccinations buddies.</p> <p>Case studies included Mendip Disability Forum and Shepton Together. In response to queries, the representatives of SPARK Somerset explained how they helped such organisations.</p> <p>In response to further queries SPARK Somerset said the additional funding came from a mixture of organisations including the County Council and the health service.</p>	<p><b>Emma Plummer</b></p>

	<p>During the discussion that followed Members said that SPARK Somerset should always feel free to approach the Council if projects came forward in the future.</p> <p>The Project and Improvement Officer was invited to speak. She said that in her opinion SPARK Somerset represented very good value for money. She was often able to refer clients and voluntary groups to them.</p> <p>The Chair thanked SPARK Somerset for their presentation.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the report and presentation be noted.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<p><b>Updates from the Scrutiny Working Groups</b></p> <p><b>a) Climate and Ecological Working Group:</b> Councillor Janine Nash (Lead) supported by Jacob Hall</p> <p><b>b) Policies and Strategies Working Group:</b> Councillor Nigel Woolcombe-Adams (Lead) supported by Tracy Aarons.</p> <p><b>c) Access Working Group:</b> Councillor Phillip Ham (Lead) supported by Kelly Knight</p> <p><b>d) Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage Working Group:</b> Councillor Chris Inchley (Lead) supported by Tracy Aarons</p> <p><b>e) Contracts Working Group:</b> Councillor Barbi Lund (Lead) supported by Haylee Wilkins.</p>	
<b>12</b>	<p><b>Urgent Business</b></p> <p>None</p>	

The meeting closed at approximately 8.55 pm.