

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SCRUTINY
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2008**

MEMBERS

∅ Cllr C M Pannell - Chairman

* Cllr K J Baldry - Vice-Chairman

∅ Cllr J H Baverstock

* Cllr P H Cook

* Cllr G J Fielden

* Cllr R D Gilbert

* Cllr J W Squire

* Cllr J A Westacott

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apologies for absence

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:

Cllrs J I G Blackler, M J Hicks, P W Hitchins, J T Pennington, M F Saltern
and R J Tucker

Officers in attendance:

For all items: Chief Executive, Strategic Director (Resources) and Member Support
Services Manager;

Item 7 (minute SC.14/08 below refers): John Halliday (Devon County Council
Highways Representative);

Item 9 (minute SC.16/08 below refers): Head of Improvement and Improvement
Programme Manager

SC.12/08 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny, held on 24 July 2008, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC.13/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but none were made.

**SC.14/08 JOHN HALLIDAY, DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS
AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVE**

John Halliday, a representative of Devon County Council Highways Authority, was in attendance to address any concerns and queries Members may have in relation to the role of the Highways Authority in the South Hams.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) specific concerns Members had in relation to issues within their ward. Mr Halliday supplied a response in each case but would discuss individual issues in detail outside of the meeting;

- b) a Member's belief that the public perception of the Highways Authority was that its customer service levels could be improved. In response, Mr Halliday noted that there was a customer services unit which dealt with concerns/queries and filtered them out to the correct officer. There was then a specific time frame for officers to respond to the customer. Mr Halliday requested that Members advise him if residents were incurring persistent problems with the service;
- c) proposed on-street car parking meters. A Member made reference to the on-street parking meters which were to be installed in Totnes. Although in support of this initiative from the traders point of view, it was queried whether it was the intention to roll the initiative out across the district's towns. In response, it was noted that a roll out would be investigated as it was felt that parking meters enabled better enforcement on restricted parking zones and also reminded drivers that it was only parking for a limited time. However, it was stipulated that it would only be implemented with the support of the relevant Town Council and its traders.

In relation to the Totnes town initiative, Members were advised that a Conservation Area Impact Assessment had been carried out in order that the impact of the parking meters on the street scene would be kept to a minimum;

- d) concern of the motor cycle signs. Following a query, Members were advised that the motor cycle signs which had recently been erected across the district, advising of the number of motorcycle incidents on the road, were only temporary and the issue was being considered by Devon County Council's Highways and Traffic Order Committee at a forthcoming meeting;
- e) water leaks. Following a concern regarding the process by which South West Water applied for maintenance works to be undertaken in respect of burst water mains, Members were advised that if a pipe had burst it would be deemed emergency works and South West Water could undertake the works immediately. However, if it was routine maintenance works, then South West Water were required to apply to do the works up to three months prior to the proposed start date;
- f) potholes. Members were informed that contractors were employed to repair potholes, and if it became apparent that they were poorly restored then it was at the contractors own cost to redo it. Furthermore, if Members were aware of potholes which were in need of attention or had not been repaired to an adequate standard, then they were requested to contact the Highways Authority with details;

- g) double yellow lines. A non-Scrutiny Member raised concern with the condition of yellow lines, noting that a number of them were inadequately marked.

In conclusion, Members thanked Mr Halliday for attending the meeting to answer concerns and queries.

SC.15/08 **STAFFING LEVELS – QUESTION AND ANSWERS**

The Chairman of the Personnel Panel was in attendance to answer concerns which Members may have on staffing levels. During discussion, Members raised concern with the lack of information being provided in relation to the starters and leavers within the Council's employment. In response, it was suggested that a recruitment list could be circulated to Members on a regular basis which also included those members of staff leaving the Council employment. Moreover, it was felt that Members required access to up to date staff job roles; with names and contact details also included.

SC.16/08 **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – PROGRESS REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report which informed Members of the achievement against selected Performance Indicators for quarter one within 2008/2009. Regular monitoring of indicators was an essential part of securing value for money for service users and the taxpayer as any dip in performance could be identified quickly and action taken to investigate the likely cause.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- a) the number of new affordable homes completed. Members were advised that given the difficulties in the financial market and the decline in developer activity over recent months, a revised target of 70 completions was proposed for 2008/2009;
- b) concern over the number of working days lost due to sickness. A Member expressed concern over the absence figures noting that long term absence accounted for than 50% of absence in this quarter. In response, the Group was advised that a new Managing Attendance Policy had been adopted which aimed to simplify the process.

RESOLVED

That Part A and Part B on the performance against the national and local indicators which form the Council's Balanced Scorecard, as set out in Appendix A of the presented report, for the 2008/09 performance indicator year be noted.

SC.17/08 SCRUTINY SHADOWING ROLES

Members confirmed that they were kept fully briefed by their Executive counterparts, and continued to meet frequently.

SC.18/08 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OF SCRUTINY

Tourism

A Member suggested inviting the Marketing and Tourism Officer to a future meeting to discuss the tourism figures for the district. However, it was suggested that the Group await the conclusion of an imminent Business Rate Payers meeting which would be discussing this issue.

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.20 pm).

Chairman