

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR REPORT APRIL 2016

Please note the following dates when I will be away - Sept. 16 – 29th; Nov. 22nd – Dec. 7th

This month has seen the start of the usual flurry of activity in relation to parish meetings and AGMs. I am attending as many as possible. In relation to my county councillor role key areas of concern continue to relate to highways, in particular pot holes, speeding and blocked drains.

ELECTIONS - In the coming weeks voting will take place for the election of the post of Police Commissioner, and also in relation to the EU Referendum. It is important that those who are eligible exercise their right to vote. I have been invited to participate in a public question and answer session on 20th May in relation to the referendum.

Apart from a week or two in May, SCC is effectively in a pre-election period. Although the impacts and risks are not as high as for local elections, SCC is bound by the requirements of the Code of Recommended Practice on Publicity relating to 'Care during periods of heightened sensitivity'. The specific requirement being that SCC's powers, facilities and resources cannot be used for electoral campaigning or political purposes during this period. SCC must make sure that it doesn't take any action or issue any publicity that might seek to influence support for a candidate or a political party.

COUNTY COUNCIL – I participated in the abseil down County Hall to raise funds for the Chairman's charities – thanks go to those who kindly sponsored me.

Updated guidance for councillors concerning the receipt of gifts/hospitality has been published. As previously advised, SCC last year replaced 0845 numbers with **0300 123 2224** for all telephone enquiries, please ensure that local residents are aware of this.

Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) has launched a new website to provide a better understanding of adult safeguarding, enabling access to information on how to identify those who may be at risk and how to report abuse. <http://ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk>

Funding has been received for social enterprise, Community Catalysts, to support the setting up of micro enterprise projects, to enable those in receipt of direct payments for adult social care to be able to access a register of small local providers, individuals or those employing less than five people, from which to choose the services required.

SSDC – The post of CEO remains vacant. I did not attend this month's full council meeting.

LICENSING – amidst objections from licence holders, as there is a requirement for licensing to operate on a full cost recovery basis, agreement was reached to increase fees for taxi and private hire licenses to £820 for a five-year licence (up from £85 p.a.) and also to increase the badge fee to £260 from £80.

AREA WEST – councillors received an update on S106 monies. To date £1.4m has been banked, of which £522k has been spent on sport and play across the district.

Ashill were successful in their £5167.50 bid for contribution towards adult outdoor gym equipment. Streetscene reported that the main focus this last year has been on routine cleaning and maintenance, along with highway weed control. There have been 272 fly tip collections across the district (up from 256) – Ashill (5); Broadway (4); Donyatt (4) and Horton (6). This does not include dumping on private land. The xmas tree shredding service has been a success. A night road sweeping shift has been introduced. Parishes are encouraged to appoint environmental wardens.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES – A successful two-day art project, 'Dreams and Aspirations' was held in Bridgwater, with the completed art works due to go display at The Brewhouse theatre in May.

I took part in the judging of the schools' art competition on the topic of 'Somerset' to mark Somerset Day on 11th May.

There is concern over the increase in Children Looked After (up by 18) in the last three months and lack of attendance at the Virtual School. Of the fifteen placement cases heard at a meeting I attended in Yeovil 13 of those were with regard to children age 12+ years.

In 2015, out of 10k attendances for emergency contraception in Somerset, 25% were under 18.

Providers of children's and families' services and community groups across the county are being urged to join a new information and advice website, Somerset Choices, which has expanded from focusing on adults' services to include children's services. It is intended that the site will be a central point of access to information, advice and services for children and families.

FOSTERING – active steps are being taken to hear from those who would consider fostering older children; who could foster brothers and sisters or to care for children with disabilities, in addition to helping troubled teenagers who are experiencing tough times. For more information visit www.fosteradoptsomerset.org.uk or phone 0800 587 9900.

GREENFYLDE SCHOOL - has made the final shortlist of schools for the **Pupil Premium Awards**. These are for schools which are judged to have made the most effective uses of the pupil premium grant to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children.

EDUCATION - In the Watchsted performance tables 91.4% of Somerset primary and secondary schools are rated good or outstanding, putting the county 22nd out of 163. There is only one county ranked above Somerset that has more than 200 schools, meaning that Somerset is the third highest performing large authority in the country.

SCC Education Travel Policy - Parents, carers and young people are invited to feedback on a 'Spring clean' of SCC's education travel policy for pupils and students, reviewed bi-annually. The consultation, which runs until Fri. 27 May, is not about proposals for change to education travel services, it relates to updating the wording and terminology of SCC's current policy to make it clearer. To access the refreshed education travel policy, and to feedback changes for consideration, visit somersetconsults.org.uk or phone 0300 123 2224 to request a print version.

ILMINSTER EDUCATION FOUNDATION – The draft lease for the domestic science hut has now been received.

CORPORATE PARENT BOARD – The annual report is due to go before Cabinet and then full council, next month. I have been granted funding from the Local Government Association to attend a conference relating to Children Looked After in May. Plans are in place to recruit a dedicated admin. person to ensure more effective and timely receipt of key agenda items and reporting. In addition to this steps are being taken to improve communication channels by synchronising the format used by partner agencies to ensure accurate recording of suspected safeguarding and child sexual exploitation cases.

Care Leavers' T&F – there are two key areas of focus for the immediate future – securing accommodation during the transition to adulthood, where district councils play a key role, in addition to reducing the number of young people not in education, training or employment, with emphasis on improving opportunities for apprenticeships though targeting LA contract providers.

Child Sexual Exploitation – there are currently 80 investigations across Somerset. There remains some difficulty in persuading victims to report incidents to the police and a shift in focus on prevention and intervention is considered to be more effective. All taxi drivers are now provided with guidance, and there are plans for practitioners such as dentists and pharmacists to receive training to enable them to be alert to the warning signs.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY- further training is to take place for Scrutiny members to ensure a more accurate understanding of the Scrutiny role. There continues to be concern over the high proportion of locums employed in children's social care in South Somerset.

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES – A two-year extension to the current P4A contract has been approved, at the current level of £1.52m p.a. This comprises a range of specialist housing related support services aimed at helping people in contact with mental health services who would otherwise be homeless or at risk, to establish and maintain a sustainable housing environment. The extension is needed in order to meet SCC's statutory duties, and in line with County Plan (2016-2020) Priorities: Work with residents and the community to help people stay independent as long as possible; Keep vulnerable and elderly people safe; Make it easier for people to access support in their own communities.

DONYATT HALT – I have nothing further to report.

COUNTY FARMS LAND – There have been several meetings between Donyatt PC and Ilminster TC to consider the best course of action in relation to upcoming housing development proposals and the impact on the two communities. Confirmation has been received from the developer that they will no longer retain their option on Cold Harbour Farm.

HIGHWAYS – a number of recent accidents along the stretch of road between Whitelackington and the Seavingtons has given cause for concern amongst local residents.

Elsewhere, in smaller communities, speeding remains a real issue, with local residents thought to be the main culprits. Options to address this are being considered where traditional methods, such as speed bumps, are not considered appropriate.

Across the division pot holes, and time taken for their repair, has been causing concern, although marking is usually swift and the new online reporting system has helped to speed up the work.

SPEED INDICATOR REPORTS

Ilminster, Station Road – 5-19th April – 34,705 vehicle movements recorded, at a median average of 32mph (85% at 37mph) and 137 travelling at speeds in excess of 50 mph.

Donyatt, near garage – 5th – 14th April - 29,378 vehicle movements recorded, at a median average of 36mph (85% at 41mph) and 224 travelling at speeds in excess of 50 mph.

WHITELACKINGTON/STOCKLINCH – ongoing issues relating to the stretch of road between both communities, which is often impassable, has been referred to highways and the county councillor responsible.

HIGHWAYS STRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE SCHEMES 2016/17

Non-Principal Carriageway Resurfacing - Ilminster – Ditton Street

Footway Schemes - Ilminster - Station Road

Drainage Schemes - Ashill – Thickthorne Lane; Horton – Hanning Road/Horton Road
Knowle St. Giles – Knowle Church Road

Carriageway Surface Dressing - Whitelackington – Old A303; Knowle St. Giles – Cricket Lane

GYPSY/TRAVELLERS – The site recently occupied has now been vacated.

PLANNING

Those engaged in planning decisions as statutory consultees will want to be aware that where there is third party involvement e.g. English Heritage, Highways or charitable trusts, delays may be experienced whilst comment/approval is obtained.

ILMINSTER – several meetings have taken place in relation to the proposed development site along Canal Way, to which I have been invited to have input in my capacity as a county councillor.

YARLINGTON – I am not aware of any further developments in relation to future plans for re-development of the Donyatt Hill site.

HASTOE- SHAVE LANE – Local residents remain concerned over compliance of planning conditions relating to this site.

BROADBAND – coverage across the county remains sporadic, (at home I frequently have no access causing delays in response). There is concern despite the Connecting Devon & Somerset programme, there will remain 5% of communities that will not benefit from the improved service. Requests to find solutions to address this at the earliest opportunity have been put forward.

WINTERHAY LANE – the planned public enquiry, intended to take place during May has been cancelled as objections to the proposal for a public right of way have now been withdrawn.

CHARD MUSEUM – the museum is keen to receive requests from local schools and other groups who may wish to visit.

ACTIVITIES/EVENTS ATTENDED

4/4	Ilminster Literary Festival planning meeting
5/4	SSDC - Somerset Placement Panel
6/4	SCC – Children’s Scrutiny Agenda meeting
6/4	SCC – Corporate Parent Forward Plan meeting
6/4	LGA – Mentor meeting
6/4	Long Sutton- Connecting Devon and Somerset eNewsletter workshop
6/4	Winsham PC
8/4	CAP meeting (in relation to debt support for young people)
8/4	Warehouse Theatre – Murder on the Nile
10/4	Combined Benefice service – Horton
11/4	SCC – Child Sexual Exploitation case review meeting
12/4	SSDC - Licensing
12/4	Ilminster Town Council
13/4	Chard Museum Trustee meeting
13/4	SCC – Micro Enterprise Project
14/4	Ilminster TC – planning
15/4	SCC – Leaving Care T&F group
15/4	SCC – Children’s Scrutiny
15/4	SCC – Child Sexual Exploitation T&F Group
15/4	Somerset School Placement briefing
16/4	SCC – ‘Dreams & Aspirations’ Art Project for Children Looked After - Bridgwater
16/4	Taunton – service for Gill Derbyshire (wife of Wadham School head)
16/4	Broadway – Sid Painter (former Chair of PC) 80 th birthday
17/4	Taunton Deane Civic Service (representing SSDC)
17/4	SCC – Dreams & Aspirations Art Project for Children Looked After - Bridgwater
17/4	Taunton – Scout Awards (representing SSDC)
18/4	SCC – Somerset Choices briefing
18/4	LGA peer support meeting
18/4	Donyatt VH - St. Mary’s Church annual parish meeting
18/4	Chaffcombe PC annual meeting
19/4	Lynx2business meeting – Yeovil
19/4	SSDC – site meeting – Numatic Chard
19/4	Community Catalyst meeting – Ilminster – micro enterprises
19/4	Knowle St. Giles annual meeting
19/4	Ilminster TC Community Assembly
20/4	Meeting with Tesco re: community lunch
20/4	SSDC - Area West Chard (<i>did not attend planning part of the meeting</i>)
21/4	Winsham School re: fund raising activity
21/4	Winsham VH coffee morning
21/4	Chaffcombe VH frugal lunch
21/4	Greenfylde School – reading support
21/4	Donyatt VH – AGM
21/4	The Vicarage – Ilminster – thank you supper
22/4	SCC – Chairman’s charity abseil
23/4	Purple Field Productions - book sale – Ilminster
24/4	Monk’s Yard Café Church
24/4	Dillington – St. George’s Day/Shakespeare event
24/4	Ilminster Majorettes charity quiz
25/4	Kingstone Parish meeting
25/4	Donyatt PC/Ilminster TC meeting
26/4	Licensing
27/4	SCC – art competition judging
27/4	SCC/Highways – Road Safety presentation