

## SCC/SSDC COUNCILLOR MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2016

### SCC - DEVOLUTION

Discussion with partners across the south west continue and plans are progressing, despite some frustration where central government attention at present is focused on Brexit.

### CONNECTING DEVON & SOMERSET (CDS) - BROADBAND UPDATE

CDS is concerned that the Government's 90% superfast broadband target be met by the end of 2016. BT has confirmed that the £94m phase 1 programme remains on schedule and is continuing to invest. CDS is discussing options with other commercial operators to ensure full delivery. The deadline for Phase 2 tendering has now passed, offering public funding to deliver superfast broadband of at least 30Mbps to rural premises by end of 2017. The **CDS Broadband Voucher Scheme, which closes on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov.** provides anyone with a broadband speed of less than 2 Mbps with a voucher for £500 towards the cost of a new broadband connection, through a range of suppliers. For more info:-

<http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/cds-broadband-voucher-scheme/>

### REFUGEES

There has recently been local media coverage about child refugees coming into the south west. A number of schemes are in operation to provide help for children from Syrian camps as well as those from Calais. All local authorities are expected to take unaccompanied minors into care up to 0.07% of the local child population. For Somerset this is 71 children. We have already begun to receive small groups of unaccompanied asylum seekers, the majority being assessed as between age 16 and 18.

Working in partnership the majority are being placed in small groups in houses with staff, similar to the provision for local children in care and care leavers, making it easier to meet their needs and minimising the likelihood of exceeding grant funding from the Home Office.

### SOMERSET WASTE PARTNERSHIP - LOVE FOOD HATE WASTE

I have received the training for this to become a 'Food Champion' to help reduce waste, and am available to speak with schools and community groups. Currently the average household throws away 260kg. of food and drink per year, at a cost of £470, and with it the associated impact on council tax charge for disposal. Across the UK 70,000 tonnes of breakfast cereal alone is wasted annually, equivalent in weight to 160 Boeing 747s.

### HIGHWAYS

Highways issues can now be reported via a new online map [www.travelsomerset.gov.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.gov.uk) 300km. of roads across the county have been surface dressed so far this year.

SID reports have been received this month for the villages in Neroche ward – median speeds have been recorded as:- Broadway – 37mph Ashill – 29 mph Donyatt – 35 mph

### SOMERSET ROAD CASUALTY DATA – Jan. to June 2016

**Accidents** – 7% reduction for same period in 2015. Fatal – 13 Serious – 68 Slight – 601  
Pedestrians – 32% (53 individuals) - down on 2015

Motor cycles – 4% (49) – up on 2015

Pedal cycles – 2% (50) – down on 2015

Cars/taxis – 5% (505) – up on 2015

### **HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

A new contract for highways maintenance, running from April 2017 to 2024, will be awarded to Skanska, who will be required to identify further savings, keep 85% of supply chain spend in the local economy, follow industry best-practice, support local communities, and reduce the number of potholes.

### **A303/A358 UPDATE**

In their latest information sheet Highways *England* have confirmed that they are in the process of drawing up plans for the dualling of the A358 link from Taunton to Southfields roundabout at Ilminster and that they will begin consultation in early 2017.

For more information visit: [www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields](http://www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields)

Email: A358TauntontoSouthfields@highwaysengland.co.uk Phone: 0300 123 5000

### **TRANSPORT - Clause 21 - Bus Service Bill**

A local resident has approached me looking for support for the 'We Own It' campaign to persuade the government to omit Clause 21 from the Bus Services Bill. There is a fear that if this is included it will deny local authorities the option of establishing new publicly funded bus companies. In a recent poll removal of this clause has received cross party support, where most people would also like to see more public ownership of buses.

### **EDUCATION EXCELLENCE**

Children with special education needs (SEND), those receiving free school meals and children looked after are all still performing below standard, with no change in the attainment gap in the last year. By contrast 95% of Somerset schools are now rated good or better by OFSTED, a significant improvement and overall in line with national average in every area. Middle Schools, which do not perform well at Key Stage 2 level, remain an area of concern. The key focus this year is on improving primary results. Whilst there has been some improvement, literacy and writing remain weak, and speaking and lack of social skills remains a real issue at Key Stage 1, with children finding it difficult to settle in – e.g. sit still, share, need constant stimulus and are also not toilet trained. At secondary level all 29 schools are performing at average or above in terms of expected progress levels at age 16.

### **SOCIAL SERVICES - P2i CONTRACT**

SCC and the District Councils have statutory responsibilities for homeless 16/17 year olds and Care Leavers up to the age of 25, which are partly met through the Pathways to Independence Service (P2i). It allows young people with housing related needs to access support until they are able to sustain independent living. In the last 3 years over 700 vulnerable young people have been supported. The new specification includes targeted preventative interventions, independent mediation, conflict resolution and support to enable them to stay within the family home when appropriate and additional resources to support access to education, training and employment. No compliant bids were received for South Somerset and despite some reservations, a decision has been taken for Mendip YMCA to provide targeted Pathway Progression Support and Accommodation Service.

### **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

Recent reports indicate that there have been substantial improvements in service provision. A further OFSTED inspection is due in the coming months.

### **DWP BENEFIT CAP**

The “Benefit Cap”, introduced in 2013 to limit the total amount of out of work benefits that working age people can receive, was set at £26,000 p.a. for couples or single parents with children who normally live with them and £18,200 p.a. for single claimants.

In Nov. the respective limits are to be reduced to £20,000 p.a. and £13,400 p.a.

SSDC (Benefits and Housing Options), organised an event, attended by 19 people, with a further 45 accessing advice by telephone.

1 to 1 sessions have been set up by Citizens Advice during Nov. at The William Dampier (Wetherspoons) in Yeovil, to provide information and help with budgeting, debt advice etc.

### **UNIVERSAL CREDIT**

Universal Credit (UC) is a working age benefit, administered by the DWP and implemented as part of the Government’s welfare reforms, paid as a single monthly payment replacing 6 existing benefits for working age people. It was rolled out in South Somerset last year and Taunton Job Centre went live with the UC Full Service this month. In the Ilminster area this will affect the TA19 0, and TA19, 9 postcodes. Those living in these postcodes who would normally claim Housing Benefit will now have to claim UC.

“Pensioners” who have reached the qualifying age for state pension are not affected by UC and will continue to claim Housing Benefit in the usual way, as will working age people living in supported accommodation. Applications are made on-line and SSDC will provide support to people to make their claim if necessary. It normally takes 6 weeks for the first payment to be made. SSDC have set up an appointment system at the Chard and Petters Way offices for advice. Contact: [Tamsin.Gold@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:Tamsin.Gold@southsomerset.gov.uk). 01935 462081

### **SSDC FULL COUNCIL (not attended)**

**New Senior Leadership Structure** – As part of the ongoing transformation programme, Rina Singh will take on the new role of Deputy Chief Exec., supported by directors covering the three key areas of operation.

### **SSDC MID TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE**

At a recent briefing the challenges facing SSDC, where there remains uncertainty over finances, were outlined. As with SCC, significant savings still need to be identified along with consideration of income generating options. Members were asked to approve the government’s proposed four-year grant settlement, and be aware of the implications of accepting the notion of a Negative Revenue Support Grant.

### **LICENSING (not attended)**

In view of national concerns over Child Sexual Exploitation(CSE) all SSDC licensed taxi and private hire operators will now be required to undertake CSE training. Additionally, they will be subject to identification checks to establish their immigration status.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE UPDATE**

In the last 12 months 296 food inspections were carried out and 91 cases of suspected food poisoning and 22 accidents were reported or investigated. Wild game **poaching** has been a problem in the area. The Streetscene enforcement team is now part of this service, dealing with issues such as dog control and fly tipping. In Area West last year 124 noise complaints were investigated and 411 calls received relating to pest control.

Free microchipping is still available for dogs to aid implementation of the new legislation.

58 abandoned vehicles were recorded in the area, representing a significant increase.

LPV – SCC/SSDC County/District Report Oct. 2016.

3, Rectory Court, Vicarage Hill, Combe St. Nicholas, TA20 3NE tel. 0797 178 5069 [lindavijeh@hotmail.com](mailto:lindavijeh@hotmail.com)

### **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY (HES)**

SSDC has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance the historic environment, requiring an HES to be produced ensuring the highest possible standard of development, acting as a guide to assessing development. Document consultation closes on Fri. 25th Nov. and can be viewed online <http://consult.southsomerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/system/listConsultations>

### **SOUTH SOMERSET WINTER SERVICE**

A depot open day will be held on **Saturday 3 December, 09:00am to 13:00pm** to enable Parish Councils the opportunity to collect 10 x 20kg salt bags in advance of the winter season. If intending to collect the salt bags please bring this along as confirmation.

This year salt bins will only be filled on a reactive basis. Parishes are asked to review existing grit bins and contact highways at [njmcwilliams@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:njmcwilliams@somerset.gov.uk) by Fri. 2 Dec. with the specific locations that require topping up.

To save costs the Winter Service leaflet will only be produced electronically.

### **COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE**

The annual report received praise from all members. Despite challenges related to staffing reductions, awards continue to be gained, with significant input from volunteers and friends; a mutually beneficial arrangement. Work is ongoing in relation to countryside management, educational and outreach activities with the help of lottery funding.

### **YARLINGTON - Riverside, Horton**

In response to local concerns, and in consultation with myself as ward member, SSDC has formally responded to confirm **opposition** to Yarlington's proposal for the disposal of eight properties in Horton. Last winter incumbent tenants were relocated to alternative accommodation and as Yarlington have estimated the cost of redevelopment to be prohibitive, YHI, their private investment subsidiary, plans to demolish the complex and gain planning permission to build private dwellings. The proposal will not produce any new affordable housing. Extract from the report 'Linda Vijeh has made clear her objections, centred around the failure of Yarlington to undertake to use the income generated to replace with new affordable housing in the same locality..... She is also aware of concerns raised by residents of the impact on parking as a number of parking spaces will be removed.'

### **PLANNING**

Housing land supply currently stands at 4 years 2 months. The current absence of a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites has been cited as a key reason in recent appeal decision, along with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

**BROADWAY** - 15/04773/FUL, Land East of Two Oaks, Broadway Road.

An appeal has been received in respect of this application

**Vardens Farm** - 15/01053/OUT - The appeal against the decision relating to a residential development of 9 dwellings has been allowed.

**Tanyard** – Local residents have expressed concern over access and the siting of social housing on the proposed development site and I have requested this go to Area West committee.

### **CHARD MUSEUM**

Several successful open days were held this year help raise funds. Volunteers are still needed and the museum will re-open at Easter with new exhibits to encourage repeat visits.

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### DOWLISH WAKE PAVILION

The fire at the pavilion this month, which is believed to be arson, has been widely reported. The 'Pavilion Phoenix' project has been set up, which has received wide ranging support with funds raised so far totalling £13,220, against a projected cost of £20,000. Permission has been gained to start demolition and re-building is to be carried out by local contractors and volunteers. Those wishing to offer their services, including donations, should contact Michael Lane at [michaelliz@me.com](mailto:michaelliz@me.com) Upcoming fund raising events include: pub nights at Speke Hall on 4<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. at 6pm, and a black tie dinner at the Shrubbery Hotel on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

### EVENTS/ACTIVITIES ATTENDED

Work commitments this month have prevented me attending some committee meetings.

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1/10  | Ilminster Carnival collection                      |
| 2/10  | Kingstone harvest festival                         |
| 2/10  | Horton Harvest festival                            |
| 5/10  | Broadway PC planning                               |
| 5/10  | Memory Café Harvest lunch                          |
| 13/10 | Broadway - Tanyard planning                        |
| 13/10 | Horton – Yarlinton, Riverside resident             |
| 13/10 | SSDC mid-term financial plan update                |
| 14/10 | Ashill Outdoor Gym                                 |
| 14/10 | Broadway VH 30 <sup>th</sup>                       |
| 16/10 | Horton partnership service                         |
| 19/10 | SSDC - Area West                                   |
| 20/10 | SSDC – awards                                      |
| 20/10 | Ilminster – resident social worker support         |
| 21/10 | Warehouse Theatre performance                      |
| 22/10 | Purple Field Productions book sale                 |
| 22/10 | Donyatt Barn Dance                                 |
| 23/10 | Ashill Harvest Lunch                               |
| 25/10 | Southwest Audit Partnership – audit training       |
| 25/10 | SSDC - Gold Star awards                            |
| 26/10 | SCC Scrutiny Education Excellence briefing         |
| 26/10 | Winsham PC   |
| 26/10 | Yarlinton resident social services concerns        |
| 27/10 | Ilminster - resident child safeguarding concerns   |
| 28/10 | Meeting with Children’s Scrutiny Chair – Taunton   |
| 29/10 | Somerset Waste Partnership – Food Champions course |
| 29/10 | Rosie Crane Trust event Horton VH                  |
| 30/10 | Isle Valley benefice combined service              |
| 31/10 | SCC member development panel                       |

**Ilminster Football Club** - firework display on Sun. 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. Entrance from 4pm.

**Rotary Club of Ilminster** are actively seeking applications from young people age 16-18 to take advantage of funding (£600 per person) to attend leadership training through the Rotary Youth Leadership Award scheme. This involves a week spent at an outward bound centre on Dartmoor, 11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2017. Contact Owen Paterson – 01460 241226.

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