

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR REPORT JANUARY 2016

COUNTY COUNCIL – Plans for devolution are progressing, with the final document proposing the way forward due to be considered at full council in February. It is intended that there be a combined authority with an elected Chair, but no plans for an elected mayor. The 'County Plan' which broadly outlines the aspirational 'vision' for Somerset, including plans for a new market town and a university, has been produced and has given cause for much positive comment. Over 200 SCC staff have volunteered to be help in developing the projects involved.

SCC is withdrawing from the Somerset Partnership contract and will be bringing social workers back in house.

Learning Disabilities services are to be set up as a separate social enterprise.

At SCC full council next month it is likely that an increase in council tax will be proposed, along with a further £12m. cuts to the local budget to offset continued cuts in central government funding. There is also concern over the additional burden (£4m.) that the introduction of the National Living Wage will impose.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES - The final senior management appointments have now been made within Children's Services which is expected to have a positive impact on service delivery in relation to OFSTED requirements. Immediate precedence includes a focus on achieving the 9 key priorities, developing a new plan, ensuring that care placements achieve the best outcomes and progressing with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities reforms.

Bath Spa University have completed a year long pilot project, commissioned by public health, to introduce 'emotional coaching' in schools to assist youngsters who may find it difficult to handle their feelings, resulting in anti-social behaviour which can mean exclusion. Local case studies have been very positive, providing evidence that investing in the improvement of mental health amongst children leads to better educational achievement. I met with representatives of the Royal National Children's Foundation to find out more about residential placement options for Children Looked After.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY- A presentation by the Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service has identified 552 parents currently accessing the service, which is affecting 826 children. In addition to alcohol and drug abuse, 120 have been identified as having mental health issues.

Last April the Care Quality Commission carried out a review of the Health Service for Children Looked After and Safeguarding and have made a number of recommendations. Disappointingly their report was not received until 8 months after the review.

CORPORATE PARENT BOARD – The terms of reference have now been agreed and to assist elected members in providing support within their divisions there is now a breakdown by ward to highlight those areas where the most vulnerable children are. A child friendly version of the strategy for children in care is to be produced to ensure full engagement.

POLICE – Reports have been received of several daytime burglaries in the area and local residents are urged to be vigilant.

DONYATT HALT – At the end of Dec. news was received that vandals had caused significant damage to the hut and statue at Donyatt Halt. Consideration is being given to plans to raise funds and seek volunteers for restoring this as no insurance was in place.

OPEN SPACES – I have received several enquiries this month in relation to concerns over the overgrown footpath along Canal Way which is impeding pedestrians, and also a large tree at The Incline, which I have passed onto the relevant officers.

HIGHWAYS – A number of local parishes continue to raise issues concerning blocked or damaged drains, pot holes etc. which are being dealt with on a case by case basis. My understanding from local feedback is that where possible highways have been swift to respond.

STATION ROAD - Concern has been raised by members of Ilminster Town Council over the planned closure of Station Road to carry out highways work to drains, and the proposed diversion route. I have contacted highways and am awaiting a response.

FIVE DIALS CORNER, HORTON – the design plan for work to address concerns over speeding is now at the consultation stage with local residents, with mixed response so far.

MANHOLES – The problem with noise caused by ill-fitting manholes along Canal Way, has been resolved.

COUNTY FARMS LAND – I met with officers this month to clarify the position in connection with the current Persimmon option on land along Canal Way and at Coldharbour Farm. Discussions continue to address a number of queries and concerns that have been raised by parish and town councillors.

GYPSY/TRAVELLERS – The family who had been occupying an unauthorised site at Peasmarsh have now moved on to Lydmars. I am continuing to work with officers to resolve the situation as soon as possible and am aware of residents' concerns.

YARLINGTON – I met with Yarlinton representatives as they visited residents at Donyatt Hill as part of their consultation in relation to proposed re-development at the site.

SHAVE LANE, HORTON – Local residents have raised concerns over a number of issues in relation to the new Hastoe development and the adverse effect of some design features, which I am following up.

PLANNING – Concern has been raised over the burden of Section 106 agreements for small developments and also the ongoing problem of larger developers later seeking to reduce or withdraw their contribution once planning permission is granted. There is mounting evidence that the planned introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is not resulting in the expected outcomes.

ILMINSTER POST OFFICE – Confirmation has been received that the Post Office is to be modernised and designated a 'main' Post Office branch. This will involve closure from Saturday 5th March to Wed. 16th March for the necessary work to be carried out.

SSDC – LICENSING – a new penalty point scheme has been introduced to address the issue of minor infringements. A new fee structure is to be introduced this April to ensure full cost recovery of the Licensing function.

DISTRICT COUNCIL PRECEPT 2016/17 – It was agreed unanimously to include a 2% levy for the Somerset Rivers Authority to cover the cost of essential flood defence work.

Meetings and Activities this month

2nd	Iminster Senior Citizens lunch
3rd	Horton New Year breakfast
8th	Whitelackington VH fund raising quiz
	Thickthorn Lane, Ashill – planning enquiry
	Chaffcombe Wassailing
9th	Chaffcombe Concert
10th	Donyatt VH breakfast
	Horton Plough Service
	The Incline, Iminster re: tree
	Winterhay Lane – resident enquiry
11th	SCC – Learning Disabilities update
	Dowlish Wake PC
	Donyatt PC
14th	SCC – Corporate Parent agenda meeting
15th	Corporate Parent Board
	Children's Scrutiny pre-agenda meeting
17th	Twinning xmas lunch
18th	Horton PC
	Iminster Literary festival meeting
19th	SSDC - Licensing
	Iminster Town Council
21st	Yarlington meeting with Donyatt Hill residents
	SCC - Taunton Cricket Club – Bath Spa University project
	SCC – Royal National Children's Foundation
	Fiveways School, Yeovil - teaching school update
	SSDC full council
25th	SCC – County Farms
	SCC – Director of Children's Services
28th	Iminster Town Council/Donyatt PC – County Farms land
	Lydmarsch – gypsy/traveller site
29th	SCC – Children & Families Scrutiny
	SCC – joint scrutiny re: Mid Term Financial Plan proposed savings
	SCC – officer meeting re: Corporate Parents