

### ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSSC/SCC COUNCILLOR REPORT JULY 2016

Whilst the efforts of individual residents and parish/town councils in resolving problems involving District or County issues is welcomed, it would be useful for me to be kept informed to enable me to effectively support and intervene where necessary.

#### **DEVOLUTION**

SCC has now formally signed up to the principle of creating a new Combined Authority. The Heart of the South West (HotSW) Devolution partnership (made up of Somerset and Devon County Councils, 13 district councils, Plymouth City and Torbay councils, Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks, and three Clinical Commissioning Groups) has submitted proposals for more powers to be devolved to the local level, to deliver skills, communication, education, employment, housing and social care benefits where productivity in the SW is currently at less than 80% of the national average. At present it is thought that an elected Mayor would not be essential to a devolution deal.

#### **HINKLEY POINT**

EDF, which is financing most of the £18bn Hinkley Point project, approved the funding this month and contracts were due to be signed. Business Secretary Greg Clark has said the government will "consider carefully" before backing it and has postponed a final decision until the early autumn.

#### **BROADBAND**

Across the country, recognising the importance of good broadband services, and as a result of an increase in complaints, Ofcom has announced a move towards a more independent Openreach, the BT-owned company which provides much of the broadband infrastructure. In Somerset, broadband is still slow or non-existent in many areas. BT has promised better customer service, and is bringing call centre staff back into the UK. Proposed changes will take time and there is no extra investment money.

The Connecting Devon and Somerset partnership (CDS) has launched a procurement exercise to extend the scheme's second phase to deliver services to homes and businesses in those rural areas that are unlikely to benefit from commercial operations. It is hoped that a network provider(s) will be commissioned by the end of 2016. As part of CDS's commitment to ensuring all premises have access to broadband speeds of at least 2Mbps. A Broadband Voucher Scheme, has also been launched, giving residents and businesses the opportunity to spend up to £500 on improved broadband. Visit <http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/cds-broadband-voucher-scheme/> Following the result of the EU referendum it remains unclear how an EU exit will impact on the CDS programme. All local bodies have been contacted and have confirmed that the current broadband delivery programme and priorities remain unchanged. While the UK remains a member of the EU single market, existing State Aid rules and EU funding programmes continue to operate.

#### **TRANSPORT - BUSES**

Concern continues to be raised over decreased bus services across the area which I am pursuing.

#### **SCHOOL TRANSPORT**

A 6 week public consultation took place between 15<sup>th</sup> April and 27<sup>th</sup> May, and despite wide publicity, zero responses were received. Specific details of the eligibility criteria for assistance in providing free home to school transport for Somerset children of statutory school age, and deemed to be the responsibility of SCC, can be obtained on request.

### **SSDC - JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

This month I attended a workshop and presentation at SSDC. It is clear that success in moving towards closer working arrangements with Sedgemoor will depend upon investment in technology.

### **SSDC**

Interviews are being conducted to fill the post of Chief Executive Officer.

### **AREA WEST - PLANNING**

The application for development of land to the rear of The Bell Inn, Broadway, deferred from last month's Area West meeting, was discussed again this month and refused (8 to 4) on grounds of over development.

S106 contributions towards affordable housing or community leisure provision are no longer required for developments of fewer than 10 properties as it is considered to be too large a burden on small developments, and has an adverse impact on the delivery of housing stock.

### **ADOPT-A-PATH SCHEME**

SCC's adopt-a-path scheme is recruiting volunteers and is open to those such as walkers, horse riders, cyclists etc. Any public right of way can be adopted. Volunteers are asked to use their chosen path as often as they can, reporting any problems they come across. They can also help with light maintenance. Paths can range from 50 metres to several miles long – or several paths can be combined to create a circular route. More than 40 rights of way have been adopted by individuals and parish groups so far. Anyone taking on a path is also offered the loan of gloves, secateurs and hi-vis jackets so they can help by cutting back vegetation or brambles. For more information call 0300 123 2224, or email [ROWVolunteers@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:ROWVolunteers@somerset.gov.uk)

### **SYRIAN REFUGEES**

Since January 2016 Somerset has resettled six families under the UK Government Syrian Vulnerable Resettlement Scheme, with one more family to come. Markers of success include private rental sector tenancies established for all families, school aged children settling well at school, nursery provision established for younger children, English classes arranged for all adults with early progress in language noted, and signs of community integration.

### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE**

Julian Wooster, head of Children's Service, has reported that following the latest performance review, SCC continues to meet the improvement requirements of the Department for Education and Essex County Council. The direction notice from the DofE will be reviewed at the end of August. Linked to this are the seven improvement programmes to improve the 'well-being' of children and key strategies have been agreed and are being put into place:

- Multi-agency Children's and Young People's Plan (CYPP) - reflecting the commitment of SCC to ensuring children's services be excellent in three years.
- Corporate Parenting Strategy, setting out Somerset's commitment to children looked after and care leavers.

### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OFSTED UPDATE**

SCC's children's services have been highlighted as an example of good practice in Ofsted's latest report, stating that SCC "has recognised the importance of reducing the workloads of its social workers." Judged inadequate by Ofsted two years running, 44 permanent social workers have now been recruited, plus 26 new graduate social workers, reducing caseloads by almost one third, to an average of 14. Social worker turnover rate is now down from 20% to 14%, below the national

average. Improvements have been as a result of improved leadership and the appointment of a permanent senior managerial team, providing stability.

### **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY**

Specific training and information to support taxi drivers and those involved in the night-time economy in being able to spot signs of child sexual exploitation is being considered by the Licensing team at SSDC, in conjunction with Taunton Deane, with the expectation of inclusion in a handbook due for publication in September

### **CORPORATE PARENT BOARD**

Updated information shows that abuse and neglect are the most common reasons for a child to be looked after. In Somerset, 73.3% of all the children looked after (368 out of 502) are due to this. In South Somerset there are 157 children looked after, representing 47.8 per 10k of child population, **significantly higher than any other district in the county.** In South Somerset we currently have 57 foster carers, and an average annual spend on foster place care of around £30k. What is also of concern is that 26.6% of all care leavers in the district (41 young people) are not in education, training or employment. Local businesses are urged to consider apprenticeships and training opportunities for them. Young people in care have to start living independently much earlier than their peers (age 18 compared with an average age of 22 of those living with parents), which can have a significant and lasting impact on their mental health and emotional well-being. Only half of children in care have emotional health and behaviour that is considered normal. Early intervention could support children, before they are placed away from home. An increasing number of 16 and 17 year olds are presenting as homeless and becoming looked after.

**The next Corporate Parent workshop for local councillors will be in Taunton on 6<sup>th</sup> October.**

### **COMMUNITY CATALYSTS**

Somerset's community micro-enterprise project, delivered in partnership with social enterprise Community Catalysts, has been highlighted nationally for providing an innovative new approach to meeting care and support needs, and cited as an example of how LAs can build local community support to meet care needs, giving people more choice. Community micro-providers are local, independent people offering flexible, local alternatives to traditional services for families who want to take control of their care. They can offer anything from home help and care at home to social groups and gardening services to help people to continue to live independently. In recognition of this the LGA has awarded a £20,000 grant to allow this work to continue. Small providers can get information on regulation, training and sources of funding. Anyone interested in setting up or already running a small local, independent service with less than eight employees or volunteers should contact Rhys Davies - 07595 411 945 or [rhys.davies@communitycatalysts.co.uk](mailto:rhys.davies@communitycatalysts.co.uk)

### **SOMERSET SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD (SSAB)**

I recently attended a case review meeting, which highlighted the many complex problems that some people face, and the difficulties in finding solutions, requiring a partnership approach. The link below covers two topics that may be of interest, one on the impact of self-neglect and hoarding, and also scam awareness, both of which have been of concern locally.

<http://ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SSAB-Newsletter-Issue-3-Jul-2016.pdf>

### **LEARNING DISABILITIES SERVICE**

This month SCC endorsed proposals to move the management of the services provided internally by SCC's Learning Disabilities Provider Service (LDPS) to a new, not-for-profit organisation, Dimensions UK. It is felt that a social enterprise will be more flexible as support for an increasingly

ageing population has given cause for fears of potential decline and instability. Services will be transferred by early 2017, including long-term residential care, supported living, home care, crisis support and employment support. Despite community and trade union involvement in the decision there remain some concerns.

### **ILMINSTER EDUCATION FOUNDATION**

At this month's meeting a number of grants were allocated. Of note were grants totalling £11,700 to the five local schools. Applications for grants are being actively encouraged. Broadly the key criteria are that grants are awarded to:- Current residents of Ilminster or Whitelackington; those who have attended an Ilminster School for at least 2 years; up to 50% of the cost of an educational trip or activity will be awarded. For more information contact Edward Wells on 01460 221703.

## **NEROCHE SCHOOL – Tim Peake Space Project**

The school is one of only 22 in the SW to be successful in their application to participate in the project, which will provide additional science training.

## **HIGHWAYS**

Notification has been received that SCC proposes to make the following Road Traffic Order, the effect of which will result in changes to parking and waiting restrictions in the following locations:

- **Horton: Five Dials**
- **Iminster: New Road The Beacon, Court Barton, West Street, Listers Hill, Market Square**

Persons wishing to object to these proposals may do so within 21 days of the publication of the Order, by writing to Area Traffic Engineer, South Somerset Area Office, Mead Avenue, Houndstone Business Park, Yeovil, BA22 8RT stating reasons for their objections.

## **A303/FOREST MILL LANE JCT.**

A local resident has been in contact raising concerns over obstruction and lack of visibility at this junction. Highways and the police have visited the site and feel that there is no cause for concern.

## **ALLOWENSHAY**

Concern has been raised over the state of the verges in the community, which is being addressed.

## **SIS JUNE UPDATE**

Crossroads at Five Dials, Pound Road, Horton - speed review	Ref. T1004225	Estimated cost £40k	Start date Nov. 2016	Detailed design progressing
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## **DONAYTT HILL – YARLINGTON**

I attended personal interviews with Yarlinton residents at 10 properties, where they will be affected by proposed plans for this development, which will mean they will need to be re-housed. Further meetings both with the PC, Yarlinton and SSDC officers have taken place to consider the best options and timescales for action, along with clarification of residents' rights in this situation.

## **HORTON PARISH COUNCIL**

Long standing clerk, Anne Goody, has tendered her resignation with view to retiring in October. Thanks go to her for all of her hard work over many years. Applications are invited to fill the post.

## **ILMINSTER LITERARY FESTIVAL**

Following this year's success, next year's Festival will be 9 days long, starting on 31 May and finishing on 8 June. Next year's programme is being planned and the committee are keen to gain as much local involvement as possible, particularly from local schools and community groups.

## **CHARD MUSEUM**

The museum held a very successful open day this month to tie in with Chard's Summer Festival. The event raised several hundred pounds, resulting in a number of new volunteers and friends.

## ACTIVITIES/EVENTS ATTENDED

1st	Broadway Festival of Angels
2nd	Broadway Angels and Devils Fund Raising Supper
4th	SCC – Corporate Parent T&F Meeting (health)
4th	Ashill PC
5th	Yarlington – Donyatt meetings with residents (all day - 10 meetings in total)
5th	Broadway PC
7th	SCC - Education, Training, Employment Board meeting
7th	SCC – Staff Restaurant procurement meeting
7th	SCC - Mental Health Peer Support launch
8th	Whitelackington Manor – Fund Raising talk on Bhutan
9th	Taunton Moose Ladies Circle 70 <sup>th</sup> anniversary
10th	Bridgwater – SiCC and SICC meeting
11th	SCC – Cabinet meeting Taunton College
11th	Ilminster Lit. fest meeting
11th	Neroche School AGM
11th	Donyatt PC
12th	SCC - LGA Mentor meeting
12th	SCC – Children’s Scrutiny pre-agenda meeting
12th	Neroche School - DBS
12th	Resident safeguarding meeting
13th	SCC – Member Development
13th	Chard Museum Trustees
14th	SCC – Corporate Parent Admin.
14th	SCC – Safeguarding Review Meeting
14th	Ilminster Education Foundation
14th	Fiveways School Open Evening
14th	SSDC – Devolution update
15th	SCC – Corporate Parent Board
16th	Horton Coffee Morning
16th	Whitelackington VH
16th	Ashill VH Church Fund Raising
17th	Warehouse Theatre MaKe Theatre Summer Show
18th	Swanmead School Awards Evening
18th	Horton PC (briefly)
19th	Arts Centre – Fairtrade Meeting
19 <sup>th</sup>	Ilminster TC
20th	SCC – Full Council
20 <sup>th</sup>	SSDC – Area West
21st	SSDC – meeting re: Yarlington homes
21st	Canalside Bridgwater – annual Children in Care Awards
22nd	SCC – Leaving Care T&F group
22nd	SCC – Children 7 Families Scrutiny
23rd	Donyatt VH – Donyatt Despatch Sale
23rd	Chard museum Open Day
25th	SSDC – planning; leaving care support; licensing
25th	Yarlington re; Donyatt Hill
26th	Bridgwater - Children Looked After roadshow
27th	Taunton - Child Sexual Exploitation consultation
27th	Donyatt – resident planning query