

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSSC/SCC COUNCILLOR REPORT JULY 2014

COUNTY COUNCIL

This month's full council meeting took place with little controversy. Councillors' expenses for the year have now been published, with my own being £1088, and my pre-tax allowance £9,324. SCC has loaned £1m. to Somerset Community Foundation to enable groups/charities to bid for acquiring community assets. 368 SCC employees (under 10%) went on strike recently.

From 6th August new regulations come into force whereby any member of the public attending a public council meeting may record it. SCC is applying for 'Healthy Employer' status, and is pro-actively engaged in employing apprentices. There has been a sharp inc. in the number of FOI requests (mainly commercial), which is having an adverse impact on SCC resources.

Extra Care housing scheme is being proposed to enable people to stay in their own homes longer, and reduce emergency admissions. There are 10 such schemes in SSSC.

HIGHWAYS

I have received no further information in relation to the requested meeting between Ilminster TC and Highways – Mike Fear had offered to be available after 8th July.

25,000 pot holes have been fixed in the county so far this year.

Horton speeding Five Dials junction – a feasibility study has now been carried out and I met with officers to discuss options. It is likely that work will begin in early 2015.

Broadway residents have again asked about the timescale for the completion of work on the road outside the entrance to the surgery. The response received is *'The drainage improvement works are currently programmed to commence on the 22nd of September 2014. Advance notices will be placed on site nearer the time, once the full road closure has been booked.'*

Consultations have been taking place across the area on proposals for development of the A303. Some Ilminster residents are unhappy about current parking restrictions and the impact on local businesses, and have asked that consideration be given to resident permits, even if at a cost.

THE BEACON, ILMINSTER

Local frustration continues over the closure of the road and I have put in a request for rate relief for those businesses affected. The latest update from Highways received last week is – *'this is likely to be a very complex process which could take many months. The geological assessment will take time, as will the subsequent engineering solutions options analysis and design. Only then will we be in a position to give consideration to the civil engineering works and their duration. At this point in time I do not wish to provide a timeline in recognition of the large number of variables involved but assure you that we are working hard to progress the matter and will not stop until the road is reopened.'*

PLANNING

There has as yet been no further development in relation to a decision over the planned direction of growth for new development in Ilminster. In addition to the overall impact, the question of service provision e.g. education and health, is high on the agenda with local residents.

Ashill – the gypsy/traveller site application has been re-submitted with amendments but local views and concerns remain unchanged.

Broadway – two public consultations have been held to consider potential development both at Varden's Farm and Tanyard.

Horton – discussions have been held over the agreed new Hastoe affordable housing development at Shave Lane. Residents wish to have the option of purchase, rather than rental, taken into consideration.

Under new planning regulations deemed planning consent is now in place, to allow rural businesses to diversify, and to increase housing supply – where buildings used for agricultural purposes may now be converted into up to 3 dwellings, subject to certain conditions being met. Concern has been raised about the lack of information available to PCs where permitted rights are granted, in addition to a lack of follow up where planning conditions are not adhered to.

COUNTY FARMS

The Task & Finish group has now had two meetings to explore options to maximise potential, and several options are now being considered, with most in favour of increasing revenue rather than realising capital assets. There are a number of County owned farms in Donyatt, and I have a meeting arranged with officers in August to look at the impact any changes to current arrangements may have, and to ensure that local residents' views are taken into account. Agreement has been reached for local member consultation before decisions are made.

EDUCATION

The planned provision of free school meals for infants has stretched resources to their limit, where expectations are unlikely to be met immediately due to the lack of funding provided by central government to support this initiative. Several schools have raised concerns and expressed disappointment over the handling of this, and the quality of meals. These issues have been taken up on a case by case basis.

It is pleasing to note that the government recently announced additional funding for Somerset, but it still falls short of our aspirations, as data is felt to be inaccurate.

The appointment of Nicky Morgan as the new minister, replacing Michael Gove, seems to be welcomed by the education community.

Funding for vulnerable groups has been increased, as GCSE results are not at the required levels. Options for changes to the provision of support services have been considered, with a decision due in Sept. - **SCHOOLS FORUM** - Ofsted results across the area are continuing to improve.

WILLOW SCHOOLS CO-OPERATIVE TRUST

One school in the group received a less than satisfactory Ofsted report recently. However, the need for improvement had already been recognised and measures put in place to improve.

SOMERSET GOVERNORS' STRATEGY GROUP

The new criteria has now been agreed for the appointment of the Executive Officer post, and the recruitment process is now under way, with interviews expected in October.

SOMERSET SKILLS & LEARNING

The OFSTED inspection report has now been released, with an overall rating of 'good', which was as expected. Specific comment on the Advisory Board, which I Chair was, 'The advisory board.... is fully aware of the service's strengths and areas for improvement. It provides effective scrutiny and challenge, and plays a key role in supporting and shaping the service's strategic direction.'

The planned move towards enterprise status is set for August, and it is unlikely that I will continue to be involved in the same way once this happens.

ILMINSTER EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Grants totalling over £2000 have been given to Ilminster students for a range of activities including: national youth choir, animation study, a trip to India, and a harp. Discussions are taking place about the future of the Domestic Service hut, and the cost of any improvements.

Some schools are late in presenting their cheques, and SCC have been late in paying the rent due on the Greenfylde site, which I have now made enquiries about.

HEALTH

I have now received dementia awareness training. I am actively pursuing a decision with regard to the allocation of this year's Health & Wellbeing fund of £5k (deadline end of Nov.). It is especially disappointing to report that last year £34,500 of available money went unclaimed. As mentioned last month, I would like to be able to offer first aid training across the division, and The Red Cross have put forward a programme that will provide sessions in each parish, three in Ilminster, and also resources and lesson plans for each school. **Could I please ask that within your communities you consider possible dates and venues for the training to be held should this be approved.**

CORPORATE PARENT BOARD

The majority of elected members do not attend these meetings, which is seen as unacceptable. On completing my regulation 33 training, my first children's home inspection was this month.

ROYAL DEVON AND EXETER NHS FT

Cancer waiting times remain a challenge, along with ensuring Clostridium Difficile compliance. The biggest issue for all NHS FTs is the financial threat due to year on year incremental funding cuts. Need for services is increasing, where there is a lack of confidence in the new 111 service so people are staying at home longer > when they are admitted to hospital their need is more acute > the top 5% of patients take up 45% of resources.

Focus is now on prevention and early intervention to conserve funds.

There is also an aspiration for all patients to be able to retain their own medical records.

GETSET

There has recently been some criticism of the roll-out of this health programme but I have yet to receive information on what changes may take place as a result of this.

SOMERSET RURAL YOUTH PROJECT

The meeting with representatives of youth groups this month enabled good contacts to be made. It is hoped that Ile Valley Youth club will benefit from outside input to ensure their continued viability. Comic Relief funding of over £1m. has been awarded.

SOMERSET IN CARE COUNCIL/LEAVING CARE COUNCIL

I continue to be involved with this group, which now has a permanent place on the SCC Corporate Parent Board. I also attended their annual awards evening as the SCC representative. I have been in early discussions about setting up a credit union or similar, along with finance/budget training.

SOUTH SOMERSET TOGETHER

I attended the first part of the AGM this month, which including an innovative presentation on a pilot scheme run by Ilfracombe Town Council, where the community and service providers have joined together to re-align local services and budget more effectively.

POLICING

One local Ilminster resident continues to be concerned about the lack of response to his ongoing issues with regard to speeding and anti-social behaviour. The police are aware and are in touch.

BROADBAND ROLLOUT

No further news on this since I have put those concerned in direct contact with SCC officers. Specific postcode information is available on request and can be accessed by using the website link www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk or by contacting SCC on 01823 359208.

Measures are in place to try to re-dress the shortfall in funding. A workshop is planned for September 10th within Ilminster division to support users, and will be on such topics as iCloud social media, online marketing etc.

Those with a particular topic of interest should contact Kate on 07753496603.

SCRUTINY – POLICIES AND PEOPLE

Public consultation on the proposed changes under the 2014 Care Act 2014 continues until 15th Aug. **There are still two places available for Parent School Governors on this committee.**

The difficulties surrounding the recruitment and retention of social workers was raised, and stress and sickness levels are being monitored. The permanent post of Director of Children's Services is due to be advertised.

The availability of school places was discussed, where the key issue is plenty of places, but in the wrong locations. Challenges include the rising birth rate and also the number of new housing developments.

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSSC/SCC COUNCILLOR MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES JULY 2014

1st	Broadway Parish Council
2nd	Business breakfast marketing training, as tutor - Taunton
	Rotary president handover
4th	Independence day event/ fund raiser
5th	Donyatt Fete
	Neroche School Summer Fete
6th	Broadway residents – Tanyard planning
	Jemima Layzell Trust fund raiser – Horton
	Ashill Safari Lunch
7th	Ashill Parish Council
	Broadway VH management meeting
	Iminster Education Foundation – as SCC rep.
	SCC – County Farms Task and Finish Group
8th	Somerset Schools Forum – as SCC rep.
	SCC – Corporate Parent Group
9th	Wadham School awards evening – Crewkerne
10th	Somerset Rural Youth Project marketing meeting – as SCC rep.
	Fiveways Special School – open evening
	Somerset Together AGM – SSSC
	Broadway VH – public planning consultation – Varden’s Farm
	Steel Magnolias – Warehouse Theatre
11th	Social services advocacy meeting - Iminster
	SRYP meeting with SSSC youth reps. – Minster Rooms
	Concert – Meeting House
12th	Ashill School PTA – strawberry tea and Ashill Village picnic p.m.
13th	Donyatt – market/breakfast
	Somerset in Care Council – meeting and tutoring -Taunton
14th	Royal Devon & Exeter NHS FT – as Somerset rep. – dementia training
	Fiveways Special School – school enterprise day – as SGSG governor
	Dowlish Wake Parish Council
	Donyatt Parish Council
	Broadway VH – planning consultancy – Tanyard
	SCC – meeting with Children’s Services re: leaving care support
15th	A303 consultation – Iminster
16th	Somerset In Care Awards – Bridgwater – as SCC Rep.
	SSSC – Area West (not attended – see above)
17th	Support Services for Education workshop – SCC
	Swanmead Prize Giving evening
	SSSC – full council (not attended – see above)
18th	Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital NHS FT – Council of Governors effectiveness
	Winsham School – cake competition
21st	RD&E – governor development day
	SCC – meeting with Communications Director
	Horton Parish Council
	Ashill Parish Council – planning meeting
22nd	Iminster Town Council – full council
23rd	SCC – Regulation 33 training
24th	Independent Visitor Children’s Home Inspection
	Iminster Carnival Quiz
25th	SCC – Scrutiny Policies and People
28th	SCC – County Farms Task & Finish Group
	SCC – Highways – meeting re:Horton feasibility report
29th	Somerset Governors’ Strategy Group
30th	Somerset Chamber of Commerce
	Winsham Parish Council

These monthly reports are intended to provide an overview of activity, but as always, more in-depth information is available on request. Apologies for the increased length, it’s been a busy month.