

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR REPORT SEPTEMBER 2014

COUNTY COUNCIL - Predicted budget overspend of around £12m. has been widely reported and there is concern over the need for further cuts in the coming years. Many local authorities are increasingly finding they are in a situation that appears to be untenable, and local residents are feeling the effect of reduced services as a result. However, many services provided in the past were not statutory obligations, and it is this over-provision that has contributed towards the deficit. Expectations are increasing, and demands on social care and provision for children and young people in particular are continuing to rise. The Member Development Group is actively working on improved engagement with members, with the aim of focusing on providing support for skill enhancement.

HIGHWAYS - A meeting is planned for 17th October with myself, SSDC councillors, highways officers and members of Ilminster Town Council, to discuss parking and traffic within the town. Residents with particular problems that they wish to raise are urged to contact either myself, their District councillor, or the town council to ensure that the opportunity to address this is maximised.

THE BEACON – I met with Cllr. Harvey Siggs this month in relation to discuss concerns over the continued closure of The Beacon. He reported 'This is still at the top of our agenda although I have been disappointed by items of misinformation that have appeared in the public domain. The issue is not as serious as at first thought, but it was necessary to carry out thorough investigative work to confirm this. Work is now due to start in early November, with the expectation that The Beacon will be open by Christmas, although the weather can either help or hamper our efforts in this respect. As the road is already closed, this will enable us to speed up the process without need for a road closure notice being issued. We are making every effort to keep people informed.'

There have been several calls by Ilminster councillors for a meeting with Cllr. Siggs, which I am pursuing. A visit to residents of The Beacon was carried out by myself and Cllr. Andrew Shearman during the month to gain local knowledge. Several have reported blocked drains throughout Ilminster and where I have been informed of individual instances I have alerted highways. Concern has been expressed over the general state of the drainage system throughout the town, which is thought to have contributed to last winter's flooding problems in several areas.

Further update received 30th Sept. – 'The period of on-site investigations – has been completed, and the remediation design proposal approved. In summary, the following major works are required, at two locations, prior to the re-opening of the B3168, The Beacon.

Carriageway failure site 1;

- Install new highway drainage system, and associated highway gullies, over length of approx.300m.
- Full depth reconstruction of approximately 750m² of existing carriageway.
- Removal and reinstatement of approximately 100m of kerb.
- Full depth reconstruction of approximately 150m² of existing footway.

Carriageway failure site 2;

- Full depth reconstruction of approximately 200m² of existing carriageway.
- Removal and reinstatement of approximately 75m of kerb.
- Full depth reconstruction of approximately 105m² of existing footway.

We have engaged our service provider to mobilise and be on site as quickly as possible. That said, I am sure you can appreciate that there are extensive works required on site, and they will take a considerable period of time to be completed. However, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that every effort is being made to re-open the road before Christmas.'

LISTERS HILL – I have been contacted by a local resident in relation to problems with parking and visibility obstruction at the junction with Listers Hill. As the road in question is unadopted, there is concern over the lack of involvement by highways, which I am following up.

FLOODING – After several meetings with Rotarian David Welch over continuing issues relating to the disbursement of money raised last winter to support flooding initiatives, I have been able to secure £600 to promote Ilminster businesses adversely affected by the downturn in footfall caused by the ongoing closure of The Beacon. The C&I has cooperated in producing a double page spread in this week's Carnival edition for this purpose. Of particular concern is £100k+ worth of goods donated, locked in a warehouse at Bridgwater, apparently without access. A meeting with SCC is planned for next week.

RIGHTS OF WAY – There has been no further news on the outcome of the Winterhay Lane application. A decision is now expected towards the end of the year.

PLANNING - LOCAL PLAN - Questions continue to be raised over future school provision, the contribution being sought by SCC for this, and the criteria used to ascertain future need.

Ashill – After last month's decision at Area West to refuse the application for a gypsy traveller site along Cad Lane, alarm was expressed when the applicant subsequently moved onto the site. SSDC are aware and an enforcement notice is to be issued.

Broadway – I recently met with local residents to assist with their concerns over the application for development at Tanyard. A further application for Vardens Farm has now also been submitted.

COUNTY FARMS – I met with SCC officer Alex Meletiou, to gain a clearer understanding of future plans for county owned farm land across the division. Where there are financial implications, and discussions are ongoing, information is confidential but I feel somewhat assured that worries of local residents are being taken into account. Some key decisions will be dependent on the outcome of the SSDC local plan.

EDUCATION - The roll out of free school meal provision for infants seems to have been largely successful, with few issues raised. Apparently the response from pupils has been favourable. I am particularly keen to monitor the raising of standards as a direct result of this initiative. Neroche School has been active in its pursuit of several issues relating to both catchment areas and planning contributions towards education as a result of planned developments in the area that will have a direct effect on pupil numbers.

I have had several meetings with Somerset College over pupil placement, with good results so far.

OFSTED results for both Primary and Secondary schools across Somerset are showing a significant, and welcome improvement, with the % of schools judged to be 'good or better' now at 87%, up from 80%, with plans in place for additional support for those considered to be at risk.

SAFEGUARDING – Work continues to improve standards in the wake of the poor OFSTED report last year. South Somerset as a district continues to under perform. Recent peer feedback has reported that SCC's new tougher regime is beginning to work although but there remain fears over the continued use of locum/agency workers; a situation being reflected across the country. Plans are in place to address this through the setting up of a 'Social Work Academy'. Domestic violence is of increasing concern in Somerset.

SOMERSET GOVERNORS' STRATEGY GROUP - I am due to participate in short listing and interviewing for the Exec. Officer post this coming month.

HEALTH - Money has now been released for the proposed First Aid course across the Division that will enable up to 300 local residents to take advantage of this. Interest has been high, with the first courses due to take place once the cheque has been received, expected for early October.

CORPORATE PARENT BOARD – In an effort to address the impact of placement stability for children looked after I have been appointed Chair of the sub-group looking into this, and held my first meeting this month, with a focus on three key areas that directly impact on a child's welfare and education. I have agreed to take part in the 'Leaving Care Challenge', from 23-31st Oct. to live on benefits for a week.

ROYAL DEVON AND EXETER NHS FT - 220 members went to the AGM this month, attending a number of workshops and focus groups. As an elected Somerset representative I continue to be involved on many levels. All NHS FTs are experiencing similar financial challenges to local authorities; required to provide more with less resources. The RD&E has taken the stance that as quality of care and patient safety are paramount reserve funds will be used to ensure standards are maintained. Focus is on increased work with partners to extend 'care in the community' provision. The CEO reported that the RD&E is now the 'safest' hospital in the SW, with the lowest possible risk rating (which is good) from CQC, the top rating for quality of care and financial sustainability, and is close to achieving 3 years with no reported incidents of MRSA.

SOMERSET RURAL YOUTH PROJECT – I attended several meetings this month to address concerns over funding, where several joint contracts were withdrawn, due to external factors, which may affect SRYP's continued viability.

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES SEPT. 2014

1st	Ashill Parish Council
2nd	Broadway Parish Council
3rd	SCC – OFTED briefing
	SCC – Alex Meletiou – County Farms update
4th	Somerset College – Chris Lacey (pupil referral)
5th	Royal Devon & Exeter NHS FT – Engagement & Experience Comm. (Somerset rep.)
	Somerset Rural Youth Project, Bridgwater – board meeting as SCC rep.
8th	SCC – Member Development Panel
	RD&E – Council of Governors' Co-ordinating Committee (as Somerset rep.)
	Taste of the West – Westlands, Yeovil – awards finalist
9th	Fiveways Special School – joint meeting with trustees
10th	Somerset Rural Youth Project, Bridgwater – board meeting as SCC rep.
	Rotary Club of Ilminster – flooding update from David Welch
15th	SCC – Cllr. Harvey Siggs re: The Beacon and other highway issues
	SCC – Cllr. Christine Lawrence – re: Councillors' Health & Well Being Fund app.
	Willows Schools Cooperative Trust, Hawkchurch – as SCC rep.
16th	SCC – Peter Lewis re: funding for Fiveways School capital project
17th	SSDC Area West, Chard
18th	Chaffcombe VH event – 'The Wrong 'Un'
19th	Fiveways School – marketing training
	Donyatt VH event – Heritage Theatre 'The Road to War'
20th	Whitelackington V H fund raiser
	Warehouse Theatre – Poppies & Proms
	Ilminster Twinning fund raising event, Minster Rooms
21st	Somerset in Care Council – cooking instruction
22nd	SCC – Claire Winter – re: Corporate Parent sub-group
	Neroche School governors' meeting
23rd	Ilminster Town Council full council meeting
24th	Somerset College – pupil performance update
26th	SCC – Scrutiny Policy & People Committee
	Taunton Deane – Licensing seminar (as SSDC)
27th	RD&E – Members' AGM – as Somerset rep.
28th	Broadway Harvest Festival
	Broadway – planning development meeting
29th	Corporate Parent sub-group meeting – as Chair of Placement Stability
	RD&E – Member & Patient Engagement Group – as Chair
	RD&E – Nominations Committee – Chairman & NEDs' appraisals (as Somerset rep.)
30th	SCC – Corporate Parent Board

These monthly reports are intended to provide an overview of activity, but as always, more in-depth information is available on request.