

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR REPORT APRIL 2015

In the run up to the national and local elections there has been considerable activity in the area, and worries over the ability of some parish councils to be able to perform their duties where insufficient people have put themselves forward for election. In other communities elections may well bring about some changes in the coming months.

Dependent on the outcome of the local elections, by the time of my next report at the end of May it may be that someone else will be in place to represent Neroche ward at district level. In any event I am planning to be away from the 8th to 13th May, so my apologies for missing any meetings during that time.

Would clerks please ensure that this report is circulated to any new councillors elected on May 7th.

COUNTY COUNCIL – In the wake of the ‘inadequate’ OFSTED proposals are in place to address the key issues urgently. This includes the suggestion that SCC split the current ‘people’ scrutiny group into two, and an additional cabinet member post. A team from Essex County Council, who have been through a similar experience are now providing peer support to bring about urgent changes, with a focus on consistency, improved partnership working, and to strengthen management teams.

SCC SCRUTINY – the Care Act came into force from 1st April, which will bring with it some changes.

At this month’s Policy & People scrutiny meeting the focus has been on

BROADBAND – the service continues to be rolled out as part of the Connecting Somerset & Devon funding bid, and will be ongoing until 2017.

HIGHWAYS – Several calls have been received this month in relation to unsightly litter along the A358 and A303. This has largely been dealt with but this is unfortunately likely to be a continuing and expensive problem.

Currently £6.5m has been allocated for subsidised bus fares across the county but in some areas the service remains vulnerable.

Planned road works, particularly in Ilminster, have given cause for concern over further disruption in the town and its impact on businesses. I have made officer aware of the need for sensitivity and coordination.

SID (speed indicator device) reports for Ashill, Broadway, Donyatt and Ilminster have been received and forwarded on to individual councils.

Winterhay Lane – There has as yet been no resolution

Gypsy/Travellers – There remains concern over illegal occupancy of two sites in the division. A court ruling has been issued in the case of the Peasmarsh site, to vacate by 1st June. The case for the site at Cad Lane, is due to be considered in August.

Chris Cooper, who heads up the Streetscene team has introduced a Parish Rangers Scheme that may be of interest to some communities. Skilled personnel, who are covered by insurance, are available to carry out such activities clearing drains, litter clearance, weeding, planting, repairs to fences/gates, minor landscaping etc. The intention is to work with community volunteers and provide a single point of contact. The hourly charge is £18 + VAT and Chris can be contacted on 07890829508.

EDUCATION – The Willows School Cooperative Trust, of which both Neroche and Ashill Schools are founder members, is in active discussions over the future shape of the collaboration, taking into account possible changes under a future government. It is generally accepted that in moving

forward 'stand alone' schools will become a thing of the past with a focus on forms of collaborative partnerships.

At Neroche there is considerable disquiet over the role of SCC in obtaining S106 monies, and the impact of funding on the ability of parents to exercise choice.

SOMERSET GOVERNORS' GROUP – Under Helen Roper's leadership new proposals are under way to increase membership and for more active involvement with Schools Forum and Compact. Several new members have also put themselves forward to join the group, which will strengthen its presence. Concern has been expressed over the hidden costs of providing free school meals – dishwasher use, maintenance etc. where allocated funding has taken this into account and this is having a negative impact on the use of school budgets.

SSDC – AREA WEST

The SSDC local plan has now been formally adopted. The next meeting after the election will be on 17th June.

Full council – no meeting this month.

PLANNING – Several new planning applications in Broadway are currently under consideration, where there is concern over the impact of rapid growth should these be approved.

In Horton plans for charges to the existing mast have been the subject of local interest and opposition.

HEALTH – Red Cross first aid sessions continue to take place, with a further one planned for Ashill School. Contact Diane Bale for details of additional sessions d.bale1965@gmail.com.

ROYAL DEVON & EXETER NHS FT – at this month's meeting an in-depth look at complaint handling was considered. In the year to March 2014, 0.17% complaints were received, equating to 946 patients out of 564,491, compared with twice this number of compliments. Top themes for both complaints and compliments were nurse attitude and wait times. Only 22% of complaints referred to the Ombudsman (23 in total) were upheld when compared with 44% nationally. I have decided to step down as Chair for the Member and Patient Engagement Group to allow more time to focus on other areas.

CORPORATE PARENT BOARD – Disappointingly, Lucy Watson from the CCG has failed to make contact with the relevant officers to progress our discussions held a few weeks ago, which I am pursuing. It is accepted that improvement needs to be at some pace. It is expected that there will be significant changes in the coming months.

SOMERSET RURAL YOUTH PROJECT

The organisation has been in contact with SCC to look at ways in which it can support activities, particularly in relation to early interventions for young people. Now that the contract for the National Citizenship Service has been received there are plans to link this to the DofE scheme.

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES – APRIL 2015

1st	Meeting with SCC leader re: proposals for addressing OSTED issues
6th	Donyatt VH ploughmans lunch
7th	Knowle St. Giles annual meeting
13th	Corporate Parent Group
	Somerset Governor's Group
	Neroche re: Willow Schools Cooperative Trust
14th	Ilminster Town Council
15th	Area West
17th	Somerset Rural Youth Project
18th	Horton jumble sale

20th	RD&E NHS FT Council of Governors
23rd	Willow Schools meeting
24th	RD&E NHS FT member & Patient Engagement
26th	Iminster Christmas lights quiz