

ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR REPORT NOVEMBER 2014

Apologies for the slight delay in submitting this report – I have been away on holiday.

COUNTY COUNCIL – Rosemary Collinson has been appointed as interim Director of Children’s Services, and interviews are due to take place shortly to recruit permanently to this post. At full council opposition members called for a vote of no confidence in the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Frances Nicholson, which was not put into effect, causing some discussion.

As a result of contact by members of the public I have met with SCC’s CEO, Pat Flaherty, and the officer responsible for Adult Social Care for Learning Disabilities, Mel Lock, to discuss ongoing concerns in relation to both children’s and adult social care.

Adult Care - The current backlog of review meetings is to be cleared by March 2015. The provision of suitable care home placements remains difficult, with demand increasing. The appointment of a new manager for SSDC Social Services will take effect by the end of the year, in addition to other changes relating to previous poor performance.

A proposal has been put forward to form a Somerset River Authority that will provide a central point for tackling flooding issues. Questions were asked over whether funding for this would be found via precept or from central government.

The mid term financial plan was approved unanimously at full council. SCC is intending to actively pursue increased devolution of government funding to enable greater say and flexibility over local spending.

Customer Access Strategy - There is a move towards providing one central community reception hub for handling enquiries for police, county and district offices, and libraries.

SSDC – There was much public interest at full council during the discussion over the proposed provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) and the granting of taxi licenses. It has been agreed that all new applications for licenses must meet the WAV requirement until a minimum of 20% of total hackney carriages in SSDC are compliant. Consideration for exceptions is to be made for single taxi owners. Agreement was reached for SSDC to provide a grant of £3.5m to the Somerset Waste Partnership for new refuse collection vehicles.

Due to a recent change in legislation that permits members of the public to record council meetings £20k of funding was agreed for the purchase of 3 audio/visual cameras, for an initial trial run enabling SSDC to record meetings and make them publicly available.

With increased fund raising activity in local communities and a lack of understanding of the Licensing Regulations, I have obtained information on permissible activity, which can be provided on request.

SCC SCRUTINY – see below for highways related matters. A report was received on the allocation of S106 monies and the impact for school places. The consultation period for the library service review will continue until January. Closer scrutiny of elderly care services is planned at future meetings. A meeting at Muchelney House over Extra Care Housing has highlighted the desire for independence, but with 24/7 support, and concern over a lack of continuity amongst staff.

HIGHWAYS

At this month’s PC meeting in Broadway the issue of parked cars causing visual obstruction along Brookside was raised. The local PCSO, John Martin, has agreed to monitor the situation.

Increased funding cuts planned for next year has meant that SCC will no longer be able to provide cover in areas where there are no resources to continue work provided in the past. e.g. cutting back hedgerows, except where there is danger to highway safety.

Confirmation has been received that the proposed scheme to reduce speeding through Horton has been agreed, with implementation planned for this coming financial year.

Street Lighting – an ongoing problem within Ilminster. Faults on adopted highways (those maintained at public expense) can be reported on 0845 601 0939 (weekdays 8am – 5pm). Callers should provide as much detail as possible to enable identification of the location. Repairs should be completed in 5 working days. Emergency out of hours reporting - 0845 795 9639.

To report lighting problems on unadopted roads and SSDC owned car parks/amenity areas call 01935 462462.

Funding has now been confirmed for schemes including the upgrading of the A303 and A358, although there are fears that the bulk of available funds will be spent on the Stonehenge tunnel. Concern has been raised about long term road works in the division and the disruption caused by lengthy diversions, in addition to several issues relating to lack of appropriate notification and changes to signage. To report pothole defects call 0845 345 9155 or email roadsandtransportSD@somerset.gov.uk. An Ilminster resident is keen to explore reducing speeds within the town limits to 20mph. **Drains** – across the district ongoing issues with the unblocking of drains, and repairs to existing ones, continues to raise concern and frustration at the lack of action, which I am pursuing. **THE BEACON** - Work on the Beacon should be complete by the middle of December. **RIGHTS OF WAY** – Despite requests by local residents, I have yet to receive a response to enquiries made in relation to the current situation over the status of Winterhay Lane, which is very disappointing.

PLANNING

Broadway – Applications for both Varden's Farm and Tanyard have yet to come before Area West as it is understood that further investigative work is required before planning officers can submit their recommendations for consideration. Concern remains over the lack of infrastructure in the village to accommodate two such developments simultaneously.

SSDC LOCAL PLAN – Final modifications were agreed and submitted to the inspector on 7th November.

AREA WEST – I was unable to attend this month's meeting. Online minutes/agendas have not been updated since July 2014, which I have reported.

EDUCATION – At a meeting of the Ilminster Education Foundation the news of the death of the Chairman, and founder trustee, Alan West, was received with sadness. The election of a new Chair has been deferred to the next meeting.

In total 26 renewal grants of £360 each was reported, with just 7 new grants allocated this year, thought to be due to fewer applications. Details of eligibility criteria can be provided on request for those interested. The long term forecast for school places shows that there are sufficient places available, but not necessarily in the right locations; this does not take into account any planned development in the division. For Early Years (ages 2-4) the take up of government funding is 98% and across the county there is high reliance on private provision. Childcare for parents working shifts is a particular problem. Places are at capacity, where funding can only be granted for providers deemed 'good' or 'outstanding'. Currently only 40% of 2 years olds are catered for; this is due to a significant rise in the birth rate and the rapid increase in new housing developments; developers contribute just 3% towards the cost of new schools in the area and there is a lack of communication between districts and county over small developments. SCC has a statutory obligation to provide school places but receives no resources to meet this. Consideration is being given to 'double timetabling' which has been successful in other areas of the country. GCSE results in Somerset are still below expectations but the introduction of the Somerset Challenge is expected to address this.

SAFEGUARDING – Referral rates for Children's Social Care are high and in addition to gaining more information on the underlying issues it is intended to provide a greater link between Adult & Children's Social Care Services. Self harm is now one of the key areas of focus, along with possible training for taxi drivers with regard to identifying signs of sexual exploitation of children.

SOMERSET GOVERNORS' STRATEGY GROUP – Helen Roper is due to begin her role as the new Executive Officer for Somerset Governors this coming week, with a view to developing a strategy for greater governor engagement and influence across all Somerset schools.

HEALTH – The planned Red Cross first aid courses across the division has at last begun, but with a lower take up than previous interest indicated. Courses will continue in the new year. Contact Diane Bale for place/venue details on d.bale1965@gmail.com.

It was disappointing to learn that by mid November 20 out of 55 county councillors had not applied for the allocation of their £5k Health & Wellbeing money.

At a meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Board, the new Mental Health Strategy outlined plans for individual care plans, for anyone with any kind of medical condition, and an increased focus on prevention,

Out of Hours and 111 service – the current contractor, SW Ambulance Service, has failed to deliver in several key areas, and a new contract has now been issued to 'Northern Doctors'.

A report was received from Musgrove Hospital over the failings of an external provider of Ophthalmic services, causing harm to patients, believed to be due to sub-contracting.

CORPORATE PARENT BOARD – Nothing further to report since last month, apart from the release of the survey/questionnaires in relation to placement stability.

I continue to support Somerset in Care Council with their regular activities and meetings.

ROYAL DEVON AND EXETER NHS FT – At the recent joint governor/board development day a report was received in relation to Clinical Commissioning Group activity and funding. Currently funding levels locally are £1100 per person p.a., based on age, population demography and outcomes, which is considerably lower than in other areas of the country.

The £30bn.funding gap across the NHS, and the problems this is causing for all NHS FTs, has been widely reported, where the intention is to close the gap by 2020, by way of further cuts; 79% of all FTs are currently in deficit.

Plans are in place to enable patients to have greater control over their treatment, with increased use of the internet to enable access to information.

A recent pilot of the patient appointment reminder service has shown a 3% reduction of 'no shows.'

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

3rd	Somerset Governors' Strategy Group Ashill Parish Council
4th	Meeting with Red Cross Area Representative – Heidi Ling Broadway Parish Council
5th	Chard Museum annual lunch SCC – Member Development Personal Development Review Winsham Parish Council
6th	Meeting with SCC CEO re: Children's Services Director Meeting with SSSC Social Services SSSC Full Council
9th	Remembrance Day Services – Broadway & Ilminster
10th	Ilminster Education Foundation – as SCC representative Royal Devon & Exeter NHS FT – joint board development day Donyatt Parish Council Dowlish Wake Parish Council
11th	SCC – School placement planning briefing
12th	SCC - Mel Lock re; Adult Social Care
13th	SCC – Health & Wellbeing Board Rotary Youth Leadership Awards interviews
16th	Somerset in Care Council meeting
17th	Royal Devon & Exeter NHS FT – Member & Patient Engagement Group Chaffcombe Parish Council Horton Parish Council
18th	Rotary Youth Leadership Awards interviews Ilminster Town Council – full council
19th	SCC – full council SSSC Area West committee – (not attended)
20th	Broadway Amateur Theatre Society performance
21st	SCC – Scrutiny Policies & People