

**ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR REPORT OCTOBER 2014**

**COUNTY COUNCIL** – The departure of Peter Lewis, interim Director of Children's Services, has been controversial and much publicised. Whilst the search is now on for a permanent director, his role is being taken over by the Chief Exec., Pat Flaherty. A good deal of heated discussion took place at this month's full council meeting around current SCC pay policy and the appointment of agency interim staff.

I have been contacted by several members of the public during the month in relation to health and social care, often with a link to mental health issues. I am following these up on their behalf.

There is ongoing concern over the ability of SCC to deliver the required level of savings this financial year, with the key area of overspend in Children's Services. Several options are to be considered to resolve the current situation, along with a recruitment drive for volunteers to provide Social Care Transport Services.

I also attended a back bench peer review meeting where the key area for discussion was over the effectiveness of communication at SCC and the format of paperwork for meetings.

**SCRUTINY** – see below for highways related matters. At the next meeting of this committee the subject of S106 agreements is to be considered. Grants of £3000 are available for parishes that wish to consider having their own lengthsmen.

The library service review consultation period is now live, and continues until January. Currently there are no proposals to close premises. Plans are to expand home delivery service.

**HIGHWAYS**

Street lighting was out in Silver Street for some time, exceeding the 28 day statutory legal requirement for reinstatement. I must reiterate that as your County Councillor I am only in a position to act on such matters if I am informed as soon as possible.

I have obtained copies of the documentation in relation to contractual terms for highways contractors, to help provide an explanation of issues over service provision. Despite residents' concerns over other issues the key consideration in terms of money and resources is clearly on safety.

Questions have been raised about applying bitumen over the summer months and the disruption this causes – apparently it has a much longer lifespan if work is carried out at this time of year.

Drains throughout the county are to be tagged as part of the gully emptying programme over the next two years to aid the reporting of future problems.

A358/A303 upgrade approval – this is expected in the government's autumn statement in December.

In relation to parking and traffic management issues Gary Warren has now taken over from Colin Fletcher as the officer for this area. At the planned meeting with officers from Town, County and District a number of concerns were raised; these included resident parking issues within the town, availability and location of disabled spaces and speeding in some areas.

Resident parking schemes can be requested but require a 'scheme champion' who must obtain 80% agreement from local residents.

The current location of the Berry's Coach stop within town, and difficulties with access was raised, with alternatives being considered.

Ongoing problems with blocked drains, which exacerbate flooding issues during periods of heavy rain were raised and an action plan to be put in place. A meeting has been arranged with parish representatives from Knowle St. Giles to address specific issues there.

With increased focus on performing 'statutory' duties as funding becomes tighter, discussion has been ongoing with some parishes in relation to the necessary skills and resources required to enable them to perform some tasks locally e.g. amenity grass cutting. Residents are urged to contact me where overgrown hedges/trees etc. are impeding on the ability of drivers to see roadside signs, causing a hazard.

My understanding is that many of the issues relating to Ilminster itself, will involve further discussion with the Town Council.

One key area that I am pursuing is the issue of the current lack of response from Highways in relation to planning applications, except where major developments are to be considered. At present there is no formal consultation with the local Highways Officer, who would have valuable local knowledge to input.

**THE BEACON** - Work on the Beacon has now started, a week earlier than anticipated. During carnival week, through funding obtained from Rotary, businesses affected by a downturn in footfall as a result of the road closure were able to receive publicity, which was well received. There is ongoing frustration by some in relation to the failure to obtain a direct meeting with the SCC Cabinet member, Harvey Siggs.

**RIGHTS OF WAY** – Winterhay Lane – nothing further to report.

### **PLANNING**

**Ashill** – Regular weekly updates are being submitted by SSDC's enforcement officer in relation to activity on the proposed gypsy traveller site along Cad Lane, with nothing further to report as of now.

**Broadway** – Applications for Varden's Farm and Tanyard have now been formally submitted, with comments from the Parish Council and others being sought prior to a decision being made.

**AREA WEST** – It was announced that free parking would be available in Chard and Ilminster car parks on 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December to support local Christmas shopping activity.

All councillors were in agreement over dissatisfaction with the present situation, that permits developers to apply for amendments to conditions agreed at the time of planning approval in relation to affordable housing provision. A letter is to be sent to the Sec. of State expressing this view.

A recent housing needs survey revealed that those expressing local villages in Neroche Ward as their first choice for housing were:- Ashill (2); Broadway (7); Donyatt (2), with a demand for 1 or 2 bed properties.

The recent Hastoe development of 6 properties in Horton has yielded income of £129,996 from the Homes & Development Agency, and an SSDC grant of £48,000.

**COUNTY FARMS** – There is nothing further to report for the moment but development opportunities in relation to the local plan are expected to be considered, along with possible solar energy generation and consideration given to the conversion of barns from agriculture to residential use.

**EDUCATION** – I met with both county and district planning officers in relation to planned development at Fiveways Special School, where there is increased complexity in relation to the needs of those attending.

**SAFEGUARDING** – Overall performance in South Somerset remains below an acceptable level, largely caused by the difficulty in recruiting permanent social workers. Plans are in place to address this soonest where there is recognition of the serious nature of the situation.

**SOMERSET GOVERNORS' STRATEGY GROUP** – The Chief Executive Officer vacancy has now been filled, by Helen Roper, who is due to take up her post in January. Her key role will be in representing and supporting the governing bodies of all maintained schools across the county.

**HEALTH** – Organising the planned Red Cross first aid courses across the division has proved more challenging than I had anticipated, mainly due to the lack of available trainers, and the fact that the funds were only released this week. I have now recruited Diane Bale to assist with coordinating this. She can be contacted on [dbale1965@gmail.com](mailto:dbale1965@gmail.com).

Two confirmed dates, with places for up to 30 people on each are 25<sup>th</sup> Nov./2<sup>nd</sup> Dec., both at The Shrubbery Hotel.

**CORPORATE PARENT BOARD** – The first two meetings of the Placement Stability sub-group have proved useful, with early data identifying a particular lack of stability amongst young teenage boys. I have now asked for further information to be able to establish links to types of placement and other issues affecting this outcome where there are peaks or troughs in stability.

During Leaving Care Week I was challenged to live on benefits of £42 for the week, which I did, with much comment on social media and in the press. I continue to play an active part in supporting children in care across the county, where again South Somerset does not perform as well as other districts at present.

**ROYAL DEVON AND EXETER NHS FT** – I participated in a recruitment session at the Met. Office, this month, in addition to attending a Healthwatch presentation, which revealed that whilst 6 out of 10 patients are satisfied with the treatment they receive, 9 out of 10 feel that NHS services could be improved. There is particular concern over GP appointment waiting times, and also transport services for patients.

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## **Agenda No 8**

In order to positively influence future decisions relating to the NHS it is important for patients and their families to register as members of the local NHS FT, giving the legal right to be consulted prior to any decisions being made affecting NHS service provision.

**ILMINSTER DIVISION – SSDC/SCC COUNCILLOR MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES OCT. 2014**

1st	Ilminster Carnival Committee Quiz
	Winsham PC – not attended, see above
4th	Ilminster Carnival
7th	Somerset Schools' Forum
	Chillington constituent meeting
10th	Somerset Governor Strategy Group – CEO interview shortlisting
	Chaffcombe Harvest Supper
11th	Purple Field Productions book sale
12th	Ashill Harvest Festival
	Donyatt Harvest Service
13th	Royal Devon & Exeter NHS FT – Council of Governors and hospital radio interview
14th	SCC Scrutiny – Policies and Place
	SCC – Harvey Siggs – meeting re: Beacon
	Fiveways Special School – planning meeting
	Knowle St. Giles Parish Meeting
	Ilminster Town Council – full council meeting
15th	SSDC – Area West
16th	Broadway Village Hall fund raising event
17th	Ilminster Town Council – meeting re; parking
19th	Somerset in Care Council – monthly meeting
20th	Royal Devon & Exeter NHS FT – Met. Office recruitment
21st	Broadway Harvest Supper
22nd	SCC – Full Council
	SCC – Peer Group Review
23rd	Somerset Governor Strategy Group – CEO interviews
23rd	Fiveways Special School – Staffing
24th	SCC – Corporate Parent sub-group – Placement Stability
	SCC Scrutiny – Policies and People
26th	Ashill Harvest Lunch
28th	SSDC - Gold Star Awards, Octagon
31st	Donyatt – Rev. Tatham farewell service

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

I expect to be away for a few days at the end of Nov., but will endeavour to submit my monthly report on time.