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## South Somerset District Council

**Draft Minutes** of a meeting of the **Area South Committee** held at the **Council Chamber Council Offices Brympton Way** on **Wednesday 2 December 2015**.

(2.00 - 3.45 pm)

**Present:**

**Members:**

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| John Clark    | Graham Oakes  |
| John Field    | Wes Read      |
| Nigel Gage    | David Recardo |
| Andy Kendall  | Gina Seaton   |
| Sarah Lindsay | Peter Seib    |
| Tony Lock     |               |

**Officers:**

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Jo Boucher         | Democratic Services Officer                             |
| Helen Rutter       | Assistant Director (Communities)                        |
| Catherine Hansford | Welfare Advice Team Leader                              |
| Neil Waddleton     | Section 106 Monitoring Officer                          |
| Angela Kerr        | Chief Executive Officer, Citizens Advice South Somerset |

*NB: Where an executive or key decision is made, a reason will be noted immediately beneath the Committee's resolution.*

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**77. Minutes of previous meeting (Agenda Item 1)**

The minutes of the Area South meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015 copies of which had been circulated, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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**78. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cathy Bakewell, Gye Dibben, Peter Gubbins, Kaysar Hussain, Mike Lock, Alan Smith and Rob Stickland.

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**79. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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**80. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)**

There were no members of the public present.

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## 81. Chairman's announcements (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised members:

- That at the September meeting members agreed that for a 3 month trial planning applications be discussed last on the agenda and at least not before 3pm. However as there were no planning applications determined in October and none again this month we feel it only fair we give it at least until February in order to give it a fair go!
- As there may be a planning application for Lidl coming in Jan and possibly another one. if it does come, that is all that will be on the agenda. It has been suggested that if members agree we may delay the start time to after 3pm. Members will be notified in due course.
- The Chairman sends his apologies for today's meeting as he is attending the opening of a new Work Hub project in Bristol.

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## 82. Reports from representatives on outside organisations (Agenda Item 6)

There were no Reports from representatives on outside organisations.

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## 83. Highways Update Report (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman informed members that Mike Fear from SSC Highways would not be attending the meeting and therefore updated members that following the financial announcement regarding 'cuts' the message from Highways is that it will be 'business as usual' with the cuts not affecting our normal service levels.

During discussion member's expressed disappointment that a representative from SCC Highway had not attended the meeting and requested that Mike Fear attend the February committee with a more detailed and updated report regarding schemes within Area South.

Members were informed that the appropriate winter maintenance provisions were in place to ensure the town centre would be clear and safe this winter.

Members noted the report and requested that a Highway representative attend the February Area South Committee with a fully updated and detailed report of the schemes within Area South.

**NOTED**

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## 84. SSDC Welfare Advice Work in South Somerset (Agenda Item 8)

The Welfare Benefits Team Leader presented the report as set out in the agenda and with the aid of a powerpoint presentation proceeded to give members an overview of the work of the Welfare Benefits Team including:

- Breakdown of annual increase in South Somerset, noting that the total figure secured for clients in Welfare Benefit payments is over 10 times more than the actual cost of the service
- 'Where we are now' – Local Assistance Scheme where criteria set by County and administered by CAB and Universal Credit roll out in South Somerset.. The current number of cases is approximately 1100 according to DWP figures.
- Households effected by welfare reform including Spare Room Subsidy, Benefit Cap and Discretionary Housing Payments.
- 3 saved tenancies equating to a saving of £7,890
- 21 maintained Tenancies
- Continuous partnership working with other agencies including local MP's.

During the ensuing discussion, the Welfare Benefits Team Leader noted the comments of members and responded to questions on points of detail including:

- Anyone receiving Housing Benefit is eligible to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payments, which are for claimants struggling to meet their Housing Costs. However the future of DHP's is still uncertain. The Welfare Benefits Team Leader was happy to provide further information regarding funding channels and would inform the member direct.
- Early intervention is the key to saving and maintaining tenancies and expense further down the line. Each case brings its differing issues where the team attempt to prevent knock on effects to the client's physical and mental well-being.
- Noted questions regarding the problems arisen from the Spare Room Subsidy and the number of people who have downsized because of this. It was advised that the Housing and Welfare Manager would answer any questions and include the relevant information in the Local Housing Needs report which would be presented at the February meeting.
- Clients can request food parcels through various agencies. These are taken case by case however the team can also request them should the situation arise, these are mainly due to delay in benefit payments.

The Chairman thanked the Welfare Benefits Team Leader and the excellent work of her team.

**NOTED**

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## **85. South Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau (SSCAB) (Agenda Item 9)**

The Chairman welcomed Angela Kerr, Chief Executive Officer, Citizens Advice South Somerset to the meeting. With the aid of a powerpoint presentation she informed members of the work and future development of Citizens Advice South Somerset. Points mentioned during her presentation included the following:

- The aim of the service was to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives;
- Between April and September 2015 Citizens Advice South Somerset helped 2125 clients from South Somerset;
- 47.11% of total clients were from Area South.
- 1001 clients in Area South were helped between April and September 2015.
- The main client issues were around benefits and tax credits, debt, housing and employment;

- The service could be accessed through the telephone, email and by drop in.
- Level of advice people need included help with maintenance costs, fuel costs and food parcels (these could be up to 8-10 a week).
- The service worked closely with the other Citizens Advice organisations in Somerset and nationally. By working together benefited from: Adviceline, Somerset Advice Network, Somerset Advice Strategy and an Online Referral System;
- The service was currently recruiting for volunteers. It took between 4 to 6 months to train an adviser. The level of knowledge required for the role was reasonably high and also had access to specialist lawyers.
- Ambitions for the future – the service had just added a day at the Balsam Centre, Wincanton. Discussions were currently taking place about bringing advice to Chard two days a week based at the Boden Centre;
- The service was looking at how they could use Skype more effectively;
- Currently a huge drive to recruit volunteers which had increased from 22 to 43 and hoped to have 60 volunteers in next 12 months.

During the ensuing discussion, the Chief Executive Officer, Citizens Advice South Somerset noted the comments of members and responded to questions on points of detail which included:

- Approximately 35% of grant funding was provided to the CAB by SSDC.
- The service worked with various fuel agencies to provide help and support regarding winter maintenance and payments.
- Welcomed help and support in advertising the service to make it more user friendly and to bring the service into the community to make it more accessible.
- One of the challenges for the service was the increasing migrant population and the language barrier.
- It was agreed to circulate a copy of the presentation slides to members of the Committee with the minutes of the meeting.
- The service worked effectively with SSDC from its main base at Petter's House. The service only had one Welfare Benefit Adviser funded to undertake specific case work so was not in competition with SSDC.
- Ambitions for the future – although discussions were currently taking place about delivery of the service within other areas of the district, services in Area South would not be reduced.

The Chairman thanked Angela Kerr, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice South Somerset for attending the meeting.

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## **86. Section 106 Obligations (Agenda Item 10)**

The Section 106 Monitoring Officer presented the report as detailed in the agenda and explained the background to his role and the changes made in the process for monitoring.

He also informed members that:

- The three main key sites within Area South were deliberately omitted from the report as he would be bringing a further detailed report early in the New Year regarding Lyde Road, Brimsmore and Lufton key sites due to their significant nature.

- Clarified two significant changes in legislation that will affect the way we are able to seek financial planning obligations in the future:
  - 1. Policy HG4: Provision of Affordable Housing 1 -5 dwellings – Small sites below the threshold for a full affordable housing contribution will be expected, where it is viable to do so to pay a commuted sum.
  - 2. CIL Regulations (2011, amended 2013 & 2014)- from April 2015, no more contributions may be sought/collected in respect of specific projects through a S106 agreement if 5 or more obligations have been entered into since April 2010. This means in future no more contributions will be sought within Area South for swimming pools, indoor tennis and the district wide sports hall through future applications.

During discussion the Chairman informed members that a request has been made to SCC for an update report to Area South Committee regarding S106 money collected by the county council and the performance/progression on Highway's S106's/agreements for developments within Area South.

The Section S106 Monitoring Officer presented the monitoring log report (Appendix A) confirming that all local contributions are spent on local infrastructure. Agreement had recently been made at Full Council that some strategic contributions are committed to support the Westland Leisure Complex and its facilities.

He also confirmed that overage clauses are monitored and if required are reassessed in line with any economic change that can be renegotiated should it be deemed necessary.

During a short debate, members discussed the provision of affordable housing and the relevant affordable housing contribution charge as detailed in the report. It was confirmed that only small sites of 5 dwellings or below will incur this charge where it is viable to do so.

Members thanked the officer for his excellent work and informative report and endorsed the actions taken in respect of the monitoring of Section 106 Planning Obligations.

**NOTED**

## **87. Forward Plan (Agenda Item 11)**

Members requested that a Highway Representative attend the February meeting with a more detailed and updated report regarding schemes within Area South.

Councillor John Clark requested that a Economic Development Update Report become a six monthly report rather than annually due to the complexity and relevance of the service within Area South.

Members requested that an update report be brought to committee from the Project Board regarding the Westland Leisure Complex delivery.

Councillor Graham Oakes requested that following his motion at Full Council regarding the proposal that the council investigates the feasibility and cost of the provision of bike lockers in the towns of South Somerset a report be brought to Area South Committee to allow members to debate the possible provision and location of them within Area South.

- RESOLVED:** (1) that the Area South Forward Plan and the comments of Members be noted.
- (2) that the reports identified by Members be added to the Area South Forward Plan.

*(Voting: Without dissent)*

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**88. Appeals (For Information Only) (Agenda Item 12)**

Members noted the appeals.

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.....  
Chairman

.....  
Date

# Citizens Advice South Somerset

A presentation for  
South Somerset District Council  
Area South Committee

Angela Kerr  
Chief Executive Officer

Citizens Advice South Somerset



## Agenda

- CA South Somerset – Aims and Principles
- Vision and Mission
- How we have helped so far this year
- Where our clients are from
- Area South – coverage
- Area South – client Issues
- Area South – preferred contact channel
- Development choices
- Advice services in Somerset
- Volunteers
- Ambitions for the future

Citizens Advice South Somerset



## Our Aims and Principles

We aim to **provide the advice** people need for the problems they face and **improve the policies and practices** that affect people's lives.

We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

Citizens Advice South Somerset



## Vision and Mission

Seeking and using advice becomes an established and valued part of everyday life for the citizens of our community

We will provide high quality, seamless and responsive services meeting our clients' needs and enabling them to overcome their problems and improve their life chances

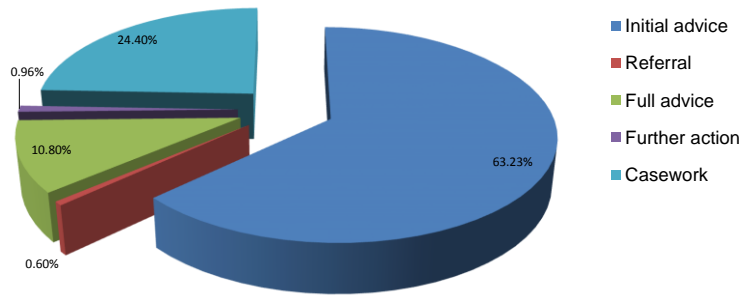
Citizens Advice South Somerset





# How we help

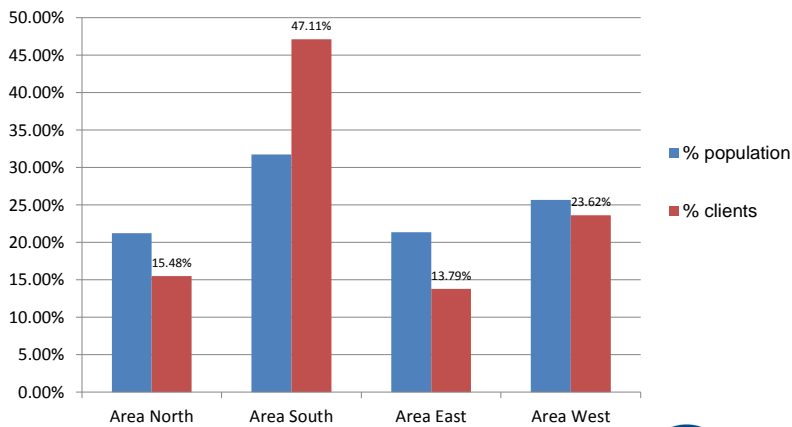
Between April and September 2015, we helped 2125 clients from South Somerset



Citizens Advice South Somerset



# Where we help

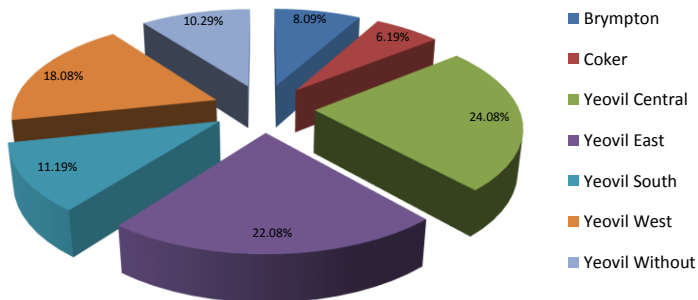


Citizens Advice South Somerset



# Area South

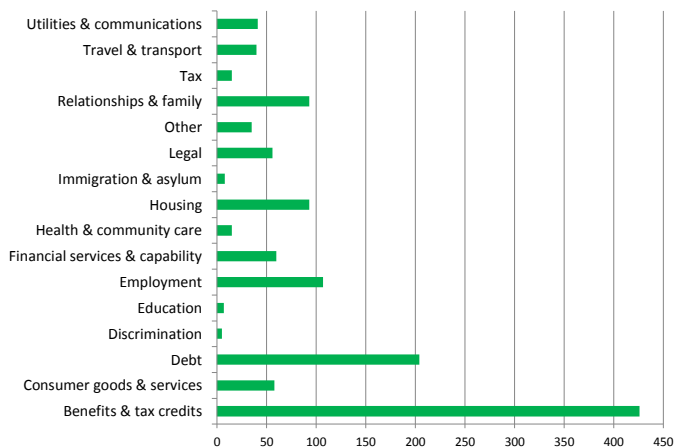
1001 clients helped between April and September 2015



Citizens Advice South Somerset



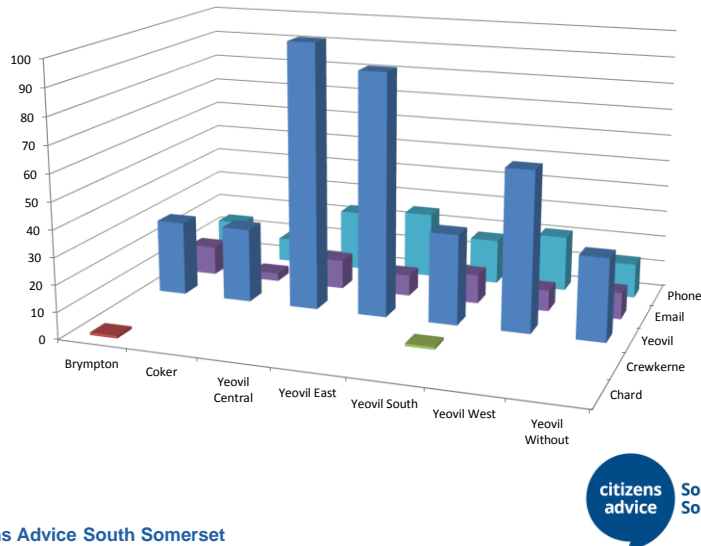
# Area South – client issues



Citizens Advice South Somerset



## Area South – first contacts



Citizens Advice South Somerset



## Development Choices

- Where people need to access advice
- How people access advice – digital, phone
- What level of advice people need
- People in crisis and the Local Assistance Scheme

Citizens Advice South Somerset



## Advice Services in Somerset

We work closely with the other Citizens Advice organisations in Somerset. By working together we all benefit from:

- Adviceline
- SAN – Somerset Advice Network
- Somerset Advice Strategy 2015-18
- OLR – online referral system

Citizens Advice South Somerset



## Volunteers

We are currently recruiting volunteers for the following roles:

- Volunteer Adviser
- Volunteer Receptionist
- Volunteer Administrator
- Volunteer Casework Assistant
- Social Policy Volunteer

Citizens Advice South Somerset



# Ambitions for the future

**Advice at the  
Balsam Centre  
every Monday  
10am - 3pm**

**3 ways we can start helping you**

- 1 Come along to our weekly drop in
- 2 Call our Advisers on **03444 889623**
- 3 Contact us online [southsomcab.org.uk](http://southsomcab.org.uk)

**citizens advice South Somerset**

If you'd like to become a volunteer please call **01935 847675**

Citizens Advice South Somerset

**Would you volunteer  
to help us pilot a new  
Skype advice service?**

We are looking to train "Skype buddies" to join our outreach teams and help clients to use Skype to speak to one of our specialist advisers.

This free and easy to use technology means we can bring advice service to many more people.

We want to ensure that everyone in our community is getting the best help and advice possible.

**citizens advice South Somerset**

So if you're tech savvy and have some time to spare during the day, call June on **01935 847675** or visit our website [southsomcab.org.uk](http://southsomcab.org.uk)

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Company No: 02076444  
VAT No: 254 589 1000  
Incorporated in England



Angela Kerr  
01935 847661  
[www.southsomcab.org.uk](http://www.southsomcab.org.uk)  
[angela.kerr@southsomcab.org.uk](mailto:angela.kerr@southsomcab.org.uk)

Citizens Advice South Somerset

