

Area East Annual Parish & Town Council Meeting Summary of Issues Raised – For information

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Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of the topics discussed and the issues raised at the Annual Parish and Town Council Meeting

Public Interest

All Area East residents are represented at the local level by their Parish Councillors. Issues that are not within their direct control can be taken up with the District Council, County Council and other public service organisations. This Annual Meeting covered topics of interest to Parishes and this year had a focus on the Community Justice Panel, the lorry watch scheme, CIL/section106 and environmental work including flooding.

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Background

Each year the Area Committee hosts an Annual Parish Meeting. This enables the District Council to share information about topics we know to be of interest to parishes. It also enables parishes across Area East to come together to discuss locally important issues and raise matters of concern with the District Council. The Area East Committee receives a summary of the event with any issues raised and actions taken arising from the meeting.

The Event

This was hosted at Churchfield on Monday 23 January 2017. Half an hour was allocated before the meeting started to enable informal discussions with Officers and invited drop-in guests from other services, including Streetscene, Development Control and Area Development.

The event was well attended with 21 Parishes represented (40 people), 6 District Councillors and 6 SSDC/Agency staff present. Cllr Nick Weeks welcomed Parishes and said that feedback helps us to making best use of our AEC resources and helps to set priorities for the coming year.

The Area Development Team Lead outlined some of the pressures facing SSDC and its communities as a result of changes to how local government is to be funded in future. He highlighted that SSDC has to find up to a further £5.5 million of budget savings over the next 4 years as revenue support grant disappears. He outlined some of the key changes that will be needed to meet the challenging target and explained the principle aims of the Transformation process and Income generation work. This is a good time for parishes to work with other local authorities to take more control over locally important assets and services to protect and enhance community life. SSDC is open to ideas and proposals from parishes.

Community Justice Panel – Restorative Justice – Emma Bourne

Emma gave a brief overview of the principles of restorative justice, background of the Community Justice Panel and the work that they do. The main points were that the Restorative Justice process, which brings victims together with offenders in a facilitated panel, was not a soft option and had a sound track record of preventing reoffending rates. Emma gave some examples of cases which had had particularly successful outcomes. She explained that the Panel is always in need of volunteers but that the main point of the presentation was to raise awareness of the work.

Q&A session:

Q – Is Restorative Justice only used to deal with lower level issues?

A – It used to be used mainly to resolve low level issues with a view to preventing young people in particular getting a criminal record. It has also been effective in dealing with neighbour disputes. All offenders should be offered RJ as an option but for more serious offences, this forms part of the sentencing rather than an option to avoid prosecution

Q – Is there any evidence regarding the effect on re-offending rates?

A – Evidence shows that there is a 17-27% reduction in re-offending where RJ is used

Q – Can it be applied to groups ie: Town Councils?

A – Potentially mediation could be used to resolve issues around vandalism, etc.

Q – Can this approach be used if either the victim or offender is a foreign national?

A – There is nothing preventing RJ being used in cases involving foreign nationals.

Lorry Watch Scheme – Mike Brownlow (Bruton Town Council)

Mike described the problems that have been experienced with HGVs travelling through Bruton despite the weight restriction. He outlined the steps that have been taken to try to address the issues and the aim to establish a wider group of representatives of communities/users of the A371. Key issues are:

- Signage with new signs at Grove Cross given as one example that creates confusion
- Sat Nav routes but also the users of sat nav

The local speed watch group is working with their PCSO to establish a 'Lorry Watch' group. It is hoped that by recording the right details of HGV movements within the restricted area, the Police will be able to identify the business and, if not exempt, send letters to encourage them to stop.

Q&A session:

Q – Ilchester did something similar but a volunteer had windows smashed as a result

A – Investigating an online reporting system to make the reporting anonymous

Q – Are there any legal restrictions on tractors, which can cause damage to the verges etc?

A – Not known but will research and respond.

A number of potential ways to help were suggested including work done by Exmoor National Park to negotiate changes to sat nav routes and an existing management plan for the stretch of the A359 between Mudford and Sparkford.

Section 106 and CIL – James Divall and Neil Waddleton

The presentation was given, key points included:

- Section 106 contributions can only be secured for certain things
- Some items are local eg: Community Halls, play areas, etc. and some items are for District wide facilities eg: the Octagon Theatre
- Funds also secured for Education, Highways, etc.
- Evidence led audits based on quality and quantity of existing facilities have been carried out and used by SSDC Community Health & Leisure to request contributions
- Area Development has been working with Planning and Community Health & Leisure to produce accounts showing all monies secured and what they can be used for
- As of 1st April 2017 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will mean that money will be collected in a different way
- CIL will still only be secured for some things but 15% will go to the PC/TC
- Evidence in local Parish/Community Plans can help to secure the right contributions

Q&A session:

Q – Will CIL replace S106?

A – CIL will apply to all development from April 2017 but 106 will still be used for some infrastructure.

Q – When does money get paid by the developer?

A – Trigger points are agreed and set out in the legal agreement. These differ from case to case and can be linked to the viability of the scheme

Flooding and other difficult environmental situations – Chris Cooper, Streetscene

Chris explained that the subject of flooding could be covered by a number of different people working for a number of different organisations. The presentation included the following key points:

- Always serious risks/dangers when dealing with flooding
- There are different types of flooding
- Detailed the organisations/agencies involved in dealing with major incidences
- Overview of the support SSDC offers
- Outline of the effectiveness of various flood protection systems

Q&A session:

Q – Keinton Mandeville have had flooding issues related to new development. The Parish is frustrated that the issue had been identified at the planning stage but has now been realised.

A – Could be a number of different solutions depending on the detail. Chris requested more information.

Q – What is SSDC policy on drain clearance?

A – SCC responsibility as it is a highway drain. Gully sucking service offered by Streetscene at £11 per drain

Q – Can anything be done about the issue of rubbish (dropped from car/blown from recycling box) blocking the drains?

A – Litter-picking is an ongoing challenge but is done as much as is possible. Volunteer effort supported. Putting recycling out on the morning of collection rather than the night before and weighing it down would help, particularly if wind is predicted

A number of parish specific issues about a range of topics were raised by individual parish representatives. These are being followed up by the Area Development team.

Feedback on the event responses

Out of the 16 feedback forms handed in 3 rated the evening excellent, 10 rated the evening good and 3 acceptable. All 16 agreed the content was relevant. There was 1 *new* Parish/Town Councillor.

Future Events for Town and Parish Councils

An Annual Parish & Town Council Meeting is held in each of the 4 Areas. In between times the Area teams arrange other workshops and events for Parishes depending on need. Parishes enjoy a close working relationship with their Ward Members who will discuss and advise on how to take up matters of local concern. In addition, they receive agendas for and are warmly invited to attend the monthly Area East Committee meetings where they can raise any topics of interest or concern to their residents.

Financial Implications

There are no new financial implications as a direct result of this report

Corporate Priority Implications

This meets the following Corporate Aim:

- *To deliver well managed cost effective services valued by our customers*

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

Equality and Diversity Implications

Background Papers: *Notes of the Area East Annual Parish & Town Council Meeting held on 23rd January 2017;*