

## **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 parish led initiatives and Localism.

### **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 Tuesday 27 January 2015. Half an hour was allocated before the meeting started to enable informal discussions with Officers and invited drop-in guests from other services, including the Police, Leader Programme, Community Heat & Power Ltd., Streetscene, Cosmic and Area Development. This enabled some specific issues raised by parishes including:

- Provision of acceptable broadband service to rural communities
- To consider any possible action to address the proliferation of HGVs using routes through villages as short cuts as opposed to out of necessity
- The amount of housing in Wincanton & surrounding villages and the effect on the infrastructure eg: schools & hospitals

The event was well attended with 15 Parishes represented (25 people), 6 District Councillors and SSDC/Agency staff present. Cllr Nick Weeks welcomed Parishes. This was followed by presentations from invited speakers with a Q&A session after each presentation.

The event focused on:

**Community renewable energy schemes, getting a scheme that is right for your Parish – Julian Brooks - Community Heat & Power Ltd**

- Current Government has a community energy strategy, launched last year which offers considerable finance and support to communities wanting to develop and invest in a locally controlled scheme
- Neighbourhood Plans may want an element of renewable energy controlled by the community.
- UK is well behind some other EC countries such as Germany and Denmark
- The economics mean that local shareholders can get returns of 7% plus pa, social investment tax relief will make this particularly attractive. There are many community energy societies shooting up & some Local Authorities are setting these up as an income source, including community farms
- Commercial solar should also put aside some form of Community Benefit Fund of around £1,000/megawatt/year although this is via a unilateral
- Solar should only be approved on grade 3b or worse land where visual impact is low
- The technology is improving fast smaller panels generating more power. No subsidy will be required soon to make solar investment worthwhile.

In discussion the following main points were made:

- Concern about cumulative impact, it is the job of the LPA to control this and refuse poor proposals & run due diligence on developer claims about land classification
- Fracking is not a renewable energy source
- Communities can take advantage of local assets like water power,
- SSDC has advice & help available through Keith Wheaton-Green & Area Development Team

**Working with Streetscene – how the Parish Ranger scheme is helping Parishes to improve the local environment – Chris Cooper**

- Lengthsman schemes were popular but too costly to keep
- The Parish Ranger is an affordable package, offered by SSDC to allow parishes to buy cost effective, skilled help on a pay as you go basis
- It is popular with 20 parishes buying in and more joining
- £17/ hour +VAT for man and van, minimum half a day
- Anyone interested can contact Steve Fox for initial discussion

In discussion the following points were clarified:

- Manual drain clearance can target the 1 or 2 problem spots
- Service is quality assured with all insurance and risk assessments built in, including working on the roads
- In response to a question about why not use a local person? this method is very simple to use and costs are very competitive but of course a local contractor may be the best method for some parishes. That is a local judgment.
- Streetscene can work along-side community volunteers too, to make them more effective, address safety, loan equipment & so make limited funds stretch further

**How to use new technology to improve communication & marketing of your Parish – Lizzie Whitchurch, Cosmic**

- Despite low broadband speeds in rural areas parishes, community groups and businesses can make good use of web and mobile technology to help them deliver their message and interact with residents

- Cosmic are contracted as part of the superfast broadband programme to help communities and businesses develop these skills and reach the socially excluded
- Gmail account holders have a wide range of free tools to help with organisation and a responsive website that incorporates Dropbox and locks to enable individual organisations to update their records and news can reduce the burden on 1 or 2 people
- Parishes have been placed in small clusters and over the next 2 years (as SFBB roll out occurs) can request bespoke sessions to help develop digital skills, each cluster can have 2 business sessions and 2 community sessions without charge under the programme
- Parishes should initiate contact for their cluster. Queries and issues about the roll out of SFBB should be directed via the [www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk](http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk) website

### Some issues raised by Parish Councils

- a) Cucklington PM – Provision of acceptable broadband service to rural communities

*Response received from Connecting Devon & Somerset – update on Superfast Extension Programme (SFBB). Key points:*

- *All premises to have 2 Mbps broadband speed by Dec 2016*
- *Phase 1 to connect 90% of premises to SFBB (24+ Mbps) by end 2016 (funded)*
- *Phase 2 to connect a further 5% SFBB in more rural areas (funding in place in principle, SSDC up to £ 640 k) by end 2017*
- *100% SFBB by 2020*

*Fuller details on: [www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk](http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk)*

- b) Keinton Mandeville PC – To consider any possible action to address the proliferation of HGVs using routes through villages as short cuts as opposed to out of necessity

*Response received from Colin Fletcher, Traffic Engineer, SCC:*

- *We try to concentrate heavy vehicles onto 'A' class roads*
- *The B3151 and the B3153 link 'A' class roads giving access to central Somerset*
- *It would be unrealistic to consider formal weight limits on the B3153*
- *If HGVs use completely unsuitable minor roads we can consider imposing a restriction*

- c) South Cadbury/Sutton Montis – The amount of housing in Wincanton & surrounding villages and the effect on the infrastructure eg: schools & hospitals

*Response from Paul Wheatley, Principal Spatial Planner, SSDC:*

- *In Local Plan Wincanton one of 4 primary market towns*
- *Minimum of 703 homes between 2006 and 2028*
- *All South Somerset "rural settlements" to accommodate >2,400 homes to 2028*
- *Infrastructure delivery plan has assessed the impacts of this development – no major infrastructure issues which prevent this overall amount of growth*
- *Confirmed by the Inspector, Local Plan is sound*

- *SSDC keep the infrastructure delivery plan up to date, to understand the latest challenges & opportunities for infrastructure provision*
- *Updating it now, revised plan mid-2015*
- *Each planning application for housing is assessed for impact on infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals, etc.) by responsible agency, SCC schools, NHS hospitals, etc.*
- *Where site specific impacts are identified the applicant must show how these can be overcome & what mitigation should be provided*
- *SCC and NHS England South have standard ways in which the impacts are dealt with, this can be to ask for money to help pay for expansion/upgrades (this is usually set out in a Section 106 Agreement)*
- *The appropriate solution is then agreed between the organisation, the applicant and SSDC*

## **Feedback on the event responses**

### Abbas & Templecombe PC

*"A lot of information was communicated. Perhaps reps from Somerset County Council could also be invited ie: Highways footpath, during the coffee time to take questions" (Tim Chapman)*

*"A very useful and interesting meeting. I would have liked contact details of the speakers rather than just names. The 'Spatial Planner' should have attended the meeting to address problems that affect probably all communities" (John Grierson)*

*"Interesting meeting but will anything change as a result? Things are happening slower year or year – not good enough!" (Martin Batchelor)*

### Ansford PC

*"Informative & broad based. Well informed speakers. Good to put faces to names. Good for networking" (Helen Moore)*

### Barton St David PC

*"Very useful event – all topics were interesting and the speakers were all informative." (J Powell)*

*"Excellent coverage of issues" (P Robinson)*

### Castle Cary TC

*"Very interesting information about a variety of issues/subjects. A great shame that members of the audience talked at the same time as the speakers" (Liz Stokes)*

### North Cadbury & Yarlington PC

*"I thought the meeting was valuable and contained much of interest. However, it ran late and had to be curtailed. The same happened last year. I suggest that the agenda needs to be limited to include only the major/weighty issues and that the time needs to be extended by 30 minutes ie 6:30-9:00pm" (Malcolm Hunt)*

## **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 Councillors 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.

At present officers are making arrangements for a Flooding Meeting for all parishes. The aim is to look at investment plans which have recently been adopted to reduce the impact of future flooding across South Somerset and enable parishes to consider how they can take steps to reduce flood risks in their own parish. The aim is for this to be held in late March date to be confirmed

### **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 27<sup>th</sup> January 2015;*