

Area North Development Plan – Review of 2014-15

Strategic Director: Rina Singh, Place and Performance
Assistant Directors: Helen Rutter / Kim Close, Communities
Service Manager: Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)
Lead Officer: As above
Contact Details: charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462251

Purpose of the Report

To report on work undertaken by the Area Development (North) Service during 2014-15 and to look ahead to 2015-16.

Councillors are asked to contact the Area Development Manager (North) or other named contacts in advance of the meeting with requests for further information.

Public Interest

Area Development teams support the council's four Area Committees (North, South, East and West) to secure investment in local social, economic and environmental priorities for Yeovil, the market towns and rural areas of South Somerset.

This is our end of year report for 2014-15 which also looks ahead to 2015-16

Recommendations

- (1) Note and comment on the report and presentation.
- (2) Endorse (or amend) suggestions for the review and agreement of priorities for the Area Committee for 2015-16 and beyond in section 2.

1. About Area North Development – and what was achieved in 2014-15

The work of the Area Development Service broadly falls into three areas designed to support the community leadership role of the Area Committees and local ward members:-

- Community development - locally led innovation and investment;
- Local access to services (face to face and help to use services on-line)
- Community engagement and local partnerships – including our work with town and parish councils.

Neighbourhood Development Officers work within local communities (neighbourhoods) to make a difference to local social, economic or environmental well-being. We use the principles of 'Asset Based Community Development' to achieve this. This means building on what you've got and making the most of opportunities rather than a focus on 'gaps' and problems.

The team can assist with (or find other sources of help for) community led project planning, consultation, securing resources, delivery and monitoring. This work can include frequent contact lasting some years or be a very 'light touch' and this will depend on the needs of the

group and significance of the project. We also work with other SSDC services to help deliver the Council Plan and other relevant strategies.

- During 2014-15 Area North supported **74 local projects** or other defined areas of work based on the Committees priorities. This includes projects led by a community group or partnership, or directly by SSDC. Further details in Appendix A.
 - Area North awarded grants of **£36,196** to **19** of these projects, worth a total overall investment of **£178,026**. This is an average grant of 20% of project costs and means that for every £1 of grant from SSDC a further £4 was raised by the community from local fundraising and other external grants.
 - *In addition* the Area Committee awarded **£40,000** in March 2015 towards the new Community Hall / Shop / Changing Rooms at **Kingsbury Episcopi** with a project value of over £1,000,000. At the time of writing the project is still waiting for final confirmation of a Stage Three grant from the Big Lottery.
 - 22 projects are completed (including some which received a grant during the year) with respect to support from Area North.
- As well as the above, during the year the team handled over 200 different enquiries with requests for information, project support, guidance, printing or hire of equipment from ward members, town and parish councils, residents, local businesses, other public organisations and community groups.
- We considered the impact of around 20 planning applications in Area North, and made consultation responses or conducted research to assist with the council's land use and spatial planning role as appropriate.
- There is one SSDC community office in Area North based in the Langport Information Centre. During 2014-15 1427 customers accessed services face to face, including 813 for help with housing, benefits, waste and council tax.
- Area North supported **four Local Information Centres** in Somerton, Langport, Martock and South Petherton with grants of £500 (£2000 in total) through a service level agreements (see appendix A for details under each parish).

The presentation of this report will highlight work which supported the achievement of the Committee's and local ward members' priorities.

2. Review of priorities for the Area Committee and updating the Area Development Plan for 2015-16

Appendix A shows the projects supported by the Area team during 2014-15. The report indicates which projects are likely to continue.

- Ward members are invited to discuss current local priorities with the Area Development Manager and / or Neighbourhood Development Officers.
- A member's workshop will be arranged for mid/late July to provide time for further informal discussion.
- A revised set of priorities will be recommended for agreement at the August meeting.

3. Resources under the control of the Area Committee / Area team.

Community Grants. The council's successful community grants programme is managed by the Area Development service. The award of grants up to £1000 is delegated to the Area Development Manager in consultation with the ward member. Grants over £1000 are awarded by the Area Committee. There is £10,680 to support community led projects through community grants in Area North during 2015-16.

Special projects. District Executive approved a 'carry forward' (ie a budget underspend from 2014-15 to be used in 2015-16) of £20,000 to support ongoing local economy development, including greater resilience for the flood affected areas. Further details on this is included in the February 2015 agenda.

Capital Programme. The Area Committee capital budget is used improve or create physical assets for local benefit with a value of at least £10,000 for a scheme led by SSDC or as a community grant of at least £250. There is currently **£210,983 for future allocation** to local priority schemes in the Area North Capital Programme for the next 2-3 years.

Reserves. There is a one-off fund held as a reserve by the Area Committee. The amount unallocated in June 2015 is £16,600. The fund also includes £10,000 allocated to support the progress (in exceptional circumstances) of schemes for affordable housing as part of the Area Committee's priorities. These are likely to be small scale and locally led. A recent example was to help pay the legal costs to establish a community land trust which took ownership of land for local affordable housing.

Attachments: -

- Appendix A – Area North Development Plan 2014-15 - projects supported ward by ward
- Appendix B – Area North Development Plan 2014-15 – map of projects supported
- Appendix C – Area North Committee priorities 2014-15

Council Plan Implications

The recommended priorities are in line with the Council Plan (2012-2015). The service team considers the implications for the Council Plan when negotiating support for local projects, handling enquiries and assessing grants.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None directly from this report. There are a number of local initiatives designed to promote carbon reduction for example promoting sustainable tourism. In particular where we are asked to support buildings projects, applicants are expected to assess the business case for energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Opportunities for sustainable transport and promoting local self-containment are encouraged.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None directly from this report. Projects and initiatives will be designed or assessed for support using the principles of equality analysis, and many will make a direct contribution to

the Council's Single Equality Scheme. For example projects for community facilities will be expected to demonstrate accessibility and other considerations to promote equalities and diversity objectives.

Background Papers: *None*
