

Area South Development Update Report

Strategic Director: Rina Singh, Director Place and Performance
Assistant Director: Kim Close, Assistant Director Communities
Service Manager: Kim Close, Area Development Manager – South
Lead Officer: Kim Close, Area Development Manager - South,
Contact Details: Kim.close@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462708

Purpose of the Report

- To present an update on the interim Area Development Plan for Area South and to summarise the work undertaken by the Area Development Team during April – September 2015 to address priorities identified by the Area South Committee.
- To present a 6 month work programme from October 2015 – March 2016.

Public Interest

This report provides an outline of the role and objectives of the Area Development Team – South which include the provision of an advice and support service for members of the public from Petters House, Petters Way, Yeovil, the delivery of Yeovil Vision, Regeneration and Community Development projects.

Recommendations

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Area Development South work programme October 2015 – March 2016 be approved.

Background

The Area South Development Plan

The Area South Development Plan identifies key issues and needs within the town of Yeovil and parishes of Area South and sets out the priorities for the Area South Development Team for the remainder of the current financial year. This report proposes a work programme from October 2015 – March 2016.

The plan (see appendix 1) is divided into three sections which relate to the three key areas of work:

1.	Support for the vitality of the local economy, with a focus on Yeovil town centre and improving the physical environment.
2.	Community development with a focus on addressing health, social and economic inequalities and the provision and development of community facilities.
3.	To continue to provide a high quality accessible front line enquiry service.

The actions contained within the Plan relate to those set out in the four areas of focus within the Council Plan 2012 – 2015. See Appendix 2 for an extract of actions that relate the work of Area Development and the role of the Area Committee.

Allocating Resources and Monitoring

The Area South Development Plan acts as a working document with regular monitoring by the Area Development Team and reflects member and community aspirations and priorities. Monitoring reports are presented to Area South Committee and individual reports on specific projects and service areas are reported to the committee regularly.

A summary of the progress of Key Projects and Services managed by Area Development South between April 2015 - September 2015

Yeovil Vision and Regeneration

- The Yeovil Vision Board has maintained its focus on transport issues in Yeovil including:
 - Working to postpone work on the Tesco foot bridge under the Eastern Corridor project in favour of other projects such as the second exit onto Clarence Street from Tesco.
 - Allocating funding to SCC to undertake a range of quick wins to improve traffic congestion in the town centre.
 - Commissioning a traffic study to assess the implications of closing the Wyndham Street junction on to Reckleford.
 - Continue to work with SCC to finalise the Reckleford scheme.
- Work on plans for the enhancement of Middle Street and Sherborne Road has been put on hold pending the outcome of the traffic review, commissioned by the Yeovil Vision.
- Continued to work with the developers of the Glove Factory to market vacant units and recently explored the possibility of utilising the building to provide a supported work place hub.
- The board has explored the options for public realm improvements including the creation of a town square within the town centre.
- Currently consulting of a retail support package for new traders in the town centre.
- Continued support to the Town Centre Enhancement Group. The Group has focused on establishing a Town Centre Ranger who has been carrying out a number of improvements in accordance with an agreed schedule, including painting and decorating street furniture, cleaning and weed killing.
- Fingerprinter signs in Yeovil town centre have been surveyed and upgraded. Some signs now have estimated time and distance information on them.
- Continue to work with Westfield Community Association to tackle unsightly waste land adjacent to the local Co-op store.
- Continue to monitor all bus shelters in Area South to ensure that standards are maintained.
- Four of the bus shelters owned by SSDC have been refurbished to a good standard.

Neighbourhood Development - Community

- Worked with SCC to design the new dual use community hall and school building on the Lufton Housing Estate including the development of user agreements for the first dual use School within South Somerset.
- Worked with the community, local organisations and the Wyndham Park Partnership to develop options for future community facilities at Wyndham Park, resulting in the transfer of play area and multi-use games area land from Barratts to SSDC. The resulting Play Area was officially opened on Friday 7th August.

- Organised 3 Consultation and Community Events and produced four community newsletters for Wyndham park to keep residents up to date with developments
- Produced a quarterly bulletin for parishes and community groups providing information on funding, grants and local events.
- Provided help and advice to over 10 communities wishing to develop community facilities including West Coker, East Coker and Birchfield.
- Provided support, training and legal advice to over 30 local groups.
- Arranged multi-agency community forum event.
- Supported the new Bike fest and Birchfield Bike Park projects.
- Continued to develop and enhance Youth activities within Area South – including chairing the South Somerset Youth Opportunities Group, advisor to Yeovil Youth Service Review Group, Dreamscheme Project at Wyndham Park and support for Yeovil Young Achievers Trust.
- Working with West Coker Parish Council on various projects:
 - New parking bay development (asset transfer of SSDC land included).
 - West Coker recreation ground play park enhancement project – completed consultation exercise supporting the parish.
 - Supporting the parish council and the recreation ground trust with the new sports pavilion project.
 - Supporting the parish council with the enhancement project for the village hall.
- Working with Barwick Parish Council representatives to develop the current play provision at the recreation ground.
- Worked to support local organisations to improve accessibility to their facilities through Access audits (Access for all).
- Monitor and respond appropriately to local planning applications to ensure that appropriate community facilities are provided.
- Monitor the allocation of Section 106 funding for community facilities within Area South.

“Our Place” – Westfield Yeovil

- Completion of Our Place programme (submitted document to locality and DCLG) and moved to next phase of programme.
- Developed new Westfield action plan (as a result of the Our Place programme) – additional works linked to this includes:
 - Working with Ward member and steering group for new Westfield Community Hall (developing a feasibility study / business plan for the hall and researching future funding opportunities).
 - Worked with the school to develop the bus bay project.
 - Developing a directory for the community on what facilities, services, activities, clubs and organisations are operating in the Westfield area (neighbourhood audit).
 - Working with partners to establish further programmes for the community (on-going).
 - On-going support and attendance at Westfield Community Association meetings.
 - An evaluation exercise is currently being carried out to measure the economic benefits of the outputs for Health and Inequalities project.

Economy

- Work with partners to resist inappropriate development which threatens the viability of the town centre.

- Monitor and respond appropriately to local planning applications to highlight where there may be a risk of detriment to the local economy and the town centre.
- Continue to support the Yeovil Town Team which attracts significant funding from local businesses for the benefit of the town centre.
- Events in the Town Centre are recognised as a way to improve vibrancy and increase footfall. The Area South Development support a number of events throughout the year including;
 - the annual Christmas Lights switch on.
 - the Super Saturday event this year held on Saturday 26 September 2015 to include a Vintage Market, a Farmers Market, a family entertainment area at St John's Church, Buskfest and Flower and Gardener's Market.
 - the Yeovil Half Marathon - we have negotiated with the organisers to bring next year's event on 20 March 2016 into the Town Centre bringing more than 4,000 people into the heart of the town.
- Manage bookings for the Public Entertainment Area (band stand) in Yeovil town centre in accordance with agreed policy.
- Hosted a Marketing Intern for the Yeovil Town Team to promote Yeovil Town Centre and to develop and maintain the Yeovil Town App, social media and the loyalty card.
- The Area South Development Team has visited 108 local retail businesses to make them aware of the Retail Business Rate Relief available to them. This has resulted in significant additional benefit being awarded to retail businesses in Area South over two years. It has also led to a higher take up of small business rate relief.
- Monitoring of empty shops in Yeovil town centre takes place on a quarterly basis. Information gained will help to steer future regeneration initiatives and is used to defend the town centre from inappropriate development.

Markets

- Continue to work with the Yeovil Market Improvement Group to regenerate Yeovil markets, re-launched Yeovil's Markets in December 2014 with new branding and an entertainments programme.
- Developed a strategy to encourage new traders to join the market including;
 - Visits to other local markets with an information pack to entice traders.
 - Provision of music and entertainment in the bandstand and vicinity to add atmosphere.
 - Introduction of branded flags to denote the gateways to the market area.
 - Provided 'Love Yeovil' market carrier bags.
 - Free car parking vouchers for winter market (early 2015 and Christmas 2014).
 - Trader newsletters.
 - £10 pitch offer at key times (for example Christmas and Easter).
 - Half rent offer for traders who introduce new traders to the market.
 - Public Liability insurance voucher scheme.
 - Trader of the week.
 - Media campaign including flyers, radio, social media and regular press releases.

We introduced a new Vintage Market throughout 2014 and successfully increased footfall in the town centre. Traders returned to the Vintage market in 2015 remarking on how much this market is valued by both traders and customers.

The market has continued to attract new traders and is actively promoted on social media and through local publications and the local press. It provides a popular attraction to complement other events in the town centre.

In order to reduce costs the management of the general markets has been reviewed and a trial is in place using the existing Area South Development Team to undertake the operational and administrative tasks. Long standing traders and local business are also assisting with this approach and their knowledge and expertise is proving very useful in this field, especially in relation to business contacts. The trial will be reviewed once the Christmas Markets are complete.

Grants and Funding

- Provided an increased funding advice service in response to the current financial climate.

Petters House Front Office

- Over 12,000 enquiries per year are dealt with at the front desk, over 9,000 of these enquiries relate to core services.

Community Safety

- We continue to support the Yeovil One Team which has been awarded £50,000 funding from the PCC.
- Continue development and enhancement of CCTV in Yeovil town centre.
- Implemented a range of ASB tools following new legislation.
- Respond to community issues related to ASB and Crime.
- Continue to support and host the Yeovil Crime Reduction Partnership.

Appendices

The appendices to consist of: -

Appendix 1 – The Area South Development Plan October 2015 – March 2016

Appendix 2 – Table showing actions within Council's Plan 2012-2015 that relate to the work of Area Development and the role of the Area committee

Appendix 3 - Area South staff structure

Financial Implications

Within existing revenue budgets

Council Plan Implications

See attached Appendix 2

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

The town centre location of Petters House minimises travel and the carbon emissions associated with it. The quality of regeneration within Yeovil will have a significant impact on future carbon emissions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Equality and Diversity will be fully explored in the implementation of the various projects within the Area Development Plan.

Background Papers

- The Council Plan 2012
- The Economic Development Strategy