

Meeting AN 10M 07/08
Date 27.02.08

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held on **Wednesday, 27th February 2008** at the Parish Rooms, Somerton.

(2.00 p.m. – 4.07 p.m.)

Present:

Members:

Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Jill Beale	Keith Ronaldson
Tony Carvin	Jo Roundell Greene
Rupert Cox	Sylvia Seal
Roy Mills	Sue Steele
Paull Robathan	

Officers:

Charlotte Jones	Head of Area Development (North)
Roger Meecham	Engineer, Engineering and Property Services
Teresa Oulds	Community Development Assistant
Claire King	Senior Community Activity and Lifestyles Officer
Louise Bulmer	Community Activity and Lifestyles Officer
Natalie House	Community Regeneration Officer
Madelaine King-Oakley	Area Support Team Leader (North)
Adrian Moore	Play and Youth Facilities Officer
Angela Cox	Committee Administrator

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

136. Minutes (agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd January 2008, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting, subject to the following amendments:-

Agenda Item 17 – Planning Applications: **07/03589/FUL - Retrospective application for the use of land to station a mobile home at South Harp Farm, South Harp, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5LP. Comments made by Mrs S Atkinson: change ‘and no objectors’ to ‘and few objectors’.

Agenda Item 17 – Planning Applications: 07/03264/FUL – The erection of a new vicarage on Land off Buttle Close, Shepton Beauchamp, Ilminster. Comments made by the Assistant Solicitor be amended to: “The Assistant Solicitor cautioned Members against being influenced by the offer of land to the primary school. She advised that she did not consider that such an offer could amount to a lawful planning obligation because it would not relate to the development to be permitted. She indicated that there was nothing to prevent the Diocese gifting the land to the school at any time.”

Agenda Item 17 – Planning Applications: 07/01853/ FUL - The use of land as a site for a mobile home to accommodate a travelling family and the erection of two timber buildings to provide bedroom and composting toilet at Crimson Hill, Top Road, Curry Mallet, Taunton. Comments made by the Assistant Solicitor be amended to: “The Assistant Solicitor indicated that she could not assist members with their assessment of the status of the applicant, not having had a chance to consider the matter in advance of the committee meeting. She indicated to Members that they had the discretion to decide the matter for themselves and should base their judgement on the information contained in the Planning Officer’s report and on the Community Liaison Officer’s comments.”

137. Apologies for Absence (agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ann Campbell and Derek Yeomans.

138. Declarations of Interest (agenda item 3)

Councillor Patrick Palmer declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 11, Community Grants, as a member of Martock Parish Council, the applicant for funding.

He said that he would leave the room during consideration of this item.

In the absence of the Vice Chairman, the Chairman asked for nominations for a Chairman for Agenda Item 11. Councillor Paull Robathan was proposed and seconded and unanimously voted as Chairman for that item.

139. Date of Future Meetings (agenda item 4)

Members noted that the next Area North Committee meeting would be held on **Wednesday 26th March 2008 at the Village Hall, Norton-sub-Hamdon.**

140. Public Question Time (agenda item 5)

Cdr Ian Neale spoke regarding the increasing amounts of fly-tipping and litter within the town of Somerton. He said the Town Council now employed their own street cleaner but he felt that this should be unnecessary and he asked how South Somerset District Council were looking at improving their street cleaning service.

The Chairman confirmed that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Property would provide a written reply to this question.

Mr David J Harrison of Somerton Town Council asked that under Agenda item 8, Supporting Older People in Area North, the allocation of £10,000 be spent on the pilot programme of support to older people and not just on administration costs of the scheme.

Councillor Paull Robathan, as Portfolio Holder for Finance, Revenues and Support Services, replied that it was the purpose of the Council as a whole to maintain services whilst reducing administrative costs. He referred to the annual budget, agreed by full

Council the previous week, part of which included the deletion of 43 staff positions whilst maintaining current levels of service.

141. Chairman's Announcements (agenda item 6)

The Chairman announced that a message of thanks had been received for the SSDC Countryside Service from Godfrey Townrow of Curry Mallet for their provision of 8 tonnes of gravel and expertise to enable volunteers to renovate a 50 metre stretch of public footpath near Curry Mallet School.

He also announced that a meeting had taken place the previous week between planning officers, applicants, Chair, Ward Member, Parish Council and other interested parties to discuss unresolved issues regarding the outstanding South Somerset Homes planning application in Ilton. However, South Somerset Homes had indicated that they would not be willing to further amend the plans to try and overcome the concerns relating to the adjoining play space and loss of informal amenity area and they wished the application to be presented to the next Area North Committee to enable them to receive a formal determination.

He also noted that the planning case officer would be producing a report for the March Area North Committee meeting regarding the Great Bow Yard development in Langport that would provide Members with an overview of the outstanding issues on the site, especially relating to enforcement matters. The report would also refer to the issue of the roofing material that had been used and would include a recommendation on this matter that Members would be able to consider.

He further noted that following the Government's announcement on Post Office closures, only one, in Bower Hinton, was currently earmarked for closure in Area North.

The Head of Area Development (North) confirmed that she would be meeting the Post Office Regional Manager the following week to discuss the proposed closures as part of a county-wide group of local authorities and other interested groups.

It was noted that during Prime Minister's Questions that day, the Prime Minister had acknowledged that if local communities could find alternative ways of funding Post Offices then closures could be avoided. Members felt that whilst this statement needed following up, there were possibly alternative means of delivering post office services in rural areas.

142. Reports from Members (agenda item 7)

Councillor Rupert Cox announced that the Long Sutton village shop and post office had been voted the Best Rural Retailer in the South West 2007 by the Countryside Alliance and had recently come third in the national competition. He also noted that the village shop and post office in Curry Mallet had been runners up in the South West regional competition.

The Chairman welcomed this report and said that he would write a letter of congratulation on behalf of Area North Committee to the two Post Offices.

Councillor Paull Robathan reported that he had attended several meetings of the Somerset Levels and Moors Leader + organisation, on which he now sat as SSDC

representative, and that as the programme was nearing its end, the projects were being evaluated and brought to an end. He said the new a bid for further funding from 2008 to 2014 to continue the economic development work was very strong, however, because of his involvement with the South Somerset Market Towns bid as Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership, who were also bidding for funding, he did not feel that it was appropriate to be involved in the Leader + bid and he had asked the Head of Area Development (North) to assist in his place.

The Head of Area Development (North) confirmed that the full Local Action bids were due to be submitted to SWRDA by 23rd May. There was still some discussion required within SSDC and the Economic Leaders Group across the county to assess the merits of each bid and to assist in eliminating any geographical overlaps. She noted that the Local Action bid, whilst based on a geographical area, was primarily an economic programme. There were also a number of more environmental programmes from different funding sources, in the pipeline, which would also have an economic benefit

143. Supporting Older People in Area North (agenda item 8)

The Community Development Assistant (North) introduced the report and asked for Members agreement to utilise the allocated funding to build on the previously successful afternoon tea sessions, held in February and March 2007, and include other partner organisations e.g. Social Services and Age Concern. The Links Community transport scheme had confirmed their willingness to help with transport again and she would be approaching other voluntary organisations to encourage them to participate.

The Senior Community Activity and Lifestyles Officer confirmed that her team of staff would use the opportunity of the proposed day time tea sessions to gather information from the older people on the types of activities which interested them and to offer training opportunities to those who wished to volunteer to run their own healthy activity schemes.

During discussion it was noted that:-

- The Community Activity and Lifestyles team worked closely with South Somerset Homes and had trained the Sheltered Scheme Managers to hold flexercise classes.
- A flexercise class recently held in Ilton had been very well received by over 20 older residents.
- The Community Activity and Lifestyles team could help a community start their own healthy lifestyle activity with support for the first 12 weeks.

The Head of Area Development (North) confirmed that the programme of events would also involve working with partners from the Community Safety Action Panel who had hosted the previous sessions in 2007, and found that providing information on personal and community safety had been well received by residents.

The Chairman thanked the Community Development Assistant (North) and the Senior Community Activity and Lifestyles Officer for their ongoing work to support and promote healthy lifestyle activity among the older residents of Area North.

RESOLVED: That Members:

1. Endorsed the allocation of £10,000 towards a pilot programme of support to older people as detailed in Section 6 of the report, with financial authority delegated to the Head of Area Development, in consultation with Ward Members as appropriate.
2. Noted the arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, as part of the SSDC Service Enhancement programme as set out in Section 7 of the report.

Reason: To support the ongoing programme of activity and information aimed at supporting older people in Area North.

(Voting: unanimous)

*Teresa Oulds, Community Development Assistant (01458) 257435
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144. Land Drainage and Flooding Issues Update Report (agenda item 9)

The Engineer drew Members attention to the main points of his report:-

- Rainfall had been higher than average during the last year.
- Some localised flooding had occurred in Chard and Compton Dundon in August 2007, resulting in the flooding of 31 properties in Compton Dundon.
- Planning Policy Statement 25 required developers to produce a flood risk assessment for new developments and most developers were 'au-fait' with this.
- Over 900 sandbags had been delivered to 71 locations at risk of flooding during January 2008.
- Floodboards were now recommended to properties regularly at risk from flooding.
- Alternative silica gel bags were being looked at to prevent flooding as they were lighter and easier to store than sandbags, however, they were expensive and could only be used once because of the contaminated water which they came into contact with during use.
- Flood awareness events had been held the previous week, aimed at Parish Councils, and the information had been well received.
- Dealing with flooding was a discretionary service carried out by the District Council.

During discussion, it was noted that:-

- The recently published Pitt review on Lessons Learned from the 2007 Floods should be brought to District Executive as soon as practical for discussion.
- The ditching work carried out in Compton Dundon after the flooding in August 2007 should be maintained to help alleviate any future flooding in the village.

Members expressed concern that the frequency of clearing of gullies and jetting of roadside drains was affecting localised highway flooding. It was noted that this service was carried out by Somerset County Council (SCC) and that the Assistant Highway Services Manager was due to present his 6 monthly report to the Committee in March 2008. It was proposed to also invite the SCC Portfolio Holder for Highways to discuss

the financing and County Council policy on drainage issues, together with the District Council's Head of Streetscene to consider joint working on this issue. Members were in full agreement with this and the Committee Administrator undertook to invite Councillor Tony Shire and Chris Cooper, Head of Streetscene to the March meeting of the Committee.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the report be NOTED.
 2. That Area North Members encourage the presentation of the Pitt review on 'Lessons Learned from the 2007 Floods' to District Executive for discussion as soon as possible.
 3. That the Somerset County Council Portfolio Holder for Highways be invited to attend the March meeting of Area North Committee, together with the SSDC Head of Streetscene to discuss financing, policy and ways of joint working to help towards the clearing gullies and drains in Area North.

*Roger Meecham, Engineer, Engineering & Property Services - (01935) 462069
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145. Community Regeneration in the Market Towns (agenda item 10)

The Community Regeneration Officer presented her annual report to Members, describing the range of achievements led by the local community within Somerton, Langport and Huish Episcopi, South Petherton and Martock. She also outlined the current programme of the Market Towns Investment Group and mentioned the new Area Development Web-pages and asked that Members check them for any obvious omissions of information.

The Head of Area Development confirmed that the expression 'local community plans' included plans known as Parish Plans and Market Town Plans. She said that many parishes had completed parish plans and the previous report on supporting Parish Plans in Area North, presented to Committee in December 2007, referred to SSDC's ongoing support for the production and delivery of them.

During discussion, it was noted that whilst the aspirations of some parish plans were significant, they still needed to be community-led to succeed, with the assistance of the Community Regeneration Officer and Community Development Officer in supporting roles.

The Chairman thanked the Community Regeneration Officer for her advice and assistance throughout the year.

- RESOLVED:** That the report be NOTED.

*Natalie House, Community Regeneration Officer (North) - (01458) 257487
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146. Area North Community Grants (Executive Decision) (agenda item 11)

(The Chairman, having previously declared an interest, left the room during consideration of this item. In the absence of the Vice Chairman, Councillor Paull Robathan assumed the Chair for this item).

Members considered one application for funding from Martock Parish Council towards the refurbishment and conversion of the Market House, Martock to a new community building.

The Head of Area Development (North) reminded Members that the current Area North Capital Programme included an 'in principle' allocation of £50,000 towards projects identified within the Martock Community Plan and she said it was appropriate to direct that funding to the Precinct and Market House refurbishment projects. She said the community were looking at the long-term use of the building to provide a central community office in partnership with other organisations and, if a Heritage Lottery fund bid was successful then further work on the building would be possible.

Members were unanimous in their approval of funding for the refurbishment and conversion of the Market House, Martock.

RESOLVED: That an allocation of £25,000 be made to Martock Parish Council towards the Martock Community Office (Market House redevelopment) project; from the Area North Capital Programme allocation for Martock; subject to the standard conditions for SSDC Community Grants.

Reason: To contribute towards the refurbishment and conversion of the Market House, Martock.

(Voting: unanimous)

*Charlotte Jones, Head of Area Development (North) - (01458) 257401
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147. Area North 2007/08 Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 31st December 2007 (agenda item 12)

The Head of Area Development (North) asked Members to note the update on the Area Reserve and the slippage in the Capital Programme. She anticipated that more delegated grants enquiries would be received and confirmed that a report on the River Parrett Trail study would be brought to Committee shortly.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Area Development confirmed that:-

- there was provision in the Capital Programme for community safety initiatives and illuminated speeding signs could be funded from this.
- The improvements to Langport town centre and car parks would be the subject of one bid within the next 3 months.
- Members could agree funding 'in principle' rather than committing it into the Capital Programme

The Play and Youth Facilities Officer confirmed that match funding had now been secured for the play area in Montacute, which he expected to be completed by summer 2008.

Members agreed that schemes within the Capital Programme needed reviewing and the Head of Area Development agreed to arrange a Members Workshop in March to do this.

RESOLVED: That the current financial position of the Area North Budgets and estimated slippage in the Capital Programme from the current year to 2008/09 be NOTED.

*Jayne Beevor, Principal Accountant, Financial Services - (01935) 462320
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148. Area North Grants – Quarterly Monitoring Report (agenda item 13)

The Area North Support Team Leader noted that this was a regular monitoring report. She paid tribute to the Head of Area Development's Personal Assistant who had been monitoring the grants and encouraging the submitting of accounts, as a result of which, very few were now outstanding.

One of the Ward Members for South Petherton noted that the stair lift project at the Blake Hall was as yet uncompleted. The Head of Area Development agreed to ensure that the Management Committee of the hall were assisted to complete this project.

RESOLVED: That the report be NOTED.

*Madelaine King-Oakley, Area North Support Team Leader - (01458) 257428
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149. Frontline Councillors Community Grants Scheme (agenda item 15)

The Area North Support Team Leader reminded Members that the scheme was introduced as a pilot scheme, designed to enhance Area Working and it was now due to be evaluated. She asked that any final requests for grants be forwarded to her by 20th March to allow payment before the end of the financial year. Some grant payments could be carried forward into the next financial year provided they had been offered and accepted.

She confirmed that projects did not have to be confined to one electoral ward – a maximum of 10 members could support a joint proposal.

The Head of Area Development noted that her service's experience of administering grants as a whole, would be submitted as part of the review of the Frontline Councillor Grant Scheme

During discussion, some Members felt that in future, the scheme would work better through the existing delegated budgets from the Area Development team. The Area North Support Team Leader reminded Members that it was a pilot scheme and encouraged them to feedback their views on the comments sheets, when circulated.

RESOLVED: That the report be NOTED.

*Madelaine King-Oakley, Area North Support Team Leader - (01458) 257428
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150. Area North Forward Plan – (For Information) (agenda item 15)

The Head of Area Development (North) noted that the discussion on rural housing issues, due to be discussed in March would now be delayed until April or May, however, this allowed for a fuller discussion on the Somerset County Highway issues, as noted earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the Forward Plan be NOTED.

*Angela Cox, Committee Administrator - (01458) 257437
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151. Planning Appeals (agenda item 16)

The Chairman asked that Members note the Planning Appeals report.

RESOLVED: That the Planning Appeals report be NOTED.

*Simon Gale, Head of Development & Building Control - (01935) 462071
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Chairman