

Meeting AN 11M 07/08
Date 26.03.08

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held on **Wednesday, 26th March 2008** at the Village Hall, Norton-sub-Hamdon.

(2.00 p.m. – 5.17 p.m.)

Present:

Members:

Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Jill Beale	Keith Ronaldson
Tony Carvin	Jo Roundell Greene (to 4.30p.m.)
Roy Mills	Sue Steele
Derek Nelson	Derek Yeomans
Paull Robathan (to 4.00p.m.)	

Officers:

Charlotte Jones	Head of Area Development (North)
Chris Cooper	Head of Streetscene
Mike Bartlett	Business Support Officer
Les Collett	Community Development Officer
Tim Bodys	Solicitor
David Norris	Planning Team Leader, Development Control
Linda Hayden	Planning Officer
Lee Walton	Planning Officer
Angela Cox	Committee Administrator

Also Present:

Cllr Tony Shire	Somerset County Council (SCC)
Kim Sharp	Assistant Area Highways Manager, SCC

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

152. Minutes (agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27th February 2008, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting, subject to the following addition: Councillor Derek Nelson be added to Apologies for Absence.

153. Apologies for Absence (agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ann Campbell, Rupert Cox and Sylvia Seal.

154. Declarations of Interest (agenda item 3)

Councillor Roy Mills declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 14, Planning Applications, as a member of the Board of South Somerset Homes, the applicants for planning application 07/03952/FUL – demolition of existing buildings and the construction of 41 affordable dwellings at Copse Lane, Ilton, Ilminster, Somerset.

He confirmed that he would address the Committee prior to the discussion and would leave the room during consideration of this item.

Councillors Tony Canvin and Jill Beale both declared personal and prejudicial interests in Agenda item 14, Planning Applications, application number 07/05685/FUL former Highways Depot, Etsome Terrace, Somerton as Members of Somerton Town Council, possible recipients of funding from the development.

They confirmed that they would address the Committee prior to the discussion and would leave the room during consideration of this item.

Councillor Tony Canvin also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 14, Planning Applications, as the applicant for planning application 08/00759/FUL - the erection of a dwelling with off road parking at Langport Road Garage, Langport Road, Somerton, Somerset TA11 6RS.

He left the room during consideration of this item.

155. Date of Future Meetings (agenda item 4)

Members noted that the next Area North Committee meeting would be held on **Wednesday 26th April 2008 at the Village Hall, Compton Dundon.**

156. Public Question Time (agenda item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public.

157. Chairman's Announcements (agenda item 6)

The Chairman reminded Members of their forthcoming informal meeting with planning officers and Area Development Workshop on 31st March at 9.00a.m. in the Meeting Room, Old Kelways, Langport.

He also reminded all present of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy consultation meeting with Town and Parish Councils to be held on Thursday 3rd April at 6.30p.m. at Long Sutton Golf Club.

He announced that he had received a letter of thanks to the Committee from Mr and Mrs Talbot of the Long Sutton Village Shop and Post Office following the Committee's recent letter of congratulation regarding the award of the Best Rural Retailer in the South West 2007 by the Countryside Alliance.

He also noted that the Market House in Martock had recently been awarded £190,000 Heritage Lottery funding towards its refurbishment and conversion and had been described as an exemplar project. He thanked the Head of Area Development and her

team, the Economic Development team leader and Mr Roger Powell of Martock Parish Council for their work in securing this funding.

It was also noted that Ash Parish Council had been awarded £5,000 Heritage Lottery funding towards the refurbishment of their play area and Norton-sub-Hamdon had secured funding towards improvements to the church bell tower.

158. Reports from Members (agenda item 7)

Councillor Paull Robathan said he was pleased to announce that the Primary Care Trust Board had received confirmation from the South West Strategic Health Authority that £17.5m had been allocated to the refurbishment of South Petherton Hospital as a dedicated stroke rehabilitation centre, linking in with Yeovil and Musgrove Park hospitals.

He also noted that the Levels and Moors bid for a new round of funding from the Local Action for Rural Communities from 2008 to 2014 to enable it to continue the economic development work in the area was now strongly supported by SSDC after the Council chose to de-emphasize the market towns submission to this funding source to allow other rural projects to bid for this funding.

The Head of Area Development confirmed that most of Area North was included in the Levels and Moors area, however, South Petherton was not and she would be pressing for it to be encompassed in the future bid.

Councillor Keith Ronaldson reported that the proposed merger of South Somerset Homes with Arcadia Knightstone had now been dismissed as there appeared to be no advantage in the merger to South Somerset Homes. He also advised that the current Chief Executive of South Somerset Homes would shortly be retiring and Mr Michael Kay, their Director of Asset Management, had been appointed as his successor.

159. Review of Gully Clearing Services in Area North (agenda item 8)

The Chairman introduced Councillor Tony Shire, Portfolio Holder for Highways at Somerset County Council and Mr Kim Sharp, Assistant Area Highways Manager.

The Assistant Area Highways Manager explained that currently all gullies in rural areas were cleaned on an annual basis, whilst those in towns were cleaned every 18 months across Somerset. He said that this was due to the improved street sweeping service in urban areas which helped to reduce the detritus on roads and he commended the Streetscene service for this.

Councillor Shire confirmed that when gullies were cleaned out, the pipes were also flushed through and any blockages would be reported for further investigation by the operatives.

In response to questions, Councillor Shire confirmed that:-

- There were over 128,000 gullies recorded within Somerset.
- Following the fitting of GPS data logging equipment to the gully emptying vehicles, the exact location of each one could now be identified to within one metre.
- The central Highway contact centre telephone is **0845 345 9155**

- Every Highway complaint was logged and numbered at the central Highway contact centre and it was hoped that a system would soon be introduced to provide feedback to customers regarding their complaint.
- The disposal of detritus was carried out in accordance with Environmental Agency requirements whereby disposal was to a licensed landfill site after allowing the material to drain and reduce the water content.
- The Area Highways Manager now produced weekly reports to Parish and Town Councils and District Councillors to inform them of what work was currently being undertaken in their area.
- Work on providing each Parish with a map of the gullies within their parish was still ongoing.
- Parish Lengthsmen schemes were still encouraged by Somerset County Council through their Area Community budgets as the benefits to both the parish and Highway Authority were noticeably high.

The Assistant Area Highways Manager confirmed that any savings within the Highway service due to the improved street cleaning service was used to boost other Highway services within the district.

The Head of Streetscene service noted that good communication was key to providing the best all-round Highways and street cleaning services within South Somerset.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Shire and the Assistant Area Highways Manager for attending to confirm the current status of the Highway gully cleaning service.

RESOLVED: That the report be NOTED.

*Kim Sharp, Assistant Area Highways Manager (01845) 345 9155
e-mail: kpssharp@somerset.gov.uk*

160. Post Office Network Change Programme – Implications for Area North (agenda item 9)

The Head of Area Development (North) advised Members that she was collating the SSDC response to the Governments proposed Post Office closures within South Somerset. She asked for their comments on the closures to be incorporated into the formal response document to be completed by 9th April 2008.

During discussion, it was noted that:-

- The Economic Development team should assist with business support advice to all Post Offices at risk of closure.
- The infrequent public transport in rural areas should be emphasized in the formal response document to highlight the need for rural Post Offices.
- Any shops which continued to operate once their Post Office services were withdrawn would not be allowed to sell any Post Office related services or items, for example, books of stamps, which was unreasonable in rural areas.

Members were unanimous in their support to lobby for the Post Office and Stores in Bower Hinton to remain open.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the report be NOTED.
 2. That the points made by Area North Members form part of the District Council's response to Post Offices Ltd.

*Charlotte Jones, Head of Area Development (North) - (01458) 257401
e-mail: charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk*

161. Update on the Enhanced Service now being provided by the Economic Development Service (agenda item 10)

The Business Support Officer provided Members with a short power point presentation on his role and the enhanced service now being provided to local businesses by the Economic Development Service, including:-

- The Business Ambassador Service available to all South Somerset based businesses.
- Pre-application planning advice through Pre-Application Surgeries for businesses looking to expand or relocate and sign-posting for all other Local Authority services.
- The Account Management Programme: a proactive approach to larger employers in the District to understand their business needs and ways the Economic Development could help them.
- Exploring the opportunities wireless broadband could offer businesses in the district.
- Various roles in marketing and promoting the Yeovil Innovation Centre, due to be completed in September 2008.
- Distribution of Local Strategic Partnership Grant funding to several North-based businesses which proved very beneficial and was over-subscribed.
- County-wide initiatives e.g. Into Somerset.

Councillor Paull Robathan, as Portfolio Holder for Finance, Revenues and Support Services, said that he had been fortunate to accompany the Economic Development team leader on his visits to some of the larger businesses in South Somerset and had been encouraged at their forward thinking on waste disposal and climate change matters as well as economic development issues. He also mentioned the help given by Economic Development Team to keep a business and jobs in Yeovil that could otherwise have left because of the poor broadband speed available.

RESOLVED: That the report be NOTED.

*Mike Bartlett, Business Support Officer - (01935) 462173
e-mail: mike.bartlett@southsomerset.gov.uk*

162. Area North Community Grants (Executive Decision) (agenda item 11)

Members considered one application for funding from Lopen Parochial Church Council towards the installation of toilets in the Sunday School room, Lopen.

The Community Development Officer reminded Members that the Sunday School room was the only meeting space in the village and the Parish Council were very supportive of the project. He advised that the community had raised an extra £2,000 the previous

week towards the project and the Parochial Church Council had agreed an additional condition to repay the grant if the school room was ever sold in the future.

Both Ward Members spoke in support of the project, mentioning that planning permission had been confirmed and there was strong support for the project within the local community.

The Head of Area Development (North) reminded Members that whilst local authorities could not promote religious activities, faith based groups were eligible to apply for support for community projects or activities under the SSDC community grants scheme.

Members were unanimous in their approval of funding for the installation of toilets in the Sunday School room, Lopen.

RESOLVED: That an allocation of £7,500 be made to Lopen Parochial Church Council towards the installation of toilets in the Sunday School room; to be awarded from the Area North Revenue Budget and the balance to come from the Area North Capital Grants Programme allocation for "Improving Community Halls and Facilities", subject to standard grant conditions with the additional condition that the Parochial Church Council agree to repay the grant if the school room is ever sold in the future.

Reason: To contribute towards the installation of toilets at the Sunday School room, Lopen.

(Voting: unanimous)

*Charlotte Jones, Head of Area Development (North) - (01458) 257401
e-mail: charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk*

163. Area North Forward Plan – (For Information) (agenda item 12)

The Head of Area Development (North) advised that she would shortly be reformatting the Forward Plan in line with the District Executive and Scrutiny Committee Forward Plans to provide Members with more information on the purpose and content of each report.

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

*Angela Cox, Committee Administrator - (01458) 257437
e-mail: angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk*

164. Planning Appeals (agenda item 13)

Members noted that at the recent appeal hearing for the use of land as a family gypsy site at Owl Street, East Lambrook, the appeal had been dismissed by the Planning Inspector. Members requested a briefing note on the new planning Circular 01/06 regarding the status of travellers and gypsies.

RESOLVED: That the Planning Appeals report be NOTED.

165. Planning Applications (agenda item 14)

07/03952/FUL - Demolition of existing buildings and the construction of 41 affordable dwellings (RSL) on Land and Garages at Copse Lane, Ilton, Ilminster, Somerset.

(Under the new Code of Conduct, Councillor Roy Mills, having earlier declared a personal and prejudicial interest, addressed the Committee and then left the room and did not return until after the decision was made.)

Councillor Roy Mills reminded the Committee of the urgent need for housing in South Somerset and that South Somerset Homes were a major provider of social housing.

The Planning Team Leader, Development Control, advised that since writing the report he had received a letter from the Somerset Playingfields Association, expressing their concern at the loss of open space and the proximity of the proposed dwellings to the recreation ground. He also noted that a flood risk assessment had not been received from the applicants and therefore this should be added to the list of reasons for refusing the application. He acknowledged that although the development was acceptable in planning policy terms, the impact on the recreation ground and the loss of open space, together with the concerns of the Police Architectural Liaison Officer regarding a footpath at the site and the potential impact of only 1½ car parking spaces per dwelling were sufficient to warrant the recommendation of refusal to the Committee.

Mr D Amor, Chairman of Ilton Parish Council, noted their concerns at the close proximity of the proposed housing to the recreation ground. He said they also had concerns with the amount of parking proposed and agreed with the comments of the Police Architectural Liaison Officer regarding the footpath and its potential to create future problems. He noted that low-lying parts of the village had experienced flooding problems recently and the Highway Authority had said that no more water should be displaced into these areas. He concluded that although Ilton was a lively community, this was not the correct development for the village.

Ms K Plumb, Housing Development Officer, reminded the Committee that the development would support the Council's key objective to reduce homelessness in the district. She provided Members with current statistics on the number of people on the housing waiting list who had indicated Ilton as an area of preference to be housed.

Mr J Shaw of South Somerset Homes, the applicants, said that developments were rarely free of controversy and he had attended many meetings to seek to address all objections. He said the report made no mention of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the unspecified use of the recreation ground could mean it being developed for housing in the future. He referred to an earlier planning officer's report, which had said the development was appropriate and recommended granting permission and he said that there were no changes in local policies which warranted the change of recommendation to that of refusal.

The Ward Member, Councillor Sue Steele, stressed that whilst she was in favour of affordable housing in the village, this was not the right scheme. She referred to poor communication between the applicants and local people and said that cars were essential in this rural area so parking could be a problem in the future. She also mentioned the intrusion to the recreation ground, the changing of its entrance and the

possible problems that schoolchildren could encounter walking to school on narrow lanes.

Members briefly discussed the application and were in agreement that whilst there was a need for affordable housing in the village, the proposed scheme did not provide sufficient parking, was intrusive to the recreation ground, did not include any open space and did not take account of the Police Architectural Liaison Officer's comments to prevent future problems in the area.

The officer's recommendation to refuse the application, together with the additional reason for refusal regarding the flood risk assessment, was proposed and seconded and on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That planning permission be **REFUSED** for reasons 1 to 4 contained in the officer's report with an additional reason for refusal:-

That the applicants have failed to provide a flood risk assessment of the proposed site.

(Voting: Unanimous)

08/00387/FUL - Alterations and conversion of building to form a residential dwelling at former Baptist Chapel, Chapel Road, Isle Abbots, Taunton, Somerset TA3 6RR

The Planning Officer provided Members with a power point presentation of the proposed development. She noted that although off-street parking could not be achieved due to the graveyard surrounding the chapel, the Highway Authority had indicated that this would be acceptable as the existing use of the chapel could potentially generate more on-street parking than a residential dwelling. Bats had been noted at the site and a space had been provided in the roof to accommodate them.

Mr M Humphry of Isle Abbots Parish Council asked that planning permission be withheld until all issues had been resolved. He said the Chapel occupied a prominent position within the village and asked that rooflights be located more centrally, digging in the graveyard be restricted to the depth of flower beds, and that skips should not be allowed on the roadside during the conversion. He also expressed concern at the on-street parking, referring to incidences of farm and emergency vehicles already encountering difficulties in the narrow lane.

The Ward Member, Councillor Sue Steele, whilst acknowledging the re-use of the Chapel, expressed concern at the acceptance by planning officers and the Highway Authority of a 4 bed property with no off-road parking in a rural area. She agreed with the Parish Council that permission be deferred until all alternative avenues had been explored.

During discussion, whilst Members were supportive of the conversion, concern was expressed at the lack of off-street parking proposed. The Planning Team Leader cautioned that Members could not insist the applicants purchased additional land to provide off-street parking.

The Legal Officer also cautioned Members that the Highway Authority had not raised any objections to the lack of off-street parking.

Mindful of this advice, Members felt that off-street parking was essential to the site because of its rural location on a narrow lane, together with the close proximity of the village hall and its similar lack of off-street parking. It was proposed and seconded to refuse the application because of inadequate parking and on being put to the vote, the proposal was carried (voting: 6 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention).

RESOLVED: That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reason:-

1. Inadequate off-road parking in a rural country lane, contrary to Policy TP7.

(Voting: 6 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention)

07/05685/FUL - The erection of 13 houses and garages together with access road and parking area at former Highways Depot, Etsome Terrace, Somerton, Somerset TA11 6LY

(Under the new Code of Conduct, Councillors Jill Beale and Tony Canvin, having both earlier declared personal and prejudicial interests, addressed the Committee and then left the room and did not return until after the decision was made.)

Councillor Tony Canvin said that the application was unique within South Somerset. The Town Council had purchased the site in 2003 for a reduced sum on the basis that it was used for community purposes. Half of the site was now a memorial garden with car parking and the remaining half could be sold provided the money gained was used for the benefit of the local community. The developer who had successfully tendered, had already provided £15,000 of play equipment at a nearby play area, and, in the circumstances, the Town Council felt that he had discharged his obligation to provide a financial contribution towards leisure and recreation facilities within the district. He emphasised that the total receipts of the sale would be used to benefit the residents and surrounding area of Somerton. Councillor Beale concurred with this.

The Planning Officer advised that the application also provided drop-off parking for the adjacent primary school and the main item for consideration was the financial contribution towards leisure and recreation facilities, which was normally a standard condition in such a development.

Mr R Calderwood, Clerk to the Town Council, whilst acknowledging the District Council's policy of contributions being sought from developers towards leisure and recreation facilities across the district, asked that this situation be viewed uniquely and sympathetically. He said that if contributions were sought then the Town Council would have to bear the cost from a reduced offer price from the developer.

Members briefly discussed the application and whilst it was acknowledged that planning gain contributions were important districtwide, the unique circumstances arising in terms of the Town Council's involvement as well as Somerton providing recreational facilities that served a wider public and the contribution already made by the developer to local play facilities made this case an exception to policy. It was proposed and seconded to grant permission minus Condition 19 and on being put to the vote, was carried (Voting: 5 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions).

RESOLVED: That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to Conditions 1 to 18 contained in the officer's report.

(Voting: 5 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions)

08/00759/FUL - The erection of a dwelling with off road parking at Langport Road Garage, Langport Road, Somerton, Somerset TA11 6RS

(Councillor Tony Canvin, having earlier declared a personal and prejudicial interest, left the room during consideration of this item).

The Planning Officer reminded Members that the application was before them in the interest of transparency as the applicant was a District Councillor. He noted that since writing his report, one further letter had been received from an immediate neighbour expressing concern at the height of the proposed dwelling, its orientation and overlooking of his property, however, he said the height was not unusual in the area and the overlooking would mainly relate to the garden area, which he did not feel was unusual in an urban location. The County Highway Authority had now responded with several conditions which he proposed to attach to his recommendation of approval.

The Ward Member, Councillor Jill Beale, spoke in support of the application. She said the applicant had insisted on off-road parking which would improve the flow of traffic along a busy main road into the town.

Members were unanimous in their approval of the application.

RESOLVED: That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to Conditions 1 to 11 contained in the officer's report together with the proposed Highway Authority conditions.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

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Chairman