

Meeting AN **06M** 08/09
Date **24.09.08**

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held on **Wednesday, 24th September 2008** at the Village Hall, Norton-sub-Hamdon.

(2.00 p.m. – 5.05 p.m.)

Present:

Members:

Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Ann Campbell
Rupert Cox
Roy Mills
Derek Nelson

Paull Robathan (to 4.30p.m.)
Sylvia Seal
Sue Steele
Derek Yeomans

Officers:

Charlotte Jones
Steve Joel
Les Collett
Teresa Oulds
Angela Cox

Head of Area Development (North)
Head of Sport, Arts & Leisure
Community Development Officer
Community Development Assistant
Committee Administrator

Others:

Inspector Andrew Pritchard Avon & Somerset Police

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

62. Minutes (agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27th August 2008, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

63. Apologies for Absence (agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jill Beale, Tony Canvin, Keith Ronaldson and Jo Roundell Greene.

64. Declarations of Interest (agenda item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

65. Date of Future Meetings (agenda item 4)

The Chairman reminded Members that the next Area North Committee meeting would be held on **Wednesday 22nd October 2008 at the Village Hall, Ilton.**

It was noted that an executive meeting of Somerset County Council was also being held on 26th November in the Brympton Way offices, Yeovil to which all SSDC Councillors were invited to attend, however, the Chairman said that the Area North Committee meeting date had been set for many months and he did not propose to defer or change the date.

It has been subsequently clarified that there is a meeting of the Executive Committee of Somerset County Council on 26th November in the Council Chamber, Brympton Way, to which SSDC Councillors have been invited to attend from 6.00p.m.

66. Public Question Time (agenda item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public.

67. Chairman's Announcements (agenda item 6)

The Chairman reported that, following previous discussions by the Committee, a letter had now been sent to Natural England asking for their view and any action taken by themselves to control the spread of the poisonous weed, Ragwort. He had also obtained a copy of the DEFRA Code of Practice for the control of Ragwort and he expressed his ongoing concern for the current resources available to address the problem, which appeared to be the responsibility of Somerset County Council.

The Chairman welcomed Vicky Breeze, Community Development Officer, who was attending the meeting on behalf of Somerset County Council.

68. Reports from Members (agenda item 7)

Councillor Ann Campbell reported that the Levels Children's Centre at Eastover in Langport had now opened, providing play, support and learning to children and their families.

Councillor Rupert Cox said he had recently attended the official launch of the new Levels and Moors Leader + programme at Dillington House. He expressed the hope that South Somerset would be able to influence how the scheme would be organised and administered in the future.

Councillor Paull Robathan reported that he had attended the launch of the 'Goldies' singing project on 22nd September in Crewkerne which was aimed at encouraging older people to participate in singing and dancing. He said the session had been very lively and that further sessions would be held in Yeovil, Somerton and Crewkerne each week.

Councillor Sue Steele reported that Ilton had been the winners of the People category in the Calor Village of the Year Awards 2008 for their achievements in business, environment and communication integration with the community and young people. It was proposed to send a letter of congratulation to the Parish Council on behalf of the Area North Committee.

Councillor Roy Mills reported that he had received a letter from a constituent asking for information on the new Sustainable Communities Act. Councillor Paull Robathan said he had proposed a motion to the full Council meeting on 30th October to obtain Council support to 'opt into' the new Sustainable Communities Act. He said it would allow anyone in the local community to require their local council to act on sustainable issues. A panel of local people would assess requests from the community and feed them up to the Local Government Association in London to refine them and then be required by law to act upon them.

Councillor Sylvia Seal reported that the recent Ham Hill Fayre had been a great success, despite the weather and had involved many local schoolchildren in a series of events and exhibitions.

Councillor Sylvia Seal also reported that a 'mystery shopper', on behalf of South West Tourism, had recently visited the Yeovil Tourist Information Centre and had scored the service they received at 98%. She said this Information Centre was now one of the top 10 Centres in the country and among the top 5 in the west of England.

69. Avon & Somerset Police Annual Update Report (agenda item 8)

Inspector Andrew Pritchard of Avon and Somerset Police provided Members with an update on the current priorities within the police service. He said that:-

- Violent crime had been significantly reduced by tackling anti-social behaviour at an early stage to avoid it escalating later.
- Opportunist crime was rising, particularly from motor vehicles, which was frustrating as it was easily avoidable.
- Theft of lead from buildings had increased, however, the police had worked with scrap-yards to make it difficult for thieves to sell the lead and this had now paid off as there had been a subsequent reduction in thefts.
- There had also been a recent spate of thefts of heating oil from tanks and petrol from cars and this would be reported in the press to ask people to be vigilant to this.
- He would shortly be restructuring his area so that the police boundaries were co-terminus with SSDC area boundaries. He felt this would help to have one police sergeant as a point of contact for each area.
- Following the Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings, aimed at consulting on crime issues with communities, he was now working with the SSDC Community Safety Officer and (Denise Dunford) to take into account all the different consultation schemes and he had produced a consultation process document which would be circulated to Members under separate cover.
- He expected all his beat managers and PCSO's to attend Parish Council meetings in their area at least once every three months to discuss and listen to any local issues they may have. He also felt that feedback to local communities on what was being achieved by the police was essential to good communication.
- He invited all Councillors to participate in the 'ride-along scheme', to shadow police officers either on foot or in cars and see first hand how police situations were dealt with.
- Four new CCTV cameras had been obtained through the SSDC Market Towns Investment Programme which would be useful to detect crime and identify people.
- An experiment using cameras attached to police officers hats, (Headcams), was proving interesting. The attitude of some people, when they realised they were

being taped, was more co-operative and as everything was recorded on camera, it was sometimes used in court to corroborate an officers report.

- The Community Speedwatch schemes in South Somerset were now so successful that their co-ordinator was striving to cope with the paperwork involved. However, the Fire Service had offered to provide assistance to help the schemes grow further and he was considering dedicating a PCSO to work solely with Speedwatch schemes.

In response to questions from Members, the Inspector confirmed that:-

- Police response times to non-emergency telephone calls should be the same across the district, irrespective of where they originated from. Response times were currently close to target, however, the public perception was different and needed to be managed.
- He expected his beat officers to focus on local issues and if this included speeding traffic then they should be liaising with road police colleagues to deal with this.
- He hoped to open further police posts in Ilchester and Castle Cary.
- Although the police had no powers of veto over proposed road junction improvements, he would check with the local officer regarding the police response to the proposals for the junction of the B3153 at Pitney.
- He would like local communities to know their beat officers and a police newsletter was published every three months detailing their mobile telephone numbers and contact details.

The Chairman warmly thanked the Inspector for attending and providing an update on the broad range of work carried out by the police.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be NOTED.

*Inspector Andrew Pritchard, Avon & Somerset Police
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70. Sport, Arts & Leisure Service Update (agenda item 9)

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Sylvia Seal, said she wished to congratulate the small team of staff within the Sport, Arts & Leisure service who were dedicated to promoting the well-being of people within the community.

The Head of Sport, Arts & Leisure provided Members with a powerpoint presentation of the varied services and activities carried out within the Sport, Arts & Leisure service. He particularly highlighted:-

- The full programme of concerts, plays and events at the Octagon Theatre now being held following the re-roofing and scenedock extension during the summer.
- The successful Active Communities programme, providing taster sessions in various activities to encourage people to be more active.
- The streetsoccer sessions held during the school holidays had helped to prevent antisocial behaviour in young people.
- The importance of strategic contributions from housing developments towards sports facilities in the district and the identified lack of swimming pool provision within Area North.

He concluded by asking for feedback from Members on any particular areas that they considered the Sport, Arts & Leisure service should concentrate on within Area North during 2009.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Sport, Arts & Leisure confirmed that:-

- Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) Planning for Open space, Sport and Recreation, when adopted by SSDC and incorporated into the Local Plan, would give SSDC the power to demand contributions from developers towards local sport and recreation facilities.
- The decision to charge parishes a fee for the inspection of their play areas was a decision taken as part of the department's annual budget savings. He said the fee was reasonable and was the lowest in the current market.
- The future of the Octagon Theatre was still under review by a Scrutiny Commission and would be subject to funding allocated through the Yeovil Vision.
- Meetings with partner organisations like the Rural Youth Project were regular and ongoing to provide an effective service to the community.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Sport, Arts and Leisure for attending and providing a full and comprehensive report and presentation of the service.

RESOLVED: That the report and presentation be NOTED.

*Steve Joel, Head of Sport, Arts & Leisure - (01935) 462278
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71. Enhanced Area Working: Supporting Young People in Area North - (agenda item 10)

The Community Development Assistant reported that the service enhancement programme to support working with younger people was going well, particularly the partnership working in the market towns of Langport, Somerton, Martock and South Petherton. In the rural parishes, she had looked at supporting individual events, some of which had led to weekly clubs being established and positive feedback to run similar activities for young people in the future. It was noted that the Somerset Rural Youth Project, in conjunction with other agencies, had offered advice and assistance to volunteers from within the community as they established a youth club in the Seavingtons. She also mentioned the Children's Centres now established in Ilminster, Ilchester and Langport which were a place to meet and a source of information for all the young people of the area.

During discussion, Members were fully supportive of the projects and suggested reviewing Parish Plans to develop a plan or strategy for further support schemes and to identify new partners. It was also felt that the Children's Centres should be marketed more widely to the rural parishes.

Members were fully supportive of continuing the enhanced area working with younger people and the proposed next steps as detailed in Section 5 of the officer's report to complete the current service enhancement programme.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the report and the proposed next steps as detailed in Section 5 of the officer's report to complete the current service enhancement programme for younger people.

*Teresa Oulds, Community Development Assistant - (01458) 257435
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72. Enhanced Area Working: Supporting Older People in Area North - (agenda item 11)

The Community Development Assistant reported that the events organised to support older people in Area North had proved very successful. Many of the grant requests had been for transport for days out to various places which had resulted in some very positive feedback and the 6 Information drop-in sessions held had attracted over 165 people who had attended to receive advice. She hoped that some of the events supported would lead onto regularly held activities and she commended the Support Coordinators in the South Somerset Homes sheltered housing schemes who had been very positive in their help. She also mentioned the Somerset Fuel Poverty Partnership to be launched on 6th October 2008 by all the Somerset District Councils, Somerset County Council and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to ensure those facing fuel poverty, or on the verge, were provided with the clearest and most up to date information on help available.

During discussion, Members were fully supportive of the project, however, it was felt that more could be done to make people aware of the benefits available to older people, particularly those which were not means tested, like Attendance Allowance.

Members were fully supportive of continuing the enhanced area working with older people and the proposed next steps as detailed in Section 3 of the officer's report to complete the current service enhancement programme.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the report and the proposed next steps as detailed in Section 3 of the officer's report to complete the current service enhancement programme for older people.

*Teresa Oulds, Community Development Assistant - (01458) 257435
e-mail: teresa.oulds@southsomerset.gov.uk*

73. Area North Community Grants – Street Lighting in Hambridge – (Executive Decision) (agenda item 12)

The Community Development Officer introduced the report, saying that Hambridge was a very proactive parish, having previously paid for their own street lamps. However, due to the sharp rise in the cost and the new regulations which stated that lamps could not be attached to existing poles, the Parish Council were forced to seek external contributions to the scheme.

He confirmed that a £500 contribution had been secured from the Somerset County Councillor grants scheme and that once installed, Somerset County Council would fully adopt and maintain the lights.

Members were pleased to support the provision of two street lighting units in Hundry Lane, Hambridge and unanimously voted in favour of the project.

RESOLVED: That a grant of £2,286.50 be made to Hambridge and Westport Parish Council towards the installation of two street lighting units from the Area North Community Grants Programme subject to the standard terms and conditions for SSDC Community and Leisure Grants listed in Appendix A to the report.

Reason: To support and contribute towards the installation of two street lighting units for Hundry Lane, Hambridge.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

*Leslie Collett, Community Development Officer - (01458) 257427
e-mail: leslie.collett@southsomerset.gov.uk*

74. British Telecom Consultation on the proposal to remove payphones in Area North (agenda item 13)

The Head of Area Development (North) presented the report. She referred to the list of draft decisions and comments set out in Appendix A.

She explained how the draft decisions had been arrived at, which were primarily through feedback from the parishes, usage figures obtained from British Telecom (BT) and mobile phone coverage. She further explained that in some cases the Parish Council had not objected to the removal of the telephone box but SSDC's draft decision was to object - this was because usage figures and poor mobile reception had been taken into account. However, she stressed that any objection put in by SSDC would have to be robust in order to defend that decision should BT appeal against it.

The Head of Area Development (North) confirmed that the deadline for Parish Councils to 'adopt a box' had been extended until 1st November 2008 (for red kiosks only), however, SSDC were objecting that this was an unreasonably short time period and were advising those Parishes who were interested in doing this, not to sign the legal agreements at the present time.

She also noted that Montacute Parish had requested the removal of their telephone box and it was not on BT's proposed removal list.

One of the Ward Members for Martock noted that the Parish Council would be willing to lose the phone box at Coat in exchange for keeping the box in Bower Hinton.

It was further noted that many payphones had been converted to payment by card only which Members felt could explain low usage figures in some rural areas.

The Head of Area Development (North) confirmed that she would take the observations made by Members into account when writing her final response to the consultation.

RESOLVED: 1. That the draft decisions to object to or support the proposed removal of a payphone, as set out in Appendix A, be approved, with the following amendments:-

- The phone box in Montacute be added to the proposed list of removed payphones.
- That the phone box at Coat be offered for removal in exchange for keeping the payphone in Bower Hinton.

- 2. That the final decision/response be delegated to the Head of Area Development (North) in consultation with the four Area Chairmen.

Reason: To allow the Head of Area Development (North), in consultation with the four Area Chairman, to formulate a response to the British Telecom proposals to remove 77 public payphones from locations across South Somerset, on behalf of the District Council.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

*Tim Cook, Community Development Officer – (01963) 435088
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*Charlotte Jones, Head of Area Development (North) - (01458) 257401
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75. Area North Forward Plan – (For Information) (agenda item 14)

Members were content to note the report.

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

*Angela Cox, Committee Administrator - (01458) 257437
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76. Planning Appeals (agenda item 15)

Members were content to note the report.

RESOLVED: That the Planning Appeals report be NOTED.

*Simon Gale, Head of Development & Building Control - (01935) 462071
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77. Planning Applications (agenda item 16)

There were no planning applications for consideration at this meeting.

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