

Meeting AN **07M** 08/09  
Date **22.10.08**

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held on **Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2008** at the Village Hall, Ilton.

(2.00 p.m. – 5.10 p.m.)

**Present:**

**Members:**

Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Jill Beale	Keith Ronaldson
Ann Campbell	Jo Roundell Greene (to 4.25p.m.)
Tony Carvin	Sylvia Seal
Roy Mills	Sue Steele
Paull Robathan	Derek Yeomans

**Officers:**

Charlotte Jones	Head of Area Development (North)
Nigel Collins	Transport Strategy Officer
Gerard Tucker	Economic Development Team Leader
Les Collett	Community Development Officer
Natalie House	Community Regeneration Officer
David Norris	Development Control Team Leader
Lee Walton	Planning Officer
John Millar	Planning Officer
Angela Cox	Committee Administrator

**Others:**

John Perrett	Team Leader, Transporting Somerset, SCC
Liz Oram	Partnership Manager, Business Link
Vicky Breeze	Community Development Officer, SCC

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

### 78. Minutes (agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

### 79. Apologies for Absence (agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rupert Cox and Derek Nelson.

### 80. **Declarations of Interest (agenda item 3)**

Councillors Roy Mills and Derek Yeomans both declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 10, Area North Community Grants, as Directors of the Langport Area Development Trust, the applicants for funding.

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

Councillor Tony Canvin declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 13, Planning Applications, 08/03000/FUL – Land Os 3769 part, Badgers Cross Lane, Somerton, as landowner over which the site would be accessed.

He left the room during consideration of this item.

Councillor Tony Canvin also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 13, Planning Applications, 08/03055/COU – 14a Wessex Park, Bancombe Road Trading Estate, Somerton, as owner of the Trading Estate.

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

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### 81. **Date of Future Meetings (agenda item 4)**

The Chairman reminded Members that the next Area North Committee meeting would be held on **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at the Millennium Hall, Seavington.**

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### 82. **Public Question Time (agenda item 5)**

There were no questions from members of the public.

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### 83. **Chairman's Announcements (agenda item 6)**

The Chairman announced that he would be holding a Christmas drinks reception at Long Sutton Golf Club on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November from 6.30 to 8.30p.m. for all the Chairmen of the Area North Parish Councils. He requested that all Area North Members also attend.

Councillor Patrick Palmer announced that, as requested at the last meeting of the Committee, promotional information on the Levels Children's Centre in Langport had now been distributed to all Area North parishes.

The Chairman also announced that the Members Workshop, due to be held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at Long Sutton Golf Club was now cancelled due to a conflicting meeting of the Regulation Committee.

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## 84. Reports from Members (agenda item 7)

Councillor Keith Ronaldson asked that Members were aware of an illegal trespass on land at Egwood Hill, south of Lopen. He said that he hoped the situation would soon be resolved but expressed concern at where the family may move to.

Councillor Paull Robathan reported that the SCC Gypsy Liaison Officer was awaiting information on this family from SSDC officers and he would not proceed with the eviction process until that information was received.

Councillor Ann Campbell reported that a leaflet of useful contact numbers for people experiencing fuel poverty was currently being compiled and would shortly be distributed to all parishes.

Councillor Roy Mills reported that the Bartletts Elm development in Huish Episcopi would be opening their first show house on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October from 10.00am to 4.00p.m.

## 85. Update on Transport Issues in Area North (agenda item 8)

The Transport Strategy Officer introduced Mr John Perrott, Team Leader within Transporting Somerset, SCC, who was attending to answer Members questions. He highlighted the rising cost of concessionary fares across Somerset and confirmed that he would be presenting a report to the Scrutiny Committee in August/September 2009 on the cost of allowing 24 hour travel by concessionary fare, as opposed to the existing scheme which only allowed travel between 9.00a.m. and 11.00p.m. each day. He also urged Members to complete the Travelplan Survey which had been circulated to all staff and he provided copies of the survey for Members.

In response to questions from Members, the Transport Strategy Officer confirmed that:-

- There was a partial bus service serving the settlements between South Petherton and Crewkerne each day via the N12 service although passenger number were low.
- The contract for the 633 service was due for renewal in the new year and it was possible that this could be replaced by a demand responsive service. This may be the opportunity to re-draw some of the routes to include poorly-served villages.
- All the concessionary fare passes should be 'ITSO' (Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation) compliant so they could be scanned when a passenger boards a bus (where the bus is equipped with on board readers). This would collect valuable data on passenger numbers.
- He would speak to the Deputy Manager of Transporting Somerset, who was in discussions with the Hospital Drivers Service, regarding the service being reduced to assist with travel within the county boundary only.
- He would liaise with Transporting Somerset to consider revising the 633 service in light of a new supermarket opening in Crewkerne.

The Team Leader within Transporting Somerset, SCC, also confirmed that:-

- Some bus operators did not have any incentive to provide the 'ITSO' compliant concessionary fare passes readers as the equipment was expensive, however, the quality of data gathered would be high and so Transporting Somerset would be promoting their use.

- Over 40,000 transport booklets and timetables were produced each year and demand for them was rising steadily. There would be a serious cost implication to providing one to every household.
- He was aware that the SCC Website was being revamped to make it more user friendly and suggested that there was potential for both the district and parishes' web pages to link to the Traveline website.
- Passengers could SMS text a bus stop number to the Traveline website and receive back information on the times of the next 3 buses due to arrive. Bus stop number plates were currently being rolled out at selected stops around the county.
- He would look at the possibility of including Hambridge and Westport in a service to Ilminster.

The Head of Area Development (North) offered to circulate a map of bus routes in the area which colour-detailed which villages were served well and which had an irregular service.

The Chairman warmly thanked the Transport Strategy Officer and SCC Transport Team Leader for attending and providing an update on the work carried out by their services.

**RESOLVED:** That Members:-

1. Noted the report and presentation.
2. Considered the villages of Long Sutton, Hambridge and Westport and South Petherton experienced accessibility problems and asked the Transport Strategy Officer and the Transporting Somerset Officer (SCC), to take this forward with other appropriate partners when considering service improvements.
3. Instructed the Transport Strategy Officer to liaise with District's Local Strategic Partnership, South Somerset Together, and Transporting Somerset to raise awareness of the current public transport provision and consider potential improvements necessary to ease accessibility to services and facilities.

*Nigel Collins, Transport Strategy Officer – (01935) 462591  
e-mail: nigel.collins@southsomerset.gov.uk*

## 86. Economic Development Service Update (agenda item 9)

The Economic Development Team Leader introduced Liz Oram, Partnership Manager within Business Link, with whom the Economic Development service worked closely. He highlighted the discussion points within his report and invited questions from Members.

In response to questions from Members, the Economic Development Team Leader confirmed that:-

- Somerset Foodlinks had been financially supported by SSDC for a number of years, however, they were now moving towards being self-funding as a number of their projects were drawing to conclusion.
- The 'Into Somerset' scheme would be launched in Spring 2009. It was a new scheme supported by the County and District Councils to attract new businesses to the County

with the assistance of LABGI funding and was an excellent example of partnership working.

- Currently, there were no plans to reconsider discretionary rate relief for businesses however, he would look at this again.
- Some businesses in Crewkerne had received a reduction in business rates during the construction of a new supermarket in the town, however, they had to prove loss of income/turnover during the construction period to qualify.

The Business Link Partnership Manager said that the Government had announced a new, proactive role for Business Link. They were to provide free healthchecks to all businesses from 0 to 250 employees. Although this service was already provided on-line, she offered to report back to the Committee on the progress of the new scheme when it had been operating for some months. She provided the Committee with information leaflets on free start-up workshops held during October, November and December for people running new businesses.

The Chairman thanked the Economic Development Team Leader and Business Link Partnership Manager for attending and providing a full and comprehensive report and presentation of their service.

**RESOLVED:** That Members:-

1. NOTED the report and presentation.
2. Recognise the impact of the charging of Business Rates on empty premises had on the local economy and directed the Economic Development Team Leader to consider appropriate action to raise the profile of this issue.

*Gerard Tucker, Economic Development Team Leader - (01935) 462527  
e-mail: gerard.tucker@southsomerset.gov.uk*

## **87. Area North Community Grants – Langport Local Information Centre (Executive Decision) - (agenda item 10)**

As permitted under the new Code of Conduct, having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest, Councillor Roy Mills addressed the Committee. He said that the local information centre in Langport was valued by both residents and tourists alike and he hope Members would support the proposal for the short-term financial support. Councillor Derek Yeomans concurred with this.

They then both left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting on this item.

The Head of Area Development (North) reported that although the Langport Area Development Trust (LADT) had received a considerable amount of public money in the past, not all projects had achieved a long lasting legacy for the community. Whilst this was to be expected with innovative and new work, the sustainability of the community office was giving cause for concern. It had come to light relatively recently that there was not sufficient long-term income secured for the Langport Community Office and therefore, it was proposed to fund the office function in the short-term whilst providing assistance to produce a long-term business plan with support and advice via a working group. She said this would provide stability to the Community Links Service and Local Information Centre who shared the offices and would give the Directors confidence to

move the Trust forward. She also drew attention to the robust conditions attached to the funding and asked that a representative of Area North Committee be appointed to the Working Group.

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

- The LADT was financially supported by the Langport Town Council and Huish Episcopi Parish Council.
- The lease on the building was renewable in October 2009 and would be the responsibility of the Directors of the LADT if surrendered early.
- She hoped the full £4,000 proposed would not be required.
- Maintenance and repair of the building would be worked into the business plan.

During discussion, Members were fully supportive of the project and proposed Councillor Tony Canvin as the representative on the working group.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That Members approve a grant to the Langport Area Development Trust towards the operational costs of the Langport Community Office, Bow Street, Langport, to a total value of £4,000, through staged payments authorised by the Head of Area Development (North) from the Area North Community Grants budget, within a maximum period of one year from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2008.
  2. That the total grant paid be subject to the following standard and special conditions:
    - a) SSDC standard grants conditions (see Appendix B to the Agenda report).
    - b) The Langport Area Development Trust, Langport Town Council, Huish Episcopi Parish Council and South Somerset District Council appoint representatives to form a working group to monitor and authorise future payments and claims relating to the Langport Community Office.
    - c) The working group to work in partnership to develop and approve a revised business plan by 30<sup>th</sup> January 2009, which demonstrates a realistic 3-year forecast.
    - d) The working group to invite representatives of the LINKS community transport service and the Local Information Centre to participate.
    - e) Claims of up to £750 per month, to be submitted monthly with the first month paid in advance due 1<sup>st</sup> November 2008.
    - f) The working group to provide a monthly update report, together with a claim if required, by the end of each month. The update to record progress towards achieving agreed actions, and a budget statement, set by the working group, in conjunction with the Head of Area Development (North), and reported to the Area Committee as required.
    - g) The working group to consider and recommend longer term management arrangements, including the role of the existing steering group for the LINKS service, and compliance with the SSDC service level agreement for the Local Information Centre.

- h) That Grant payments must be viewed as restricted funds, and ringfenced to this project, and presented as such in LADT accounts. This should include the allocation of £1,000 by LADT, as shown in the budget included in this report. LADT accounts to maintain a separate financial record for the Community Office as a separate business activity.
  - i) That in the event of a decision by LADT to rescind the lease before October 2009, SSDC is notified in writing, and reserves the right to reclaim payments made to date.
  - j) That the LADT agrees to undertake and publish a 'social audit' of itself, by March 2009, in partnership with other key stakeholders, including SSDC, including an independent assessment of its current governance and constitutional arrangements. Arrangements for this to be approved in writing by SSDC in advance.
3. That Councillor Tony Canvin be appointed to act as SSDC representative to the working group, and that Members endorse support to the working group by the Head of Area Development (North).

**Reason:** To provide a short-term financial contribution to meet the current shortfall in revenue for the Langport Community Office, enabling the Local Information Centre and Links Community Transport Service to continue to operate from their current premises while a longer term solution is developed.

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

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

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## **88. Area North Forward Plan – (For Information) (agenda item 11)**

Members were content to note the report.

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

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

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## **89. Planning Appeals (agenda item 12)**

Members were content to note the report.

**RESOLVED:** That the Planning Appeals report be NOTED.

*Simon Gale, Head of Development & Building Control - (01935) 462071  
e-mail: simon.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk*

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## 90. Planning Applications (agenda item 13)

### **08/00518/FUL - Erection of two storey extension, loft conversion and alteration and extension of garage at Bramble Field, Vagg Lane, Chilthorne Domer, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 3PX**

The Planning Officer advised that Members were invited to pass a resolution, which would be passed to the Planning Inspector as to what their decision would be on the application, as part of an ongoing appeal against non-determination of the application.

Mr G Vincent, Agent for the applicants, said that although the proposed extension would result in a 40% increase in the property, this was subjective as the surrounding plot was very large and could easily accommodate it. He noted that there was no intention to increase the business use or parking at the property and the overall roof height would only increase by 0.7m. He said surrounding properties were set higher than the bungalow and therefore their views would not be impeded.

The Ward Member, Councillor Jo Roundell Greene, said the bungalow could be clearly seen from the bottom of the hill and the proposed extension would be prominent. She expressed concern at a possible sub-division of the property in the future and concluded that she agreed with the Parish Council who were opposed to granting permission.

During discussion, the majority of Members felt that the proposal was acceptable given the size of the plot.

It was proposed to grant permission in line with the Planning Officer's recommendation and on being put to the vote, was carried (voting: 9 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions).

**RESOLVED:** The Committee indicated that they would support officer's recommendation for approval of planning permission subject to Conditions 1 to 5 as detailed in the Planning Officer's report. This indication to be forwarded to the Planning Inspector with a statement that SSDC would not contest the appeal.

*(Voting: 9 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions)*

### **08/03000/FUL - The erection of 2 no. agricultural buildings for the storage of fodder and machinery and 2 no. polytunnels at Land Os 3769 Part, Badgers Cross Lane, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7JF**

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

The Planning Officer noted that whilst the site was wholly within the ownership of the applicant, the access road was in joint ownership with a member of the Committee. He noted that the site was well screened by trees and hedges, the Highway Authority had no objections and there were other agricultural buildings nearby. His recommendation was that of approval with conditions.

The Ward Member, Councillor Jill Beale, said the application had been given unanimous approval at the Town Council meeting and she fully supported the use of the land.

Members were in agreement that the use would be of benefit to the local economy and it was proposed to grant permission in line with the Planning Officer's recommendation. On being put to the vote, it was carried (voting: unanimous in favour).

**RESOLVED:** That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to Conditions 1 to 8 as detailed in the Planning Officer's report.

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

**08/03055/COU - The change of use of building from light industrial (Use Class B1) to an indoor childrens play centre (Use Class D2) at 14A Wessex Park, Bancombe Road Trading Estate, Somerton, Somerset TA11 6SB**

The Planning Officer advised that although the Economic Development unit supported the application and there was no precedent being set as other units on the estate had diverse uses, his recommendation remained of refusal because of the likely conflict between pedestrian and commercial traffic. He noted the objections raised by the Highway Authority as the access, parking and turning facilities were not completely separate from the other nearby industrial units, however, as the estate was privately owned, they had no actual jurisdiction although he asked Members to take account of this.

As permitted under the new Code of Conduct, having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest, Councillor Tony Canvin addressed the Committee. He said that amendments had been made to the parking area to accommodate a safe footpath to the entrance of the unit. The business would create 5 or 6 new jobs and the main use of the facility would be afternoons and weekends whereas the majority of deliveries to the other nearby units took place in the mornings.

He then left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting on this item.

Mr D James, occupier of a nearby unit, said there was no alternative access to his unit other than through the site and his agricultural engineering business attracted heavy goods vehicles and tractors on a daily basis. He said the proposed parking area was not separated from the main access area and there was a potential for children running in front of vehicles.

Mrs P Clarke, County Councillor, spoke in support of the application. She reminded the Committee that they had given permission for a children's day nursery less than 200m from the site, which was a great success and although there were other small business units nearby, their main business and vehicle activity would be in the mornings, when the indoor play area would not be operating. She said the segregated footway meant there would be no need for children to cross the car park, and, as Portfolio Holder at Somerset County Council responsible for Children and Young People, she would not be supporting the application if she thought it was in any way dangerous.

Mr M Walrond, the applicant, said that safety and access to the nearby units was his main concern and although he expected the indoor play area to be busy outside of normal working hours, he would be willing to cone off part of the car park for large deliveries if necessary. He said the outside area of the unit had always been designated as a car parking area and the only difference would be the presence of children.

The Ward Member, Councillor Jill Beale, referred to other indoor childrens play areas located on trading estates in the area. She felt the additional safety measures proposed overcame any objections and she recommended granting permission.

During discussion varying views were expressed. Whilst the majority of Members felt the proposal was sound and would be an asset to the town, some expressed deep concern at the safety of children in the car parking area.

In response to Members questions, the applicant confirmed that no children over the age of 10 would be allowed entrance, all children must be accompanied by an adult and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) would inspect and certificate the premises annually. This was a condition of their insurance.

The Development Control Team Leader also confirmed that obtaining RoSPA certification could not be tied to a planning condition, nor could an age limit of the children attending.

It was proposed to grant permission, with conditions regulating the layout of the parking area and pathway to the unit, that the land and building only be used as an indoor play area and no other purpose, and that the unit remain within the ownership of the applicants. On being put to the vote, the proposal was carried (voting: 6 in favour, 2 against, 0 abstentions).

**RESOLVED:** That planning permission be **GRANTED** for the following reasons:-

The proposed change of use is considered to be an acceptable form of development, which meets an identified need, has no detrimental impact on employment provision locally and is not considered to result in a conflict between pedestrian and commercial traffic, which would be prejudicial to the safety, amenity and convenience of users, in accordance with the aims and objectives of policy VIS 2 of the Regional Spatial Strategy, policies STR1 and 49 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Joint Structure Plan Review and policies ST5, ST6, MC5, MC6 and ME6 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006.

Conditions:

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The use hereby approved shall not be carried out unless a mechanism has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority that ensures that Unit 14a remains in the same ownership as Unit 14. This restriction shall remain in place for as long as Unit 14a is used for D1 purposes as approved under this consent.

Reason: The local planning authority would not have been prepared to grant planning permission but for this special need, to minimise the impact of possible conflict between pedestrians and commercial traffic to accord with Policy ST5 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006.

- 03. The subject land including any building(s) thereon shall be used as an indoor children’s play area and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in Class D1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

Reason: To safeguard the amenities and character of the area and in the interest of assuring adequate parking remains available for any alternative use to accord with policy 9 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Joint Structure Plan Review and Policies ST5 and ST6 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006.

- 04. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until details of the layout of the car parking area, including position of parking spaces and protective measures have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The use hereby approved shall not be carried out unless such agreed details have been fully implemented. Such approved details, once carried out shall not be altered without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To minimise the impact of possible conflict between pedestrians and commercial traffic to accord with Policy ST5 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006.

*(Voting: 6 in favour, 2 against, 0 abstentions)*

*Simon Gale, Head of Development & Building Control - (01935) 462071  
e-mail: [simon.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:simon.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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Chairman