

Meeting JAN 02M 08/09  
Date 25.02.09

## South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Joint Area North Committee** held on **Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009** at the Village Hall, Long Sutton.

(2.00 p.m. – 6.55 p.m.)

**Present:**

**Members:**

Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Ann Campbell	Derek Nelson
Douglas Campbell	Paul Robathan
Tony Carvin	Keith Ronaldson
Pauline Clarke	Jo Roundell Greene
Sam Crabb	Sylvia Seal
Rupert Cox (to 5.30pm)	John Sharpe
Philip Horsington (from 3.30pm)	Sue Steele
Roy Mills	Derek Yeomans

**Other Members:**

Ric Pallister	Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing, Inclusion & Revenues & Benefits
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**Officers:**

Charlotte Jones	Head of Area Development (North), SSDC
Julian Gale	Group Manager - Community Governance, SCC
Sally McCarthy	Acting Principal Housing Strategy Officer
David Norris	Development Control Team Leader, SSDC
Vicky Breeze	Community Development Officer, SCC
George Montague	Countryside Ranger, SSDC
Paula Goddard	Senior Legal Executive
Claire Nute	Planning Officer, SSDC
Adrian Noon	Major Applications Planning Officer, SSDC
Jeff Copp	Planning Liaison Manager, SCC
Ian McWilliams	Planning Liaison Officer, SCC
Angela Cox	Committee Administrator, SSDC

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

### 16. Minutes (agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2009, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

## 17. Apologies for absence (agenda item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jill Beale (SSDC).

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## 18. Declarations of Interest (agenda item 3)

Councillor Roy Mills declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 16, Planning Applications, Application No. 08/05347/R3C - Huish Episcopi Secondary School, as a Governor of the school. He also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 16, Planning Applications, Application No. 08/05090/FUL - Land and garages at Copse Lane, Ilton, as a Board Member of South Somerset Homes, the applicants.

He confirmed that he would leave the room during consideration of these items.

Councillors Roy Mills and Derek Yeomans both declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10, Langport Local Information Centre and Community Office, as Directors of the Langport Area Development Trust, the leaseholders of the office. The report was for information only and although they did not leave the room, they took no part in the debate.

Councillor Pauline Clarke noted that although she had no interest to declare, she had worked for 25 years as a teacher, rising to Acting Headteacher at Huish Episcopi Secondary School (regarding Agenda Item 16, Planning Applications, Application No. 08/05347/R3C - Huish Episcopi Secondary School).

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## 19. Date of Next Meeting (agenda item 4)

The Chairman reminded Members that the next meeting of the Joint SSDC/SCC Area North Committee meeting would be held on **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at the Village Hall, Norton-sub-Hamdon.**

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## 20. Public Question Time (agenda item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public.

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## 21. Chairman's Announcements (agenda item 6)

The Chairman welcomed County Councillors Douglas Campbell, Pauline Clarke, Sam Crabb and John Sharpe to their first Joint Area Committee meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Joint Area North Annual Meeting with Town and Parish Councils would be held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 in the Village Hall, Long Sutton, commencing at 6.30p.m. and he encouraged Committee Members to attend to speak to the Town and Parish Councillors present.

The Head of Area Development (North) advised that Town and Parish Councils had been invited to suggest topics for discussion during the evening.

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

Councillor Sue Steele advised that the flooding awareness workshop scheduled to be held in Donyatt had been cancelled due to further flooding. It was noted that the workshop would be rearranged at a different venue.

Councillor Rupert Cox advised that he had assisted in the recruitment of the new police beat manager for the area, PC Stuart Brunt, and he had suggested to him that he make early contact with District and County Ward Members and Parish Councillors.

Councillor Jo Roundell Greene advised that she had attended an interesting meeting on Transition Towns in Cirencester and she was hoping to run a workshop on the subject in South Somerset.

Councillor Paull Robathan noted a Transition Towns event was being held by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in June 2009 at the Yeovil Innovation Centre.

Councillor Ann Campbell advised that the contract had now been awarded for the flagship play area to be built on land adjacent to the Yeovil Recreation Ground.

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## 23. Area North Affordable Housing Development Programme (agenda item 8)

The Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing, Inclusion & Revenues & Benefits, Councillor Ric Pallister, said that although Members may consider that the pace of delivery of affordable housing within Area North was slow, South Somerset District Council as a whole were the second highest deliverer of affordable housing in the country at the moment. He noted that the Housing service were focusing their delivery programme on the areas of highest need, which were currently the towns of Yeovil and Chard.

The Acting Principal Housing Strategy Officer (SSDC) advised that there were some difficulties for prospective shared-ownership applicants obtaining mortgages in the current economic climate, although Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) were doing their best to assist. She noted several possible affordable housing schemes within Area North which could be progressed and she asked the Committee for an indication of their priorities.

During discussion, Members felt that the role of Rural Housing Enablers was key to progressing rural affordable housing schemes and that possibly some people in need of re-housing did not put their name forward as they felt they may not be considered a priority need for social housing.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the first phase of the county-wide affordable land search would soon be available and the most favourable locations identified would be considered first for affordable housing sites.

In response to questions from Members, the Acting Principal Housing Strategy Officer undertook to provide further information from the Housing Register on housing need in Area North.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the current position of the Social Housing Development Programme for 2008/11 be NOTED.
  2. That further information from the Housing Register on housing needs within Area North be presented to the Committee.

*Colin McDonald, Corporate Strategic Housing Manager (SSDC) – (01935) 462331  
e-mail: colin.mcdonald@southsomerset.gov.uk*

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## **24. Addressing Local Priorities in Area North – Affordable Rural Housing (agenda item 9)**

The Head of Area Development (North) (SSDC) advised that her report was intended to provide an overview of the progress of local affordable housing schemes within Area North. She provided Members with a power point presentation of the process and stages to successfully deliver an affordable rural housing scheme.

During discussion it was noted that several local affordable housing schemes were either underway or proposed within Area North and it was agreed that 6 schemes in Long Sutton, Long Load, Norton-sub-Hamdon, High Ham, Compton Dundon and Curry Mallet should be prioritised for assistance. It was also agreed that Area North Committee should allocate funding towards the appointment of a dedicated Rural Housing Enabler to progress the above 6 schemes.

The Head of Area Development (North) agreed to provide Members with a further report on the financial implications of engaging the services of a dedicated Rural Housing Enabler to progress local affordable housing schemes within Area North.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the report be NOTED.
  2. That a report on the financial implications of appointing a Rural Housing Enabler to progress the six existing affordable rural housing schemes within Area North be presented to the Committee in March 2009.

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

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## **25. Langport Information Centre and Community Office (agenda item 10)**

The Head of Area Development (North) (SSDC) reminded Members that they had financially supported the Langport Community Office and Local Information Centre in October 2008 to assist in the short term running costs of the office, whilst a longer term solution was developed. Since then, she reported that the local Town and Parish Councils had pledged £3,000 towards future running costs and volunteers had come forward to staff the Local Information Centre for the summer season. Although she still had some concerns as to their business case, she felt their location, and the fact that the Town Council were considering taking over the lease on the building, demonstrated their positive support for its continuance.

Councillor Tony Canvin, as the Committee's representative on the working group, confirmed that he had attended a recent meeting which had discussed possible savings and areas of overspending.

During discussion, Members felt that the Local Information Centre could be more creative and positively promote the local Civil War battlesite and consider marketing tourism gifts and publications. It was also felt that space within the office could be used for more partnership working.

It was noted that a report on SSDC Area North Community Offices was due to be presented to the Committee in March 2009 and Members would consider future delivery of SSDC services then.

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

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

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**26. Area North 2008/09 SSDC Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 (Executive Decision) (Excepted Business) (agenda item 11)**

The Head of Area Development (North) advised that the pathway to the Cocklemoor Bridge was now complete and she was pleased to ask for authorisation to release the outstanding balance of funding for the project to Somerset County Council.

Councillor Derek Nelson advised that the parish of Westport were seeking funding for an illuminated speed-activated traffic sign at the entrance to the village and may submit a request to the Area Committee. It was also felt that willow hurdles, placed at the entrance signs to some villages within Area North were now becoming unsightly and overgrown and the Highway Authority should be asked to remove them.

Members were unanimous in their support of the report recommendations.

**RESOLVED:** That Members:-

1. Noted the NOTED the current position of the Area North Budgets.
2. Authorised the Head of Area Development (North), to release the outstanding balance of funding to Somerset County Council, from the Area North Capital Programme, allocated to the Cocklemoor Bridge, as budget holder for SSDC revenue and capital budgets under the control of the Joint Area Committee.
3. that the Highway Authority be asked to remove those willow hurdles which were in poor condition, placed at the entrance signs to some villages within Area North.

**Reason:** To note the current position of the Area North Budgets and authorise the Head of Area Development (North) to release the outstanding balance of funding allocated to the Cocklemoor Bridge to Somerset County Council.

*(Voting: Unanimous in favour)*

*Jayne Beevor, Principal Accountant, Financial Services (SSDC) - (01935) 462320  
e-mail: jayne.beevor@southsomerset.gov.uk*

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## 27. Area Development Plan Quarterly Monitoring (agenda item 12)

The Head of Area Development (North) advised that discussions were in progress with Somerset County Council on a joint Area Development Plan for 2009/10. She drew Members attention to the four new priorities proposed in the Area Development Plan and asked for Members approval of their future inclusion in the plan.

Members were in agreement with this and requested further information on the Park Homes project at gypsy and traveller sites and the junction improvements at Field Road, Somerton Road, Huish Episcopi, when it was available.

During discussion it was noted that funding of the Joint Area Committees from Somerset County Council would be considered following the County elections in June 2009 and when the Joint Area Committees moved to Phase 2 of their development.

**RESOLVED:** That Members:-

1. Noted the report and the updates on progress towards addressing local priorities contained in Appendix A.
2. Noted the addition of four major projects (items 26 – 29) currently being supported by SSDC, to be monitored by the Joint Area Committee.
3. Agreed that an in principle allocation to the planned roundabout at Langport (Field Road junction) be included in the revised Area North Capital Programme for 2009/10.

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

## 28. Area North Service Enhancement Programme - 2008/09 (Executive Decision) (Excepted Business) (agenda item 13)

The Head of Area Development (North) (SSDC) said that discussions had been ongoing with the Rights of Way team regarding access improvements to footpaths in the area. She noted that the example projects detailed in the agenda were not the specific schemes which would be carried out. Parish and Town Councils would be encouraged to put forward their local priority improvements.

Members welcomed George Montague, Countryside Ranger, who would be assisting in the access improvements

During discussion Members felt that a scoring criteria should be used to target those areas in most need, however, it was felt that the scoring criteria should not be overly complicated. Parishes should also be encouraged to provide volunteers to assist in the work.

Members were unanimous in their support for the scheme.

**RESOLVED:** That Members approved the allocation of £15,000 for local access projects (with priority on the public rights of way network), from the Area North Service Enhancement Programme 08-09, to be managed by the acting Head of Countryside, Heritage and Tourism, with local enhancements agreed in conjunction with Parish Councils and Parish Paths Liaison Officers.

**Reason:** To improve local access projects (public rights of way) within Area North.

*(Voting: Unanimous in favour)*

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

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## 29. Joint Area North Forward Plan (agenda item 14)

Julian Gale, Group Manager - Community Governance (SCC), advised that an SCC service presentation on Adult Social Care would be presented to the Committee in March 2009, followed by a Children and Young People service briefing in April 2009.

**RESOLVED:** That Members:-

1. Noted the proposed Joint Area North Forward Plan as attached at Appendix A to the report.
2. Identified the following reports for inclusion in the next Joint Area North Forward Plan:-
  - Adult Social Care service briefing
  - Children and Young People service briefing

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

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## 30. Planning Appeals (agenda item 15)

Members expressed concern that three recent planning applications, which had been refused permission at Committee, had subsequently been granted permission by Planning Appeal Inspectors. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the Members next informal meeting with planning officers in March 2009.

**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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### 31. Planning Applications (agenda item 16)

**08/05347/R3C – Erection of two storey extension and single storey science extension with associated works, alterations to visibility splay and car parking arrangements and new play court at Huish Episcopi Secondary School, Wincanton Road, Huish Episcopi, Somerset**

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

The Planning Officer introduced the report with a power point presentation of the plans and photographs of the site. She noted that a Transport Assessment report had been received, which stated that the site proposed 115 car parking spaces (29 more than currently existed at the school) and she asked for Members comments on the proposals, which would form part of SSDC's statutory consultation response to the County Council planning application.

Mrs S Nicholas, Chairman of Huish Episcopi Parish Council, said that whilst they were impressed with the design of the buildings, they were deeply concerned with the increase in traffic which the school would generate. She advised that the local church car park and a nearby housing estate were already used as overflow parking for the school and an additional 29 spaces was totally inadequate. The proposal also dismissed the need for junction improvements at the A372/B3153 as unnecessary, despite the Parish Council's requests for many years.

Mr D Bell, Chairman of the School Governors, spoke in support of the application. He said that a 6<sup>th</sup> form college would give students confidence and continuity to remain in the same educational establishment from the age of 11 to 19. He noted that concerns had been raised at the number of car parking spaces provided, however, they did fit with current Local Transport Plan guidance and significantly more cycle and motorcycle spaces were proposed.

The County Council Division Member, Councillor Derek Yeomans, said that as a County Regulation Board member, subject to any new information coming forward, he supported the application as it would reduce the number of journeys made by local students to other colleges.

During discussion, Members were fully supportive of the establishment of a 6<sup>th</sup> form college, however, strong concerns were expressed at the lack of additional parking provided, considering that nearby car parks and estate roads were already used as overspill. Strong concern was also expressed at the lack of any proposals for a roundabout at the junction of A372/B3153 considering the increased traffic which the 6<sup>th</sup> form college and other planning proposals in the area would generate.

Mr G Copp, Planning Liaison Manager, SCC, stated that despite the Transport Assessment report's conclusions, he still had concerns on the numbers of car journeys generated and parking spaces proposed and so he had requested further information, which would be reported to the SCC Regulation Board the following week. However, 115 spaces was the maximum number allowed for this type of development according to Government regulations.

Members discussed the proposals at some length and concluded that their concerns at the lack of car parking provided and the lack of any proposals for improvement to the road junction nearby were significant and asked that these concerns form part of the consultation response to Somerset County Council.



**RESOLVED:** That the following comments form part of the consultation response to Somerset County Council:-

That the Joint Area North Committee fully support the proposal for the establishment of a 6<sup>th</sup> form College at Huish Episcopi Secondary School, subject to the issues of parking at the site and the proposal for a roundabout at the junction of the A372/B3153 being fully resolved.

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

**08/05090/FUL – Demolition of existing buildings and the construction of 40 dwellings on land at Copse Lane, Ilton, Somerset**

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

The Major Applications Planning Officer noted that following comments made by the Parish Council, two car parking spaces had been rotated to allow easier access to the north of the site. He said the applicants had agreed all the contributions requested by the Open Spaces Officer, the Play & Youth Facilities Officer and the Leisure Facilities Officer towards enhanced recreation and play facilities in the area. The Somerset Playing Fields Association had written objecting to the development due to its potential impact on the functioning of the recreation ground and suggested the acquisition of an alternative site for a new recreation ground to mitigate the loss of open space at the site and suggested the agreed contributions from the applicants could be used to achieve this. However, given the previous Inspector's comments and for the reasons given in the report, he concluded that the general design and layout was acceptable and subject to a Section 106 Agreement, he recommended approval of the application.

The Senior Legal Executive reminded Members that the previous appeal decision on the site was a material consideration and the Inspector's comments in that decision should be closely regarded.

Mr D Amor, on behalf of Ilton Parish Council, said they had no objections to the principle of redeveloping the site but the lack of communication and consultation by the applicants was disappointing. Also, the close proximity of the houses to the existing recreation ground was a concern as noise could be a problem for the residents. He asked that if the application were approved, then the Parish Council should not be asked to bear the cost of erecting protective netting behind the existing goalposts.

The County Council Division Member, Councillor Derek Nelson, said he welcomed more children to the area to boost the local school, however, he felt that 1½ car parking spaces per property was inadequate and the proximity of houses to the existing recreation ground would be a problem. He said it was regrettable that the applicants had not addressed the Parish Councils concerns regarding communication and consultation.

The District Council Ward Member, Councillor Sue Steele, noted her disappointment at the lack of consultation with herself by the planning office on the application. She said that although she was not against redevelopment of the site, the arrangement of the houses and their proximity to the recreation ground was a concern. She said there must be an adequate buffer zone between the two as the nature of the recreation ground would change.

The Major Applications Planning Officer apologised to the District Council Ward Member for the lack of consultation with her. He said that application was before Members for determination as a major application and because of the previous appeal decision on the site. He confirmed that the applicants had submitted a Statement of Community Involvement, and the SSDC Engineer was satisfied with the flood risk assessment.

During discussion, whilst mindful of the Planning Inspectors comments, Members expressed deep concern at the impact the development would have on the existing recreation ground and the loss of an existing area of open space. The lack of consultation with local residents and the Parish Council was also regretted.

It was proposed that the application should be deferred for a meeting on site to assess the impact of the development on the recreation ground and to appraise the capacity of the recreation ground to absorb the additional use arising from the development. Parties to the meeting to include the applicants, the Major Applications Planning Officer, Parish Council representative, Play and Youth Facilities Officer, SSDC Ward Member. Members voted unanimously to defer the application.

**RESOLVED:** That planning permission be **DEFERRED** for further discussion with all parties concerned on the impact of the development on the adjacent recreation ground.

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

**08/05025/FUL – Conversion of modern agricultural building into farm shop and the construction of an access track at Scotts Farm, Water Street, Hambridge, Somerset.**

The Planning Officer introduced the report with a power point presentation of the plans and photographs of the site. She noted that the access track would be constructed of permeable hardcore material and only the access onto the highway would have a consolidated tarmac surface.

Mrs J Lucas spoke in objection to the application. She said the proposed new access track would be 300mm above the current field level and it would cause floodwater to become trapped between it and Water Lane. She said it did not take exceptional weather to flood in that area as there was solid clay under the field. She also noted that cars parked on the roadside could impede vision when exiting Water Street and would similarly impede vision for the proposed access track.

Ms C Baker said local residents had commissioned a report from independent construction engineers on the proposed farm shop and access track. She said the report highlighted several issues, including:-

- The proposed access track crossed an existing drainage ditch, which would require permission from the Environment Agency
- Although the applicant proposed a porous surface to the access track, the sub-soil beneath was clay with little or no drainage properties.
- The field was a storage area in times of flooding and the access track would reduce the capacity in the field and increase the risk to nearby houses.

Ms Baker concluded that a topographical survey, a flood risk survey and a map of any areas affected by flooding should be produced before permission was granted.

Mr C Morris, Agent for the applicant, said Mr Shaquer had purchased the farm in October 2007, specifically to establish an organic farm, to which he was very committed. He said that although the access track was on a flood risk zone 3 area, the farm was not and the original application, with access to the farm via Water Street had been withdrawn due to Highway Authority objections and land ownership issues.

The County Council Division Member, Councillor Derek Nelson, stated that flooding was a real issue in this part of the village, as was speeding traffic at a dangerous bend in the road.

The District Council Ward Member, Councillor Sue Steele, expressed her concern at the construction of the access track across the floodplain and the difference in height from the road to the field (2 metres). She said there was no footpath link to the village and speeding traffic at that point was very dangerous.

During discussion, Members expressed concern at the drop in levels from the road to the field and questioned why the existing Water Street was not considered suitable when it was currently used to access the farm.

The Planning Liaison Officer (SCC) advised that pre-application consultation had taken place and the width and gradient of Water Street had been considered unsuitable. It was considered that the new access provided better visibility and safety for traffic.

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

- A sloping ramp was proposed to cross the ditch onto the road.
- The farm was approximately 9.5 hectares in size.

The Development Control Team Leader, SSDC, noted that both the Environment Agency and the SSDC Engineer had not raised objections to the proposals, however, in light of the independent construction engineers report commissioned by local residents, he suggested that Members defer the application for further consultation with all parties. Members were unanimously in agreement with this.

**RESOLVED:** That planning permission be **DEFERRED** for further consultation with the SSDC Engineer and the Environment Agency on the Independent Construction Engineers report and for further negotiation with the applicant.

*(Voting: unanimous in favour)*

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Chairman