

Meeting JAN 03M 08/09
Date 25.03.09

South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Joint Area North Committee** held on **Wednesday, 25th March 2009** at the Village Hall, Norton-sub-Hamdon.

(2.00 p.m. – 6.15 p.m.)

Present:

Members:

Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Jill Beale	Paul Robathan
Ann Campbell	Keith Ronaldson
Douglas Campbell	Jo Roundell Greene
Tony Carvin	Sylvia Seal (to 4.15 p.m.)
Rupert Cox	John Sharpe
Philip Horsington	Sue Steele
Roy Mills	Derek Yeomans
Derek Nelson	

Officers:

Charlotte Jones	Head of Area Development (North), SSDC
John Moughton	Service & Operations Manager, Adult Social Care, SCC
Jon Goodwin	Team Manager, Langport Adult Social Care Team, SCC
Vicky Breeze	Community Development Officer, SCC
Madelaine King-Oakley	Area Support Team Leader (North), SSDC
Leslie Collett	Community Development Officer (North), SSDC
Ian McWilliams	Planning Liaison Officer, SCC
David Norris	Development Control Team Leader, SSDC
John Millar	Planning Officer, SSDC
Adrian Noon	Major Applications Planning Officer, SSDC
David Shears	District Rights of Way Officer, SSDC
Dominic Heath-Coleman	Planning Officer, SSDC
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.*

32. Minutes (agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25th February 2009, copies of which had been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting, with the insertion of the words "and anti-social behaviour" to Mr D Amor's comments on Minute 31, Planning Application 08/05090/FUL. Full sentence to read "Also, the close proximity of the houses to the existing recreation ground was a concern as noise and anti-social behaviour could be a problem for the residents."

33. Apologies for absence (agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Clarke and Sam Crabb (SCC).

34. Declarations of Interest (agenda item 3)

Councillors Jill Beale and Tony Canvin declared both a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 10, Area North Community Grants, as members of Somerton Town Council, the applicants for funding.

They confirmed that they would leave the room during consideration of this item.

Councillor Patrick Palmer declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 14, Planning Applications, Application No. 09/00520/FUL Bower Hinton Farm, Bower Hinton, Martock, as father of the applicant.

He confirmed that he would leave the room and the Vice Chairman, Councillor Ann Campbell, would assume the role of Chairman during consideration of this item.

Councillor Roy Mills declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 14, Planning Applications, Application No. 09/00023/FUL – Land rear of Westfield House, Westfield Road, Curry Rivel as a Board Member of South Somerset Homes, the applicants.

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

35. 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 22nd April 2009 in the Village Hall, Chilthorne Domer.**

36. Public Question Time (agenda item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public.

37. Chairman's Announcements (agenda item 6)

The Chairman reminded Members that the Joint Area North Annual Meeting with Town and Parish Councils would be held the following evening, Thursday 26th March 2009, in the Village Hall, Long Sutton, commencing at 6.30p.m.

The Chairman said he was pleased to announce the promotion of the Committee Administrator to the position of Democratic Services Manager and the Committee joined him in congratulating her on her appointment.

38. Reports from Members (agenda item 7)

Councillor Ann Campell advised that a new Community Cohesion Officer, Jo Morgan, had now been appointed to address social inclusion issues across the district.

Councillor Sue Steele reported that the number of dangerous pot-holes in the roads across Somerset had significantly increased following the recent bad weather, one of which caused a child in her Ward to fall off her bicycle, requiring several stitches to a wound. She felt not enough was being done to address the problem.

Members were in agreement with Councillor Steele that more should be being done to repair dangerous pot-holes in roads quickly. The Head of Area Development (North) advised that a Highway report was due to be presented to the Committee in May 2009.

Councillor Derek Yeomans reported that the planning application to create a Sixth Form College at Huish Episcopi School had now been granted permission by the Regulation Committee of Somerset County Council.

Councillor Derek Nelson said he had attended the Joint Area West Committee the previous week where there had been some confusion over County Councillors declaring an interest in a planning application on County owned land. He said further clarification on such issues for County Council members was essential.

Councillor Philip Horsington advised that he and the other Parish Representatives on the Joint Area Committees were due to meet with Philip Dolan, Chief Executive for South Somerset District Council, to discuss their emerging role on the Joint Committees.

39. South Somerset Adult Social Care – an overview (agenda item 8)

John Moughton, Service and Operation Manager for Adult Social Care and Jon Goodwin, Team Manager for the Langport Adult Social Care Team, provided the Committee with a presentation on the work of the service. They advised that within South Somerset they had 5 centres in Chard, Langport, Yeovil, Wincanton and at Yeovil District Hospital dealing with older adults, younger adults of working age with disabilities, sensory loss services and occupational therapy.

They noted that:-

- The Somerset Adult Social Care service had been awarded the maximum 3 Stars by the CSCI as 'An excellent service' for 4 years running.
- The FAB team continued to maximise benefits and income for adults in Somerset, enabling them to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible.
- They had a highly dedicated, good quality workforce with a low turnover of staff.
- Although the service was for adults over the age of 18, the majority of their clients were over 65.
- Direct payments had been introduced to allow clients a choice in who provided their care – this could be a friend, good neighbour or relative as well as a private care provider.

In response to questions from Members, the Service and Operation Manager and the Team Manager for the Langport Adult Social Care Team replied that:-

- There was a shortage of skilled Adult Social Workers, possibly due to a level of negativity associated with the service, and so there was a need to promote the excellent work within the service to attract skilled staff.
- The Children and Young Peoples Service looked after children under the age of 18 and shared accommodation with the Adult Social Care Teams so there was a good working relationship between the two services. There was a transition process for 17 year olds to transfer to the Adult Social Care service, if appropriate for the individual.
- Private developers were able to access Adult Social Care demographic information to ascertain need for a nursing home in a particular area.
- The Adult Social Care managers held regular meetings with NHS managers at Yeovil District Hospital to discuss their joint requirements and they had a good working relationship.
- Referrals for assistance came from GP's, relatives or the individual concerned.
- The service was dedicated to maintaining and supporting people to live in their own homes for as long as practicable.
- During the recent bad weather, there had been some excellent examples of care agencies working together to ensure people were not left isolated.

The Service and Operation Manager concluded that the service had one central point of contact: Somerset Direct on 0845 345 9133.

The Chairman thanked the Service and Operation Manager and the Team Manager for attending and providing the Committee with an informative overview of their service and for answering Members many questions.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be NOTED.

*Jon Goodwin, Team Manager for Langport Adult Social Care Team (SCC) - (01935) 847796
e-mail: jgoodwin@somerset.gov.uk*

40. Promoting Local Access to Services – Area North Community Offices (agenda item 9)

The Area Support Team Leader (North) (SSDC) presented her report to Members. She highlighted the costs currently involved in providing the two Community Offices in Langport and Somerton and noted the request from Martock Parish Council to provide staff support in their new community office, which was due to open in April 2009. She said there were some issues around accessing SSDC information (particularly the Northgate reporting service) remotely in Martock, which may be overcome later in the year with a web-based access system.

The Area Support Team Leader further noted the discontinuance of funding for Community Offices from Somerset County Council and the re-negotiation of the lease at the Parish Rooms, Somerton which was expected to achieve a saving in the region of £3,000. She said that footfall figures at all offices would be further analysed before any firm decisions were made about their future use.

Councillor John Sharpe noted with regret the withdrawal of funding for Community Offices by Somerset County Council. He said that he had personally proposed using local shops within communities to provide 'Community Hubs' following the proposals to close Post Offices across the County. He also asked that consideration be given to a trial of SSDC staff in South Petherton library to provide Council advice when the IT weblinks permitted.

Several Members expressed regret at the withdrawal of SCC funding to a front line service and asked that the Area Support Team Leader further consider a presence in a central location within Langport.

The Area Support Team Leader (North) agreed to provide Members with a further update once she had completed her footfall analysis of the Community Offices and had firm proposals for the future delivery of reception services within Area North.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the report be NOTED.
 2. That the following observations be noted:
 - That a trial of the provision of a Customer Adviser presence in Martock Community Office and South Petherton library be considered, IT web-links permitting.
 - That the provision of a Customer Adviser in a central location within Langport be further considered.

*Madelaine King-Oakley, Area Support Team Leader (North)(SSDC) - (01458) 257428
e-mail: madelaine.king-oakley@southsomerset.gov.uk*

41. Area North Community Grants – Equipment for Somerton Town Council (Executive Decision) (Excepted Business) (agenda item 10)

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

The Community Development Officer (North) (SSDC) advised that Somerton had several small halls to meet the needs of small local groups, however, the Town Council had long aspired to have a large Community Hall for the benefit of the whole town. They had purchased an industrial unit and converted it into an all purpose building with 5 meeting rooms upstairs available for hire and a large auditorium and stage downstairs. All funding had so far been raised by the Town Council and the request for £12,500 would support the purchase of tables, chairs and crockery to complete the furnishing of the hall.

Members felt that Somerton Town Council had shown outstanding enterprise in completing the purchase and conversion of the Community Hall from money raised by themselves and fully supported the application for funding for equipment.

- RESOLVED:** That a grant of £12,500 be made to Somerton Town Council towards the purchase of equipment for the new Community Hall, to be funded from the Area North Capital Programme allocation for “Improving Community Halls and Facilities” and subject to the standards terms and conditions for SSDC Community and Leisure Grants and the following special conditions:
- a. The equipment and facilities are made available to community and charitable groups at affordable rates.
 - b. In the event of the closure of the hall, the equipment may only be re-sold or transferred to a third party with the prior written agreement of SSDC.

Reason: To support the equipping of the new Community Hall in Somerton.

(Voting: Unanimous in favour)

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

42. Support for Affordable Rural Housing Schemes in Area North (Executive Decision) (Excepted Business) (agenda item 11)

The Head of Area Development (North) advised that SSDC currently worked in partnership with the Community Council for Somerset, who provided two Rural Housing Enablers to progress housing schemes across Somerset. She noted that both the Planning service and the Area Development team could provide additional capacity to existing resources and a stronger focus on local delivery. Each scheme being different required a range of different skills to promote successful delivery. Further research was needed to correctly identify the additional resources for each of the priority schemes.

She said that Registered Social Landlords had indicated that if land were identified as suitable for an affordable rural housing scheme in planning terms then this would greatly assist them. The planning service had indicated that they currently had capacity within their service to do this. Similarly, she felt that that the Area Development Support team could be used to refresh any out of date Housing Needs surveys for villages.

During a lengthy discussion, Members felt that one individual should be identified and given the authority to progress the six named schemes within Area North. The Head of Area Development (North) noted that as each scheme was at a different stage of development she felt it would be more productive to allocate resources depending upon need and stage of development. She said the new database and regular monitoring now established would assist in maintaining a clear overview of progress.

During further discussion, Members were still of the opinion that a key contact person be named but agreed that it would be sensible to appoint the correct person to each scheme. They asked that the Head of Area Development regularly monitor progress made on the schemes and report back to them.

RESOLVED: That an allocation of £15,000 from the Area North Reserves be allocated to support the successful progress of rural housing schemes within the Area North Rural Housing Enabling programme, to be delegated to the Head of Area Development (North), in consultation with Ward Members and the Joint Area Chairman, with a view to identifying a key contact person for each scheme.

Reason: To provide additional officer support towards progressing affordable rural housing schemes in Area North.

(Voting: Unanimous in favour)

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

43. Joint Area North Forward Plan (agenda item 12)

The Head of Area Development (North) advised that an SCC service presentation on the Highway service would be presented to the Committee in May 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:-
 - The Adult Social Care FAB team and SSDC Welfare Benefit team – a joint report on the provision of Welfare Benefit advice.
 - SCC Highway Service report.

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

44. Planning Appeals (agenda item 13)

Members were content to note that there had been no appeals lodged, dismissed or allowed.

RESOLVED: That the Planning Appeals report be NOTED.

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

45. Planning Applications (agenda item 14)

09/00520/FUL – The erection of an open fronted covered extension to existing farm shop at Bower Hinton Farm, Bower Hinton, Martock, Somerset

(Councillor Patrick Palmer, having earlier declared a personal and prejudicial interest, left the room during consideration of this item and Councillor Ann Campbell assumed the role of Chairman).

The Planning Officer introduced the report with a powerpoint presentation of the plans and photographs of the site. He noted that the application was for an open fronted extension to the existing farm shop, to provide cover from the elements to goods displayed outside the shop entrance. He said the design respected the character of the building, there were no local objections and the Parish Council fully supported the proposal. He recommended approval of the application.

Members were fully supportive of the extension and asked that the roof materials to be used closely matched the existing roofing.

RESOLVED: That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions 1 and 2 as detailed in the planning officer's report.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

08/05225/COU – The change of use of land to form extension to residential curtilage (retrospective) at Hillberry, North Street, South Petherton, Somerset

The Planning Officer introduced the report with a powerpoint presentation of the plans and photographs of the site. He noted that the land was currently designated as agricultural use, some fencing, hedging and tree planting had already taken place and a footpath diversion had been made, although it was currently subject to a legal challenge. He said the SSDC Rights of Way Officer had not raised any objections and although the SSDC Landscape Officer was satisfied with the extent of the proposed garden, he had raised concerns of erosion of the countryside. Water run off from the site would continue as existing through the field gate. The Parish Council were in favour of the application and he recommended approval, subject to conditions.

Mr G Turnbull spoke in objection to the application. He said that as a close neighbour, his property was primarily affected by the change of use. He said that his immediate neighbour's property had been flooded 3 times and his own property suffered from dampness resulting from the land behind. He felt that comments made by the Ramblers Association had not been fully considered and he referred to 13 similar planning applications in the area which had been refused permission as unwarranted intrusion into the countryside. He felt the applicant may not respect the planning conditions proposed as he had previously breached others.

Mr I Greenfield also spoke in objection to the application as a representative of the South Petherton Walking Group. He said the footpath diversion was the subject of an appeal and, following consultation with a legal adviser, he felt confident the appeal would be upheld and the footpath reinstated to its original position. He said the footpath was currently blocked to all walkers, which was unlawful.

Mr P Kidner spoke in support of the application. He said the diverted footpath would provide a valuable circular walk around the village and that 4 cottages to the north of the applicant already benefited from a similar diversion made some years ago, which included one of the objectors. He said he had lived in the village for 30 years and this particular footpath had been blocked all that time and other than the 3 objectors to the application, he had yet to meet anyone else who opposed it.

Mr P Dance, Agent for the applicant, spoke in support of the application. He said there were only two planning issues for the Committee to consider; the effect of the application on neighbouring properties and the effect on the countryside. He said only 3 properties could see the site and neither immediate neighbour had objected. Mr Turnbull could only see the garden from a distance. He felt the garden was now proportionate to the house and he asked the Committee to support the planning officer's recommendation of approval.

The Parish Representative noted that the public were generally opposed to blocked footpaths and although it was not relevant to the application, they should be respected and kept open.

The County Council Division Member, Councillor John Sharpe, declined to comment.

One of the District Council Ward Member, Councillor Keith Ronaldson, noted that although the application was retrospective, the Parish Council had raised no objections. Because of the letters of objection, he had agreed that the application be determined by the Committee although he felt the officer's report had addressed each objection.

The other District Council Ward Member, Councillor Paull Robathan, said the issues surrounding the application were complex although the Parish Council had given their approval. He felt that if the footpath diversion appeal was successful then the reinstatement to its original line would have a negligible impact upon the garden. He noted that of the last 15 similar applications for the change of use of land to domestic gardens, 9 had been approved and at least 3 were very similar to this application and he concluded that, in his opinion, this would not impinge on the rights or character of the area.

Members proposed and seconded the officer's recommendation to approve the application and on being put to the vote, was carried unanimously. There was no debate.

RESOLVED: That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions 1 and 2 as detailed in the Planning Officer's report.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

09/00023/FUL – The demolition of 9 dwellings and the replacement with 20 dwellings and associated access, parking and landscaping on land rear of Westfield House, Westfield Road, Curry Rivel, 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 advised that he had been contacted the previous day by a resident immediately next to the site, who claimed that he had received no information regarding the application. Although it was unclear what new objections the resident would make, he had posted a statutory consultation letter to his property and so extended the consultation period on the application. Therefore, he proposed to add to his recommendation of conditional approval "subject to no new relevant issues raised during the consultation period". Or, he said Members could defer the application until the next meeting of the Committee to allow for the extended consultation period.

In response to questions from Members, the Major Applications Planning Officer confirmed that two site notices were displayed at the site, one of which was outside the property to be demolished which was immediately next door to the resident who claimed he had received no information. He also confirmed that the property to be demolished was boarded up and surrounded by security fencing.

With this information, Members agreed to hear the application and if they were minded to approve the application then they would accept the officer's amended resolution "subject to no new relevant issues raised during the consultation period".

The Major Applications Planning Officer then introduced the report with a powerpoint presentation of the plans and photographs of the site. He noted that all the existing dwellings would be demolished, that the applicants were willing to provide a footpath link through the site to the existing recreation ground to the south and he indicated the area designated as phase 2 of the development. He pointed out that a new access to the site

would be created through demolishing the property, Treligga, and that to achieve a good visibility splay on the main road, it was proposed to pull back the kerb on the north side of the road. The Highway Authority had approved these plans and had asked that a condition to require all highway junction works to be completed before commencement of development on the site be imposed. To this end, he asked Members to accept an amendment to conditions 3, 4, 6 and 8 to accommodate the highway junction improvements condition.

Mr M Frost, Agent for the applicants, said the proposed new homes would significantly upgrade the housing stock in the village, they would be level 3 sustainable homes and the new junction would significantly improve safety for traffic. There would be 2 car parking spaces per dwelling and the new access would be built out to achieve good visibility. He said the site was currently in a poor state of repair and the proposals would significantly enhance the area.

In response to questions from Members, the Major Applications Planning Officer confirmed that the land to the north of the main road was in the ownership of the Highway Authority and they were agreeable to the proposed road realignment.

The County Council Division Member and District Council Ward Member, Councillor Derek Nelson, stated that the road realignment was significant and he expressed his disappointment at the lack of communication by the applicants with the local community. He said that whilst he welcomed the new homes, he was concerned with the proposals for three-storey high properties on already high ground. He also expressed concern that the application was proposed in two phases, particularly as there were 3 owner/occupiers still resident in houses proposed for redevelopment in phase 2.

During lengthy discussion, Members expressed concern at the two phased approach, the impact of the development on the remaining residents, the re-alignment of the main road, the proposed three-storey properties and the lack of a Construction Management Plan to protect the remaining residents.

It was proposed to defer the application for further clarification and negotiation on the above points, and on being put to the vote, was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That planning permission be **DEFERRED** for further clarification and negotiation on:-

- the re-alignment of the main road
- the proposed three-storey properties
- a Construction Management Plan to protect the remaining residents during development
- a single phased project for the whole site

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

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Chairman