

JOINT AREA NORTH COMMITTEE
22nd April 2009

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The items for information do not form part of the agenda. Should Members have questions regarding any of the items please contact the officer shown underneath the relevant report. If, after discussing the item with the officer and it is felt appropriate, a Member may request an item to be considered at a future Committee meeting.

1. Highway Matters Arising from March 2009
2. Joint Area North Committee Action List – March 2009
3. Notes of Joint Area North Annual Town & Parish Council Workshop
4. Priority Results from Annual Town & Parish Council Workshop
5. Information on the cost of the Adult Social Care Service
6. Copy of letter from Councillor Palmer on behalf of the Committee and reply by SCC Highway Service regarding future Highway service budgets

1. Highway Matters Arising from Joint Area North Committee on 25th March 2009

Councillor	Issue	Action
P Robathan	South Petherton Pothole – Over Stratton	Repaired

Kim Sharp
Assistant Highway Service Manager - SCC
South Somerset Area
0845 345 9155

2. Action List from Joint Area North Committee on 25th March 2009

Action	By who	Outcome
Members be provided with further information from the Housing Register on housing needs within Area North.	Sally McCarthy	To be circulated to Members when extracted from Housing database.
Information on the annual cost of the Adult Social Care service be provided to Members	Committee Administrator	Information supplied by SCC – see attached sheet
That a trial of the provision of a Customer Adviser in South Petherton library be considered, IT web-links permitting.	Madelaine King-Oakley	Trial to be set up when IT web-links are in place
The Adult Social Care FAB team and SSDC Welfare Benefit team – a joint report on the provision of Welfare Benefit advice be added to the Forward Plan.	Committee Administrator	Added to Forward Plan

Angela Cox
Committee Administrator - SSDC
(01458) 257437

3. Notes from Joint Area North Annual Town & Parish Council Workshop

South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council

Joint Area North Annual Town & Parish Council Workshop

Thursday, 26th March 2009 at the Village Hall, Long Sutton.

(6.30 p.m. – 9.00 p.m.)

Networking Session

All representatives of the Town and Parish Councils participated in discussions with the Councillors, officers and service representatives present.

Introduction & Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Workshop, stating that there was a good representation of Parishes present and their attendance was greatly appreciated. He introduced the officers and County and District Councillors present and the new Parish Representative on the Joint Area North Committee.

Philip Horsington – Parish Representative on SSDC/SCC Joint Area North Committee

Philip advised the audience that his role on the new Joint Area Committee was to put forward the parish perspective with regard to both planning and grant applications brought to the Committee. He noted that although he had no voting rights, he could put forward the principle of a Parish Council perspective, whilst not over-riding or substituting any Parish Council wishing to speak on a particular item.

Sergeant Alan Bell – Avon and Somerset Police

Sergeant Bell advised that the police had recently rearranged their areas to mirror the South Somerset area boundaries and so he was now the Sergeant for Area North. He noted that although the police may not have been good at communicating with the public and Parish Councils in the past, he now hoped to change this. He now expected his PCSO's and Beat Managers to contact each Town and Parish Clerk and advise them of the monthly crime figures within their area and they will offer to attend any Town or Parish Council meeting to speak to Councillors on crime issues. He stated he was the point of contact for any issues on Area North.

Peter Keenlyside – Volunteer Co-ordinator for Rights of Way (SSDC)

Peter Keenlyside spoke of the two schemes currently running to encourage local participation in footpath maintenance and improvement. These being the Parish Paths Stewardship Scheme and the Parish Paths Liaison Officer scheme. He said that volunteer input was very valuable as it helped towards delivering the service more efficiently, taught the volunteers new skills and encouraged active and social participation. He said problems on footpaths could be reported to either SSDC or SCC and they would be passed down to the appropriate officer.

Charlotte Jones – Head of Area Development (North) (SSDC)

Charlotte Jones outlined the area priorities identified by Town and Parish Councils at the last Annual Meeting and the schemes which had been supported by enhanced funding during 2008/09. She noted that over £67,000 of grants had been awarded to various schemes and projects within Area North during the past year, examples of which were the Somerton and Langport Links Transport Service (£4,000), South Petherton Bridge Club (£150) and the Fivehead Multi-Use Games Area (£12,500). She noted that £15,000 had recently been allocated for permanent rights of way improvements and Parishes would be contacted shortly regarding this. Funding had also been allocated to progress local affordable housing schemes within Area North. She advised that further funding would be available during 2009/10 and she advised those present to contact their Ward Councillor or the Community Development Officer (Les Collett) for further information.

Questions from the Audience

Rights of Way (questions answered by Peter Keenlyside)

Q: Rights of Way – there is a level of confusion between what SSDC do and what SCC do. Will there be a single point of contact in the future as it is confusing for Town and Parish Councils.

A: It is hoped that the Parish Paths Stewardship Scheme and the Parish Paths Liaison Officer scheme will be merged later in the year which should help. Enquiries or complaints are generally reported to SSDC and are passed to George Montague, the Countryside Ranger or myself (Peter Keenlyside) to resolve. Some enquiries are received by SCC and these are filtered through to us. SCC encourage all fault reporting via their website or telephone in order to ensure accurate recording.

Q: Bristol gates installed on a footpath have been locked by the farmer – has this happened elsewhere and how was it resolved?

A: Yes, this has happened elsewhere and was resolved by Rights of Way officers talking to landowners. Landowners are advised not to lock Bristol gates at the time of installation.

Police Issues (questions answered by Sergeant Alan Bell)

Q: It appears that police officers can only work nights and PCSO's during the day. Is this a problem as most crime happens at night?

A: PCSO's can only work up to 11.00p.m. I want them to become to the old village 'bobby' but they can only work between the hours of 8.00am to 11.00pm

Q: Is it possible to use PCSO's on traffic management?

A: Each police force sets out the powers within which their PCSO's operate. We are currently training and encouraging PCSO's to take on a wider role.

Q: A French Market set up from 6.00am in our town but we can only get help with traffic management from 8.00am from PCSO's. Can you help any earlier?

A: I take your point but I cannot guarantee someone from 6.00am. Speak to me after the meeting.

Somerset County Highways (questions answered by Patrick Flaherty of Somerset County Highways)

Q: Our road surfaces do not appear to be able to cope with the recent bad weather (flooding and freezing temperatures)

A: Unfortunately, pot-holes are caused by water getting into cracks in the surface of the tarmac, freezing, and then lifting the tarmac. Surface dressing work is carried out during the summer months where roads are starting to crack but we tend to cover one area at a time. Roads on the levels have been particularly affected by the weather this year and although our performance is among the best in the country, the roads are still not perfect. Please phone our Area Highway office and report any pot-holes on 0845 345 9155.

Q: How can local communities influence your service? We understand you have a lack of resources but sometimes the repair work carried out on pot-holes is sub-standard.

A: I will report your comments on the quality of work. 95% of pot-holes reported to us are in need of immediate attention and are dealt with within 24 hours

Q: What is the time period between marking a pot-hole for repair and actually doing the work?

A: The severity of a pot-hole is assessed by a Highway Superintendent. All pot-holes present some risk and the officer takes into account size, location, depth, speed and volume of traffic, road alignment and visibility. It can be assessed as 24 hours, 7 days, 30 days or 3 months depending upon the above.

Q: Do you also cover the M5? Their road surfacing work is accomplished quickly.

A: No, this is maintained by the Highways Agency. They have more money to maintain a motorway surface to a higher standard because of the speed and volume of traffic using them.

Q: Do you have an A,B,C classification of road priorities particularly relating to drain maintenance?

A: There is a clearing and inspection regime of drainage at the side of roads but CCTV cameras are not routinely used to check the drains in between gullies. Large culverts and known problem areas are checked regularly.

Q: What new roads have you recently built?

A: There is 1 new road in Bridgwater, 2 in Taunton, various new estate roads and the park and ride scheme currently under construction in Taunton.

Streetscene Service (questions answered by Chris Cooper, Head of Streetscene)

Q: I have been waiting for a green waste bin for some time and have been told that I am on a waiting list and the service is under review. What is happening?

A: The green waste collection service is managed by the Somerset Waste Partnership and we will have to ask their officers to answer this question.

Q: When fly tipping on the levels occurs the Streetscene service are very good at clearing, but, do you have any ideas on prevention?

A: We do have covert surveillance on regular sites but a rural area like the levels is very difficult to cover. Possibly local vigilance may be the only answer. We cannot use Fixed Penalty Notices in these instances but must go to Court with solid evidence and proof and a Judge then decides the penalty.

Closing Comments & Finish

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and participating in the lively discussion.

4. Priority results from Annual Meeting with Town & Parish Councils – 26th March 09

Engineering & Property Services	Car Parks in Market Towns	1
	Public Conveniences	0
	Land drainage & flood alleviation	8
Countryside, Heritage & Tourism	Access to the countryside & maintenance of Public Rights of Way	7
	Educational activities	1
	Tourist information and visitor services	0
Streetscene	Street cleaning	1
	Fly-tipping removal	6
	Public open space / planting and horticultural	0
	Enforcement (litter, dog fouling, fly posting etc)	6
Development & Building Control	Building control inspections	2
	Protection of Listed Buildings, Conservation areas, protected trees & special wildlife sites	2
	Enforcement of unauthorised development	12
	Land use planning decisions	0
Housing, Welfare & Benefits	Affordable housing in rural areas	10
	Housing advice	0
	Welfare benefits take up advice	0
Economic Development, Planning Policy & Transport	Sustainable construction and energy reduction	1
	Business support & advice	0
	Public & community transport	8
	Employment land & premises	1
	Availability of local food & produce	0
Environmental Health & Community Protection	Licensing (premises, taxis, events etc)	1
	Pest control services	0
	'Handyman' and Home Aid scheme	0
	Food premises registration & inspection	0
	Noise & pollution control	0
Sports, Arts & Leisure	Promoting community health & physical activity	1
	Play areas/youth facilities	9
	Young people's clubs & play schemes	3
	Sports & leisure facilities	0
	Arts and Cultural facilities/activities	1
Community Development & Community Safety	Community buildings	1
	Funding and support for voluntary groups & activities	2
	Parish Plans	0
	Crime reduction and community safety	10

5. Information on the annual cost of the Adult Social Care service

This information is taken from the Somerset County Council's Revenue Budget 2009/10

REVENUE BUDGET		
Community	Revised Estimate 2008/09	Forward Estimate 2009/10
	£000	£000
Adult Social Care		
<i>Health & Well-Being Portfolio</i>		
Older People	71,679	69,987
Mental Health	8,717	8,708
Physical Disabilities	14,208	14,273
Adult Social Care - Other	-	-
	94,603	92,967
Adults with Learning Disabilities		
<i>Health & Well-Being Portfolio</i>		
Learning Disabilities	38,324	40,569
Community Regeneration		
<i>Economic Development Portfolio</i>		
Economy & Europe	2,306	1,715
Leisure	1,400	-
Leisure Management	-	1,314
	3,706	3,029
<i>Health & Well-Being Portfolio</i>		
Culture	7,651	7,445
Heritage	2,759	2,325
	10,410	9,770
Partnerships & Community Development		
<i>Community Safety Portfolio</i>		
Community Safety	1,311	1,315
Substance Misuse	1,001	649
	2,312	1,964
<i>Health & Well-Being Portfolio</i>		
Community Development	1,604	1,648
Community Partnerships	1,595	18,869
Local Initiatives	967	580
Business Development	-	-
	4,166	21,097
TOTAL COMMUNITY	153,521	169,396

Area North

Old Kelways, Somerton Road, Langport TA10 9YE
Tel: (01935) 462462 Fax: (01458) 257474 Website:
www.southsomerset.gov.uk

Cllr Patrick Palmer
Chairman, Joint Area North Committee



Councillor A Shire
The Magnolias
30 Barn Close
Ilminster
Somerset
TA18 8BL

Date: 6th February 2009
Our Ref: CJ/AC
Ask For: Charlotte Jones
Direct Line: 01458 257401
e-mail : charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk

Dear Tony,

HIGHWAY SERVICE BUDGETS FOR 2009/10

At the first meeting of the Somerset County Council and South Somerset District Council Joint Area North Committee on 28th January 2009, a report was presented on Water Management and reducing Flood Risk within Area North of South Somerset District Council.

During open debate of the report, the heavy rainfall of 29th May and 12th and 13th December 2008 and the resulting flooding of many properties across South Somerset was discussed and Members sought re-assurance that SCC and SSDC would continue to maintain the high level of service to the public in the event of another occurrence, particularly in relation to the clearing of gullies and jetting of drains.

As Somerset County Council Portfolio Holder for Highway Services, Councillors asked that I write to seek your assurance that there are no planned reductions to County Council budgets, during a difficult financial climate, with subsequent reduction in service in this vital emergency area.

I would be pleased if you would confirm current and planned service levels for 2009/10, and any other information that you feel would be of interest to the Joint Area Committee, and the communities it serves.

I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to be 'P. Palmer', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chairman of Joint Area North Committee

CC: Ioan Rees, Head of Highways, Environment Directorate, Somerset County Council

Cllr P Palmer
Old Kelways
Somerton Road
Langport
TA10 9YE

please ask for

Richard Grove

my reference
DM Ref: 299045

Contact
01823 483040
highways@somerset.gov.uk

your reference

9 April 2009

Dear Councillor Palmer

HIGHWAY SERVICE BUDGETS FOR 2009/10

Thank you for your letter of 6 February 2009, addressed to Councillor Tony Shire, regarding the flooding events in May and December 2008. Councillor Shire has asked me to reply to you direct.

First may I apologise for the delay that has occurred in writing to you. This has been due to an oversight on my part and I am disappointed I have not met the response time I would expect of myself or my staff.

I am pleased that the Joint Area North Committee at its meeting on 28 January recognised the high level of service provided by both the county and district councils during those difficult times in May and December. Staff and operatives from both authorities worked long hours in difficult conditions to alleviate the problems faced by many, often without recognition.

As we recently discussed and as indicated in my letter to the Somerset Water Management Partnership on 19 February 2009 there is a role for many agencies, including our authorities, to play in reducing the likelihood of flooding and I am grateful for your support in promoting this integrated approach. I am very much aware of the close working relationship that already exists between the County's Area Office staff and the land drainage officer for South Somerset District Council and clearly we need to engage, more closely, with other bodies such as the Environment Agency, the National Farmers Union and Water Boards.

As you are aware the Pitt Review has made a large number of recommendations in response to the major flooding that occurred in several parts of the country during 2007 and there will be a need for all agencies, which have an involvement, to show commitment in meeting the recommendations. I am pleased to say that the County Council has started to examine its role in this but unfortunately it appears that some district councils may be reducing their capacity to deal with land drainage issues, which together with river overflows are the main contributory factors to the flooding of property

and roads. It would therefore be re-assuring to know that South Somerset District Council will maintain or increase its resources in this area.

With regard to the planned service levels for 2009/10 the County Council has a difficult task balancing the demands and needs of all the services provided against limited budget availability. This is compounded by the difficult financial climate that now exists. However I am pleased to say that the routine maintenance drainage budget for South Somerset which includes gully cleansing, drain jetting and minor drainage works has been increased from £630,700 to £705,900. This represents a 12% increase on the 2008/09 base line budget.

I hope the above is helpful and again apologies for the delay in providing this information.

Yours sincerely

Richard Grove
Group Manager Highways