

13. Addressing Area North Priorities 2009-10 - Progress Report

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Purpose of the Report

To provide a progress report of the work undertaken by, and on behalf of the SSDC Area North Committee to address the priorities identified for the municipal year 2009-10.

[Please note:

- o This report should be read in conjunction with the associated report from Financial Services on the budgets under the control of the Area Committee.]*
- o Councillors are asked to contact the Area Development Manager or other named contacts in advance of the meeting with any requests for further information to assist in the presentation (and brevity of) the agenda item!]*

Public Interest

The Area North Committee works to address local communities' priorities, which complement both SSDC's own statutory services, and major strategies affecting the area. These include the Somerset Local Area Agreement and the South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Area Committee adopts an annual set of priorities, which drives its work throughout the year to invest in or influence the use of public resources in the locality.

This report provides information on work supported (through influence or direct allocation of finance) by the Area North Committee, completed or taking place from April 2010 to date.

Recommendations

Members are **RECOMMENDED** to

- (1) Note and comment on the report and its appendices, highlighting any areas of concern or interest for current or requested activity by the Area Development team.
- (2) Note that the next Area North Parish Workshop (Area Forum) will be held on 10 March 2010, in Norton-sub-Hamdon Village Hall, as part of the review and update of Area North top priorities for 2010-11.

Background

In a rural area such as Area North in South Somerset, economies of scale can be harder to achieve for public services. Building on existing partnerships, or promoting voluntary action can assist to make real improvements for local people.

South Somerset District Council aims to address this challenge, and build upon the local skills and knowledge found in local communities, through its nationally acclaimed arrangements for Area Working, the Council's 'enable-partner-deliver' ethos, and its mission to be 'an organization consistently improving local quality of life for all'.

The area priorities, together with a range of powers and functions delegated to the Area Committee by SSDC form the SSDC Area Portfolio, held by the Chairman of the Area Committee. The Area Chairman is also a member of the District Executive for SSDC, and also represents SSDC as a member of the Local Strategic Partnership (South Somerset Together.)

The Area Development team is based at Old Kelways, Langport, working flexibility across the area. The team provides a range of support services to community led projects and initiatives, to enable and promote local involvement in decision making, and act as the district council's 'local' team for working with other providers of public services.

The Area Committee also provides staffing for the two SSDC face-to-face community offices in Somerton (Parish Rooms) and at Old Kelways. The costs of premises are met from corporate budgets.

Area North Priorities 2009-10

The Area Committee adopted the following nine priorities in May 2009, and has used these throughout the year to inform decisions for allocating resources under its control, implementing local scrutiny and service performance monitoring, promoting local partnership working and supporting high quality community engagement activities.

The Area Development team also uses the Area Priorities to determine its work programme (what gets done by officers), and to help determine small grants under use of delegated authority.

TOP 1	Increase the provision of affordable homes , with a particular focus on use of the rural exception planning policy, and the Somerset Rural Housing Enabler programme.
2	Increase the availability of community and public local transport services , in particular to promote access to services and to reduce isolation
3	Increase the number, accessibility and quality of community facilities, activities or services , in particular for children and young people, and older people
4	Increase access to public and community services , including the development of local public access points and access to Internet technology.
5	Increase levels of local action and involvement in decision-making, which seeks to improve self-containment and sustainability
6	Retain and enhance key local services and businesses for residents, visitors, and employers, together with the necessary infrastructure to ensure their contribution to a vibrant economy, and local quality of life.
7	Increase opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages to access and enjoy the built and natural heritage of Area North
8	Increase levels of community safety and cohesion , reducing crime and the fear of crime, and anti-social behaviour through partnership work to target local priorities
9	Increase local environmental quality through enforcement, education, voluntary action and joined up services.

Appendix A includes a brief summary against each priority of completed and planned programme of work, which have been supported by SSDC's Area North Development Service and / or appear significant to the area.

Appendix B includes a more detailed list of the many projects and issues supported by the Area Development team during the year from April 2009 to date. Taken together this provides a detailed overview of the work programmes of the Area North Development Service. Whether the project received direct financial support from the Area North annual investment (revenue and capital) programme is shown.

Further information can be provided at a ward or parish level on request, on the local delivery of SSDC services, or through contact with a range of partners.

The presentation of this report will include some highlights of recent positive achievements and indicate issues that require further attention.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

The set of nine area priorities has been fully informed by the SSDC Corporate Plan (2009-12), including priority outcomes and key targets. The Area Development team's work programme is developed with direct reference to 'Our Targets' for 2009-10. The revised 'Our Targets' insert to the Corporate Plan for 2010-11 (agreed by District Executive), will inform priorities for the coming year.

Financial implications

None from this report

Background Papers: *Promoting Quality of Life in Area North – Priorities for 2009-10 – Report to Area North Committee 27 May 2009*

Reports of surveys and consultation activity are available, in addition to published town and parish plans.
