

12. Community Development in Area North (Executive Decision)

Strategic Director: Rina Singh, Place and Performance
Assistant Director: Martin Woods, Communities
Service Manager: Charlotte Jones, Area Development (North)
Lead Officer: Les Collett, Community Development Officer (North)
Contact Details: leslie.collett@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01458)257427

Purpose of the Report

This report proposes an additional financial commitment from the Area North Committee to help make local projects happen, which will enhance or increase local community facilities and activities, particularly those which seek to involve young people.

Public Interest

South Somerset District Council aims to promote a continuous improvement in local quality of life. One of the many ways the organisation does this is to promote high levels of community volunteering, with local responsibility for managing facilities, and running activities with benefits for residents of all ages.

Recommendations

- (1) Note the position of the Area North 2009-10 service enhancement budget (see financial implications for this report)
- (2) Allocate £10,000 towards a programme of increased support to local community development in Area North, with a special focus on increased opportunities for young people, and increased support to adults working with young people.
- (3) Subject to recommendation 2), appoint up to three ward members to work with SSSC and partner officers as a steering group to develop and agree this programme, and to provide an overview of opportunities for and services for young people in Area North.
- (4) Request an update report in three months time.

Background

The Area North Development team works in partnership with many other SSSC service teams and partners to promote long-term community well-being. Using the principles of community development, this work involves supporting local volunteers to create and deliver local projects, and understand and resolve local problems identified by communities themselves.

The purpose of the Area Service Enhancement budget is to promote a greater level of service delivery into areas of the district who seek more support than may be otherwise available.

Area North – demand for community development support

The past year has been extremely busy for SSSC Area Development North – as detailed in the report to the February meeting of Area North. Many successful projects have been

completed, and many ongoing projects require only a 'light touch' to assist local volunteers and community leaders to achieve their ambitions.

From a review of the huge variety of requests for support and assistance, and from other consideration evidence from research and consultation, the Area North Development team has identified the need to increase support to a number of villages in a similar situation. This evidence has indicated that an additional resource may prove successful for a number of projects / communities while working at a very local and individual level.

Proposal to increase community development resources

Discussions with a number of service teams and partners has taken place, including the Somerset Rural Youth Project and South Somerset Voluntary & Community Action whose services cover the range of needs identified. It is also recognised there are many organisations offering a vast range of opportunities to young people, some of whom appreciate additional networking between adults supporting young people.

The type of work required may include working with volunteers who need additional help to:

- Plan and deliver projects
- Plan for funding and complete funding bids
- Liase with public agencies to attract sources of support available
- Recruit and develop volunteers
- Commission professional or technical work
- Conduct consultation and promote involvement from the community.

It is proposed to provide additional community development work within Area North, working closely with a number of partners – including Somerset County Council, Yarlington Housing Group, and the Area North Neighbourhood Policing team.

If approved, the programme would be developed from April (and run for approximately 18 months). There will need to be further external funding, from local communities themselves, partner agencies or programmes such as Awards for All.

The work programme would focus on direct 'hands-on' support to local communities planning to increase the level of facilities and activities for young people or for all ages, or address issues which require close partnership at a neighbour / parish level.

There is often evidence of a lack of information of the services and support already available, and this project would need to include some communications and 'signposting' activity too.

Summary

Well-planned projects (which are pushed to progress) together with the opportunity to develop local skills along the way are more likely to be successful, and the momentum gathered will carry the community on to manage the work themselves for the future – with far more limited levels of support and advice.

It is proposed to provide resources towards an additional worker with community development skills, including youth work, whose employment would be hosted and supported by a voluntary sector organisation, commissioned by the Area Development Manager (North).

The work programme and overall delivery of the project will be managed by Les Collett, Community Development Officer (North) for SSDC working with a small steering group.

The focus would be on the delivery of community-based projects, and community capacity building, in close partnership with existing community services – SSDC Area North Development and Community Health & Lifestyles; Somerset Rural Youth Project and other services for young people operating in Area North.

Initial priorities will be to work in Ilton and Chilthorne Domer – where there are immediate needs to promote activities for young people, and improve local recreation facilities.

Financial Implications

The Area North Development budget includes £40,000 for Area North Service Enhancement; and £30,000 of this has been allocated to date to the following service areas:

- £10,000 - Streetscene Service
- £10,000 - Access to financial and welfare services
- £5,000 - For the new Turn Hill Parish Lengthsman Scheme
- £5,000 - Development of community car schemes for South Somerset

Allocation of £10,000 towards increased local community programme of support for young people will fully utilise the service enhancement budget for 2009/10.

Corporate Priority Implications

3.20 – Increase children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas and adult participation in sports and active recreation.

4.0 Deliver specific programmes of positive activities for children, young people and families designed to reduce anti-social behaviour by October 2010.

4.19 – Increase civic participation in the local area.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

Equality and Diversity Implications

Supporting young people to fully access services and facilities, and increase the levels of joint working across age groups.

Background Papers: *SSDC Youth Strategy; Parish Plans;*
