

Meeting AN 03M 10/11
Date 23.06.10

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held in the Village Hall, Long Sutton on **Wednesday 23 June 2010**.

(2.00pm – 4.12pm)

Present:

Members: Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Jill Beale
Ann Campbell
Tony Carvin

Roy Mills
Derek Nelson
Paull Robathan

Jo Roundell Greene
Sue Steele
Derek Yeomans

Officers:

Charlotte Jones
Les Collett
David Julian
Adrian Noon
Becky Sanders
Neil McWilliams
Carl Brinkman

Area Development Manager (North)
Community Development Officer (North)
Economic Development Manager
Area Lead North/East (Development Management)
Committee Administrator
Assistant Highway Service Manager (SCC)
Principal Planning Liaison Officer (SCC Highways)

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

19. Minutes (Agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Paull Robathan requested an amendment to minutes 6 and 12 of the meeting held on 26 May 2010 to indicate he was Vice Chairman of Raglan Housing Association and not Chairman. Members were content that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2010, copies of which had been circulated, be taken as read and be approved as a correct record subject to the amendment to minutes 6 and 12.

20. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rupert Cox, Keith Ronaldson and Sylvia Seal.

21. Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 3)

Councillor Paull Robathan declared a personal interest as Vice Chairman of Raglan Housing Association in agenda item 8, Area North Affordable Housing.

22. Date of next meeting (Agenda item 4)

The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting of the Area North Committee would be held on Wednesday 28 July 2010 at the Village Hall, Norton Sub Hamdon.

23. Public Question Time (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public.

24. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman informed the committee that:

- Some members of Area North Committee had attended a tour of the new South Petherton Hospital at which they had also viewed the location of a proposed new Doctors Surgery.
 - The Members Core Strategy Workshop would take place on Wednesday 7 July at Long Sutton Golf Club.
 - The annual Area North parish meeting would take place in the early autumn.
 - The next informal members meeting with Development Management would be arranged for September or October.
 - He had attended the meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership in May where there had been an interesting presentation by Richard Higgs of the National Trust (NT). It was felt this would be of interest to Area North Committee and the NT would be invited to give a presentation at a future meeting.
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25. Reports From Members (Agenda item 7)

Councillor Paull Robathan informed members that a recent PACT (Partners and Communities Together) meeting in South Petherton had taken place earlier in the month. He acknowledged that the SSDC and Yarlinton Housing Group officers in attendance had been most helpful.

Councillor Ann Campbell commented that she wished to raise her concern regarding the procedures followed by SSDC for issuing Certificates of Lawfulness, in particular the arrangements in place for consulting with parish councils and ward members. Other members spoke and shared her concerns. It was agreed that a request for a written update should be sent to the Development Manager on behalf of the Area North Committee.

Councillors Sue Steele and Jo Roundell Greene informed members that the presentations made by students involved in the Member Shadowing Programme had been very successful. The students had learnt a lot about the role of councillors and democracy and the programme had been a positive experience to the students involved. They encouraged other councillors to take part if the programme was repeated.

26. Area North Affordable Housing (Agenda item 9)

(Councillor Paull Robathan declared a personal interest as Vice-Chairman of Raglan Housing Association).

The Area Development Manager (North) introduced Vaughan Lake, Development Manager from Hastoe Housing Association (South West Regional Office). She explained that the purpose of the agenda item was not to discuss planning issues but to facilitate a discussion about the different types of tenure for affordable housing, as requested at a previous meeting.

The Hastoe Development Manager highlighted some key facts about Hastoe including:

- Established in 1962 and were a Housing Corporation Lead Investment Partner.
- They worked with 56 local authorities across the south of England and had good experience of different practices and ideas.
- Housing stock within the SSDC area currently included approximately 300 properties.
- Own and manage about 4000 properties in total.
- Had an excellent reputation as a rural housing provider and for delivering environmentally friendly homes.

He explained that that they worked with rural housing enablers to establish rural housing needs which was crucial to driving a project forward and determining the type and mix of housing. Affordable housing schemes were dependent on Government finances, which were fluid at the current time. Hastoe is concerned about the levels of future grant subsidy available but hoped the situation would become clear following the outcome of the Government's Spending Review expected in October.

The Hastoe Development Manager noted it was thought approximately 19,000 people in Somerset were looking for affordable housing, including rented or other opportunities such as shared ownership. The South West was classed as a low income area and people needed housing they could afford and most people had aspirations to own their own home. He commented that people who were unable to purchase privately may also be unable to afford private rented accommodation. Hastoe believe that affordability was is not only about the cost of the home but also the cost of living in the home, and where possible environmentally friendly and cost effective facilities are integrated within their properties such as solar panels, high levels of insulation and water saving devices.

Members noted that Hastoe only had three lenders who would give mortgages on their shared ownership properties. The Hastoe Development Manager commented that shared ownership was a worthwhile and credible form of affordable housing but acknowledged it was not suited to everyone.

The Hastoe Development Manager explained that Community Land Trusts (CLT) were not-for-private profit organisations run by the community, that owned property for the benefit of local people. In order for CLTs to manage and provide properties they needed to be able to co-ordinate and finance a scheme in a long term context, and be a proper operational entity. He acknowledged that CLTs were recognised as a provider of affordable housing. He also noted that the National Housing Federation were currently in the process of recruiting a co-ordinator for CLTs.

In response to questions and comments raised by members, the Hastoe Development Manager confirmed that:

- With shared ownership properties Hastoe usually retained at least 20% ownership so that the property remained in perpetuity as affordable housing.
- Low cost market housing tended to be purchased 'off shelf' at approximately 70% value.
- Modular builds were not an option considered by Hastoe, however they did use timber-framed builds. Hastoe looked at different designs depending on the location.

- The impact of recent budget announcements regarding reduction in housing benefits was unknown but would eventually impact on how schemes would work in terms of financial viability. There would be a need to for innovation and constant review of how to provide affordable housing.
- Local authorities now had a different role since the Regional Spatial Strategies were unlikely to exist in future. He felt it was important that local authorities decided their priorities on where affordable housing should be developed.
- Owners of shared ownership properties were responsible for all the maintenance on the property. The shared ownership scheme appeared to work well but fewer lenders were willing to lend against such properties.
- Some funding applications for affordable housing schemes were in the system and awaiting an outcome from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and were neither refused nor confirmed. It was important to keep the development process ongoing so that if given the opportunity, advanced schemes could be taken to the HCA as deliverable schemes.
- CLT schemes usually consisted of between six and eight homes.

The Chairman and members thanked the Development Manager from Hastoe Housing Association for his very informative presentation.

27. **SSDC Economic Development Service (Agenda item 9)**

The Economic Development Manager introduced the report as laid out in the agenda. Members noted that since the management restructure in late 2009, the Economic Development Service was responsible for economic development, tourism and heritage. Katy Menday now managed the Countryside Service and the maintenance of Public Rights of Way had returned to Somerset County Council on 1 April 2010.

It was explained that the Innovation Centre in Yeovil had utilised much of the Economic Development Service resources over the previous 18 months, due to the unexpected withdrawal of the appointed operator for the centre. The Innovation Centre was doing well and two anchor tenants were in place. Occupancy in early 2010 was at 36%, which was higher than the business plan prediction of 30%. A bid had been made to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for the running of the centre for three years.

Members noted that rural business support had continued over the past few years, but the remit would be reviewed shortly as demands for support from the agricultural sector were changing. The Economic Manager commented that the SSDC Recession Strategy had been through Scrutiny and would receive a refresh. He updated members that since the agenda had been published the unemployment figures for South Somerset had reduced from 2.1% to 1.9% which compared favourably to 2.9% for the South West. It was also noted that publicising rural rate relief had resulted in 90 initial enquiries with 11 applications for hardship relief coming from businesses in Area North.

Tourism had a relatively good year in 2009, with the camping and caravanning sector of the accommodation market in particular doing very well compared to other years. He noted that the influence of the Somerset Tourism Partnership was reducing due to restricted budgets. 2010 would be the final year for a combined Somerset accommodation guide and from 2010 the "Discover South Somerset" publication would be expanded to include accommodation listings. It was noted that the Heritage Service had little direct impact on Area North, as there were no community museums. Members also noted that Wincanton Museum was due to close shortly.

In response to comments and questions from members the Economic Development Manager confirmed:

- SSDC would consider requests to store items from community museums. In the case of Wincanton Museum, the county council may also have a major role to play.
- The exact reason for the reduction in income from car parks was unknown and could be due to a number of factors including free parking at supermarkets and at weekends.
- Profits from the operation of the Innovation Centre were uncertain during years one and two, but were expected from year three onwards. From year three any profits would be proportionately divided between the capital investment providers.
- The Recession Strategy did not specifically take into account school leavers, Apprenticeships may a suitable way forward for school leavers and there were several local pro-active employers keen on apprenticeships.

The Chairman thanked the Economic Development Manager for his update report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*David Julian, Economic Development Manager
david.julian@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462279*

28. Area North SSDC Community Grants: Outturn Report 2009-2010 (Agenda item 10)

The Community Development Officer presented the report as shown in the agenda. With the aid of slides he highlighted some of the achievements following Community Grants awarded by the Area North Committee and delegated grants. Including:

- Coffee shop and meeting facilities at All Saints Hall in Stoke Sub Hamdon (£10,000) – used by Welfare Benefits to host sessions, Health Visitor and parenting classes as well as a youth group and private hire
- Relocation, modification and kitting out of Langport Information Centre (£7,435) – run totally by volunteers.
- Purchase of cinema equipment for Langport (£600) – small grant used to complete a larger project.
- Enhancement of facilities at Langport & Huish Cricket Club (£3,000) – new practice nets, an official opening due in July.
- Long Load welcome pack (£300) – welcome pack for new residents which will last a number of years.
- Seavington community shop and café (£35,000) – due to open on 14 July, a good volunteer base in place and much 'self help' to achieve project.
- South Petherton Scouts activity tent (£365.50) – working towards a replacement scout hut, the tent being used for community events.

It was noted that on many occasions groups thought they needed funds but when given advice they were able to bring projects to fruition without funding support from SSDC. The Community Development Officer commented that advice and support were as much a part of the community grants process as awarding actual funding.

The Area Development Manager noted that the Area North team were very mindful of the Corporate Grants policy towards parish / town precepts as a contribution towards community projects. She also noted that whilst the Corporate Grants policy allowed for

up to a 50% contribution for grants from the Community Grants budget, the actual average for Area North was 19% during 2009-10.

The Chairman commented that the Area North team had an excellent reputation within the communities across Area North and congratulated the Area Development Team (North) for the outcomes achieved in the community.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*Les Collett, Community Development Officer
leslie.collett@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01458) 257427*

29. Area North Budget Outturn Report 2009-10 (Executive Decision) (Agenda item 11)

The Area Development Manager (North) presented the report noting that some of the content was a repetition of the Community Grants Outturn report. She highlighted to members that the carry forward balances would not be confirmed until the July meeting of the District Executive. It was possible that the decisions of District Executive could have an impact upon the budget available for grants in 2010-11. If the carry forwards were not approved existing commitments would need to be paid from this years budget. Members also noted that some slippages on the Area North Capital Programme included projects that may have been completed but invoices had not been paid.

Members were reminded that a report would be presented at the July meeting on the work of the Community Health & Leisure Team and would provide an opportunity to raise comments regarding the Play and Youth Capital Investment Programme in Area North.

Members noted that there was an apparent error in the figures of the summary of the revenue position as shown on page 25 of the agenda. The group total, actual spend should have shown £321,245 (£299,313 plus £21,932) and not £369,780 as indicated.

Members were content to approve all recommendations, including the amendment that the revenue position, group total actual spend should have shown £321,245 and not £369,780 as indicated in the agenda report.

RESOLVED: That members:

- (1) Reviewed and commented on the outturn position and explanation of variances from budgets for the financial year 2009/10 – including the amendment that the revenue position, group total actual spend should have shown £321,245 and not £369,780 as indicated in the agenda report;
- (2) Noted the position of the Area North Reserve;
- (3) Agreed to carry forward the slippage of £130,509 on the Area North Capital Programme;
- (4) Noted the position of the Play & Youth Capital Investment Programme in Area North;
- (5) Noted the position of the Area North Community Grants budget, including the grants authorised under the Scheme of Delegation by the Area Development Manager (North) in consultation with the ward member(s).

Reason: To inform members of the actual spend against budgets for the

2009/10 of the services over which this Committee exercised financial control.

(Voting: unanimous)

*Nazir Mehrali, Management Accountant
nazir.mehrli@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462205*

30. Area North Committee Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

Members were content to note the forward plan as shown in the agenda report. As noted under Chairman's Announcements the National Trust would be invited bring a presentation to a future meeting. The Area Development Manager also suggested inviting a representative from Raglan Housing Association to give a presentation.

RESOLVED: It was resolved that:

- (1) The Area North Committee Forward Plan be noted.
- (2) The National Trust and Raglan Housing Association are invited to present a report to Area North Committee.

*Becky Sanders, Committee Administrator
becky.sanders@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01458) 257437*

31. Planning Appeals (Agenda item 13)

The Committee noted the details contained in the agenda report, which informed members of planning appeals that were lodged, dismissed or allowed. Councillor Paull Robathan expressed his disappointment at the Inspectors decision, to override highway concerns, and allow the appeal regarding Pond Farm, Seavington.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*David Norris, Development Manager – 01935 462382
david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk*

32. Planning Applications (Agenda item 14)

The Committee considered the applications set out in the schedule attached to the agenda and the planning officer gave further information at the meeting and, where appropriate, advised members of letters received as a result of consultations since the agenda had been prepared.

(Copies of all letters reported may be inspected in the planning applications files, which constitute the background papers for this item).

**10/00848/S73 Application to vary condition 3 of planning approval 05/02818/OUT dated 03/04/07 to require provision of roundabout access prior to occupancy. Bartletts Elm School, Field Lane, Huish Episcopi.
Applicant: Brookvale Homes (SW) Ltd**

The Area Lead North (Development Management) updated members that an email from a resident of the converted school had been received in objection to the roundabout proposals. In response he had explained to the correspondent that this wasn't the application that detailed roundabout design nor the site access to it. He informed members that the application for the site connection with the 5-arm roundabout had been received, and would be the subject of a separate consideration. The plans had been viewed by the Highways Officer who had since retracted his objections.

Members were informed that the current applications seek to vary conditions attached to the outline and associated full permissions that require a mini-roundabout to be marked out at the existing access onto the A372 prior to the commencement of works. The Area Lead advised that the determination of these applications would not prejudice the provision of a roundabout or the application to connect the Bartletts Elm site to it. The roundabout would be provided as a County project and, if approved, the Bartletts Elm site would connect to it, if not, the developer would revert to the approved mini-roundabout. Any impact would be limited

The Area Lead recommended that the conditions should be varied to allow:

- Construction traffic to use existing entrance
- No more than 45 units be commenced and no dwelling occupied until a roundabout has been constructed at the junction of the proposed new access road and the A372.

Mr John Wood, parish representative for Huish Episcopi Parish Council, commented that the parish council understood the application and supported it fully.

Ward Member, Councillor Roy Mills expressed his support for the application.

In response to questions, the Area Lead commented that if for any reason the proposed 5-arm roundabout didn't come to fruition then the application would revert back to the original mini-roundabout at the existing site access. He noted that plans for the 5-arm roundabout at the junction of the A372 were at an advanced stage and believed that finances had been committed.

Members were content to approve the application to vary condition 3 as indicated in the agenda report and on being put to the vote was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED: That planning application 10/00848/S73 to vary condition 3 of planning approval 05/02818/OUT dated 03/04/07 be APPROVED. The revised condition 3 to read:

No more than 45 units shall be commenced and no dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until a roundabout has been constructed at the junction of the proposed new access road and the A372, and improved visibility from the A372 onto the B3453 in an easterly direction with no obstruction higher than 300mm and which has been carried out in accordance with a design and specification to be first approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and to be fully implemented to the satisfaction of the said Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to accord with Policy 49 of the Somerset Structure Plan.

(Voting: Unanimous)

**10/00849/S73 Application to vary condition 2 of planning approval 08/04879/FUL dated 11/08/09 to require access improvements prior to occupancy regarding access road. Bartletts Elm School, Field Lane, Huish Episcopi.
Applicant: Brookvale Homes (SW) Ltd**

This application was discussed in conjunction with the previous application, 10/00848/S73 and comments made on that application also refer to this application.

The Area Lead advised that this application was the associated application to the one previously discussed and related to a small area to the rear of the original school building, where permission had been granted for 3 houses outside of the main development site. Members were content to approve the application to vary condition 2 as indicated in the agenda report and on being put to the vote was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED: That planning application 10/00849/S73 to vary condition 2 of planning approval 08/04879/FUL dated 11/08/09 be APPROVED. The revised condition 2 to read:

No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until a roundabout has been constructed at the junction of the proposed new access road and the A372, and improved visibility from the A372 onto the B3453 in an easterly direction with no obstruction higher than 300mm and which has been carried out in accordance with a design and specification to be first approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and to be fully implemented to the satisfaction of the said Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to accord with Policy 49 of the Somerset Structure Plan.

(Voting: Unanimous)

*David Norris, Development Manager
david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462382*

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Chairman