

Meeting AN 05M 10/11
Date 25.08.10

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held in the Edgar Hall, Somerton on **Wednesday 25 August 2010**.

(2.00pm – 4.58pm)

Present:

Members: Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Jill Beale	Paull Robathan (until 2.47pm)	Sylvia Seal (from 2.12pm)
Ann Campbell (until 4.55pm)	Keith Ronaldson	Sue Steele
Tony Carvin	Jo Roundell Greene	Derek Yeomans
Rupert Cox (from 2.05pm)		

Somerset County Council

John Bailey (until 4.25pm)

Officers:

Charlotte Jones	Area Development Manager (North)
Adam Burgan	Arts & Entertainment Manager
Pauline Burr	Arts Development Officer / Community Regeneration Officer (North)
Les Collett	Community Development Officer (North)
Rina Singh	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)
Becky Sanders	Committee Administrator

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

47. Minutes (Agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2010, revised copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

48. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Roy Mills.

49. Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 3)

Councillor Paull Robathan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 8 as a member of the Board of Raglan Housing Association.

Councillor Derek Yeomans declared a personal Interest in agenda item 11 as a director of the Warehouse Trust.

50. 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 22 September 2010 at the Village Hall, Barrington.

51. Public Question Time (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public.

52. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman reminded members that the Area North Annual Parish Meeting with Town and Parish Councils would take place on 15 September 2010 at Long Sutton Golf Club from 6.30pm.

He also informed members that on the 8 September he would be chairing a public meeting as part of the Langport and Huish Episcopi Community Governance Review.

53. Reports From Members (Agenda item 7)

Councillor Jo Roundell Greene noted that there was an unauthorised traveller incursion at Montacute, and that the publication of guidance or procedures of the actions landowners were able to take would be useful. She suggested that a formal request be sent to the appropriate officers to ascertain the procedures to be followed. Members shared her views and it was agreed that a written request would be sent to the appropriate officers on behalf of the Area North Committee.

54. Raglan Housing Association (Agenda item 8)

(Councillor Paull Robathan declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a member of the Board of Raglan Housing Association.)

Cllr Paull Robathan introduced Jonathan Layzell, Regional Development Manager from Raglan Housing Association (Thames and West). He noted that Raglan was a long-term partner of SSDC and that the organisation had gone through a time of change in recent months which included new members on the Board.

Using a PowerPoint presentation the Raglan Regional Development Manager highlighted some points about Raglan including:

- Over 11,000 properties across England including around 400 in South Somerset.
- Focus was on the south and southwest.
- Commitment to developing new affordable housing in South Somerset.
- Approaches to delivery included acquiring sites from the market, Section 106 opportunities, publicly owned land and rural exception sites.
- Focus on quality homes including a drive towards low carbon emissions and addressing fuel poverty.
- Recent projects within SSDC included properties for affordable rent and shared ownership in Yeovil, South Petherton, Chard and Wincanton.

- Their strengths included partnership working with key stakeholders, financial strength, working with local communities and parish councils, excellent relationship with local authorities, strong links with local contractors, and extensive experience of working with other landowners e.g. utilities, county councils and primary care trusts.
- Exploring possibilities to build on publicly owned land – land released by a local authority for affordable housing would enable private sector funding to go further.

He noted that barriers to delivery included:

- land availability or the cost of securing land on the open market
- the planning system – timescales were sometimes a frustration and inconsistent advice could make things difficult
- uncertainty regarding future availability of capital funding for affordable housing until the outcome of the Government Comprehensive Spending Review was known
- wider public misconceptions about, and resistance to, affordable housing.

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

- Recent government announcements and the pending outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review meant that they needed to look at different ways of delivering affordable housing, but the most important issue was that those on the housing list got housed.
- Housing needs surveys tended to be used for rural exception sites. They worked with housing staff to look at demand trends also took into consideration that personal circumstances could change over time.
- There would be some properties that could be considered oversized for the occupants if appropriately sized, alternative accommodation was not available in the local community or nearby area.

The Chairman thanked the Regional Development Manager from Raglan Housing Association for his informative and comprehensive presentation.

*Jonathan Layzell, Regional Development Manager, Raglan Housing Association
jonathan.layzell@raglan.org or 0117 970 9290*

55. Arts and Entertainment – Service Update (Agenda item 9)

The Arts and Entertainment Manager introduced the report and explained that the Arts service was now based at the Octagon Theatre providing a more cohesive approach and promoting the Octagon as a ‘cultural hub’.

The Arts Development Officer commented that the role was a part time post with the majority of work done in partnership with outside groups. With the aid of slides she gave examples of the work of some of the partnerships and their recent projects and achievements, as indicated in the agenda report, including:

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| Take Art | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Performance Scheme – quality live arts and performances in 25 venues across the district • Step Change Project – dance workshops for all ages and abilities encouraging dance as an active lifestyle • START and Little Big Bang – creativity for preschool children |
| Actiontrack | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taster workshops in dance, drama, music and creative writing • Working with the National Trust at Montacute House, Barrington Court and Stoke Sub Hamdon Priory |
| SAW | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somerset Art Works – showcase in 2009 included 450 artists at 100 |

- venues across the county, 19,000 visitors in South Somerset
- River Parrett Trail Revisited – a different way at looking at the countryside
- SPAEDA • Arts Award and Artsmark Scheme – children and young people can gain awards at different levels
- Somerset Film • Learning venue and outreach work for using film, photography and digital media

Members noted that the current South Somerset Arts Directory was two years old and was due to be refreshed. The publication included a directory of voluntary and professional organisations in the South Somerset area plus a funding guide for groups. The Arts Development Officer commented that it was also hoped to produce an e-newsletter to publicise events and training opportunities.

It was also highlighted that:

- Several art works were to be installed at the new South Petherton Hospital including outdoor sculptures and a roof light in the main building atrium.
- The National Trust were using Barrington Court for the display of contemporary arts

The Arts and Entertainment Manager commented that it had been a busy year for the Octagon Theatre with 240 performances and 150,000 guests from across South Somerset and beyond. He was pleased to inform members that income from ticket sales in one season was up threefold and ticket sales for the autumn season were strong and ahead of the same period in previous years. He summarised some of the key points in his report including:

- Diversifying drama productions.
- The Octagon Café Bar – new menu featuring local produce. Hosts a Somerset Cancer Care Café. Redevelopment of gallery space for exhibition of works by local artists.
- Dance classes for adults with learning difficulties had been suspended due to lack of funding. Officers were working with the teacher to see if they could continue.
- SomerZest – arts and crafts markets – were hoping to be a long-term event.

Portfolio Holder, Cllr Sylvia Seal commented that the team did fantastic work with few resources. She commented that there were many activities happening across South Somerset and the team's work was very wide and encompassing. She also noted that in comparison to other theatres in the region, the Octagon had a low subsidy.

In response to questions from members, the officers confirmed that:

- Turnover was approximately £1.2 million, and the service receives a subsidy of £45,000 for the arts service and £320,000 for the Octagon.
- Average seat occupancy/attendance at Octagon performances was about 60% compared to a national average of 50-60%. Acknowledged that increasing occupancy by 10% would make a big difference to turnover.
- Aspirations to grow the business of the Octagon by promoting as a venue for other uses such as dance classes and events.
- The Octagon also had an impact on the night time economy of Yeovil.
- The Octagon café was not currently open at lunchtimes. This may be reconsidered in the future as the building was now used more during the day for exhibitions etc and the customer base had changed accordingly.

The Committee thanked the officers for their comprehensive report and for their support.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*Adam Burgan, Arts and Entertainment Manager
adam.burgan@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 845911*

56. Area North Community Grant – Powered Wicket Roller for Curry Rivel Cricket Club (Executive Decision) (Agenda item 10)

The Community Development Officer (North) introduced the report as outlined in the agenda and explained that the grant was for the purchase of a new, powered, wicket roller. He noted that Curry Rivel Cricket Club had good youth participation and was very active in the community.

During the ensuing discussion members raised various comments including:

- Very supportive of the club, their activities and the work they do in the community
- A good roller would encourage usage of the facilities
- Pleased to see active youth team
- Concern regarding the proposed costs
- Would the purchase of a pre-owned roller be more cost effective?
- Neither the parish council or cricket club had contributed a minimum of 10% of the purchase costs.
- Concern regarding storage and future maintenance of the roller

In response to questions from members the Community Development Officer confirmed that:

- It was unlikely the roller could be loaned to other communities due to transporting issues
- When the club originally approached the parish council the costs of the roller were lower
- He thought the issue with the existing roller was that it was costly to maintain
- He did not know if the ECB funding was dependent on purchasing a new roller rather than pre-owned

Members were strongly supportive of the proposal in principle, and stressed the many obvious strengths of the club and its plans. Concern was expressed for the project costs and plans for the future maintenance of the roller as without a sinking fund the project would not be sustainable.

It was proposed and seconded to defer the grant application for further information to include the costs of different options, and to review levels of match funding. Members requested that the application be taken back to Area North Committee for consideration regardless of the amount of funding requested from SSDC. Members wished it to be made clear to the applicants that they were very supportive of the club and the work that they did within the community.

RESOLVED: That the application for a grant by Curry Rivel Cricket Club be **DEFERRED** for further information regarding costs of different options, and to seek further levels of match funding.

Reason: To determine a grant application submitted by Curry Rivel Cricket Club.

(Voting: Unanimous in favour)

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

57. The Great Bow Wharf, Langport – Update Report (Agenda item 11)

(Councillor Derek Yeomans declared a personal Interest in agenda item 11 as a director of the Warehouse Trust.)

The Community Regeneration Officer summarised the agenda report and reminded members that the project had received significant investment from SSDC via a grant of around £240,000. She noted some key points of the report including:

- Centre Manager in place to give visitors and tenants a central point of contact.
- An original aspiration of the Great Bow Wharf was for community usage community activities now took place such as Tai Chi classes and the community cinema club.
- There were still issues regarding governance of the Warehouse Trust. These included the complexity and size of the organisation and the limited capacity of the Board. A review was currently being undertaken, with external advice, regarding future governance arrangements.
- Finances were now in the black, and the remaining term of loans was approximately eight years – with careful management a sinking fund would become available.
- Full planning consent did not currently cover the whole site, and it was believed that the Trust were likely to apply for a Certificate of Lawfulness. Parking on site was limited although a small amount of extra parking had been made available at Westover.

Councillor Derek Yeomans, a director of the Warehouse Trust, commented that the finances were reasonably stable and in the black. The cinema club was doing well as was the café which was attracting good custom. He noted that when the mortgage and loans had been cleared there should be a substantial income.

During the following, lively discussion, members exchanged various comments and frustrations including:

- Felt misled regarding parking issues at the site
- Relieved that SSDC had no further financial investment to make
- There was still significant SSDC officer support and would like to see a clearer picture. How long should SSDC support the business in the way it had?
- Unease at intention of a Certificate of Lawfulness, but acknowledged this was an issue for the applicant, the Local Planning Authority and the SSDC Legal Services and not the Area North Committee
- Shouldn't the original business plan have indicated the timeframe for when the Great Bow Wharf would have been financially sustainable?
- Disappointment that a footpath along the riverbank to link to Common Moor was unlikely to happen.
- Felt mistakes had been made
- Less outdoor community space that originally thought

- Clarification was needed of planning consents that had been finally approved and what had been done on site to date.

In response to comments, the Area Development Manager (North) clarified that the original plan for Great Bow Wharf was for creative industry. The current plan, incorporated a revised financial model that had been agreed by District Executive. In response to a question she noted that SSDC had a legal agreement with the Warehouse Trust which enabled SSDC to seek recovery of the money should the business fail.

Members were broadly in agreement that the Great Bow Wharf should no longer be an Area Development (North) priority. With the financial investment by SSDC seeming secure, the view was expressed that current levels of support to the Warehouse Trust from the Area Development team should end. In addition that the Development Management Manager be requested to clarify the current position with regard to permitted development on the site and public access. This was proposed and seconded, and on being put to the vote, was carried.

RESOLVED: (1) That the report be noted
(2) That the current level of officer support from Area Development (North) to the Warehouse Trust cease.

(Voting: 9 in favour, 0 abstentions, 1 against)

*Pauline Burr, Community Regeneration Officer (North)
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58. Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30 June 2010 (Agenda item 12)

The Area Development Manager (North) commented that there were no changes to the agenda report. For the Area North Capital Programme she noted that:

- All consents were in place for the roundabout at Bartletts Elm, Huish Episcopi and work had commenced.
- The contract had been let for the works at Martock precinct

In response to a question, she confirmed she was unaware of a corporate policy regarding a time frame for youth & play facility projects within the capital programme, other than through the annual cycle of reporting to Area Committees and District Executive, with the programme being agreed each year by Full Council.

There was no debate. Members were content to approve all the recommendations as indicated in the agenda report.

RESOLVED: That members:

- (1) Reviewed and commented on the current financial position on Area North budgets;
- (2) Noted the position of the Area North Reserve as at 30 June 2010;
- (3) Agreed the revised Reserve Schemes and the profiling of the Capital Programme for 2010/11 to 2014/15;
- (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 details of grants authorised under the Scheme of

Delegation by the Area Development Manager (North) in consultation with the ward member(s).

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

*Nazir Mehrali, Management Accountant
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59. Area North Committee – Forward Plan (Agenda item 13)

The Area Development Manager (North) noted that both the Streetscene and Highways Authority reports had been confirmed for the meeting on 27 October. She also commented that the reports on the Buildings at Risk Register and Conservation Area Appraisals were scheduled for the meeting on 24 November.

RESOLVED: That the Area North Committee Forward Plan be noted.

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

60. Planning appeals (Agenda item 14)

The Committee noted the details contained in the agenda report, which informed members of planning appeals that were lodged, dismissed or allowed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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

61. CONFIDENTIAL – Exclusion of Press and Public (Agenda item 15)

RESOLVED: That the following item be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under paragraph:

- 3. information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
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62. Area North Accommodation – (CONFIDENTIAL) (Agenda item 16)

Members considered the confidential report, which was summarised by the Chairman of the Area North Committee and the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services)

RESOLVED: That members:

- (1) Noted the position of SSDC's property interests in the premises identified in the confidential committee report.
- (2) Forwarded comments on the options and proposals contained in the confidential committee report to District Executive.

(Voting: Unanimous in favour)

*Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)
charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01458 257401*

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Chairman