

10. Addressing Community Priorities - Area North Development Plan 2010-11 - Update 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]*

Public Interest

The Area Committee adopts an annual set of priorities, drawn from evidence of local need and aspiration in Area North. These priorities drives its work throughout the year to invest in or influence the use of public resources in the locality. During the year, the Area Development (North) team work with a variety of partner agencies, SSDC service teams and members of the local community to develop, progress and complete projects and programmes.

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.

Recommendation

Members are recommended to note and comment on the report, including the proposal for a community event as part of the Area North Service Enhancement programme in early 2011.

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 organisation 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 a member of the District Executive for SSDC, and also represents SSDC as a member of the Local Strategic Partnership board (South Somerset Together.)

The Area Development Service provides a range of services to **enable**:

- The delivery of community led projects and initiatives;
- Local involvement in decision making
- Local partnerships and investments between communities and public services.
- 'Face to face' public access to services through community offices / Local Information Centres.

Area North Priorities 2010-11

The Area Committee adopted the following six priorities in May 2010, 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 community engagement activities.

TOP	
1	Ensure delivery of current Area North programme and continue to develop further affordable housing .
2	Increase access to services to improve quality of life, through local and outreach services, transport and ICT.
3	Promote resilience and growth for local services and businesses .
4	Promote community safety - reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour – where it occurs.
5	Increase local action towards carbon descent and enhance the local environment .
6	Increase and improve voluntary run community facilities and activities for all ages.

Appendix A includes a summary of the six Area North priorities and links to the SSDC corporate plan.

Appendix B includes a list of the projects and issues currently supported by the Area Committee's investment into grants, partnerships or through the Area Development team's work programme during the year from April 2010 to date.

Further information on the local delivery of SSDC services can be provided at a ward or parish level on request.

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

Area North Service Enhancements 2010-11

Members will be aware that as part of the Council's continued commitment to tailoring local service delivery to the needs and aspirations of local communities, the current annual budget includes £40,000 per annum as a 'Service Enhancement' budget. When this budget was first introduced in 2007-08, the Area Development Service (East, West, North and South) was asked to develop and pilot different models of community participation to decide upon the actual spending of each Service Enhancement budget. Different methods of consultation and decision-making have been used, supporting a mixture of service delivery and grants to partnerships or community groups aiming to address local priorities.

It is likely that this budget will not be continued into 2011-12, following a corporate review of budgets. There is currently £50,000 to allocate (including £10,000 carried forward from 2009-10). The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) has confirmed that money allocated to specific schemes before the end of March 2011 can be carried forward.

There is growing interest both locally and nationally in Participatory Budgeting and concepts such as 'Total Place' where budgets from a variety of agencies can be used more effectively to deliver services within a community.

With the increasing need for all public agencies to deliver services with less money there is a need to look at using local knowledge to inform better service delivery. Such a way of working is attracting a lot of interest at local, regional and national level and is likely to be adopted through the forthcoming Localism Bill.

In Area North, we have sought to involve both local town and parish councillors and local community volunteers in decisions in allocations from the Service Enhancement budgets. However the use of participative voting has been limited to prioritising issues to improve local quality of life, with actual spending decisions being made by community groups or volunteers on a project by project basis, authorised by the Area Committee or ward members.

Previous allocations have been as follows:

Year	Service area	Amount allocated	Status / outcome
2007-08 (part year)	Additional activities for young people	£10,000	Completed. Supported development of local youth forums plus numerous additional events for young people.
	Additional activities for older people / access to services	£10,000	Completed. Supported further partnership work for Active Living Centres and Fuel Poverty plus numerous additional events for older people.
2008-09	Streetscene	£15,000	Additional sweeping of rural roads and deep cleans in market towns.
	Access improvements – rights of way	£15,000	A series of local priorities agreed with volunteers. Some delays due to changes between SSDC & SCC for management of rights of way. All bar one project completed.

	Community Safety	£10,000	Provided funding to the Area Action Panel to support local projects. Helped start of Farm Watch.
2009-10	Streetscene	£10,000	Additional sweeping of rural roads and deep cleans in market towns.
	Access to housing services & welfare benefits	£10,000	Carried forward to 2010-11. Partially completed.
	Parish Lengthsman – Turn Hill Parishes	£5000	Provided start up funding for this new scheme.
	South Somerset – Community Cars	£5000	Carried forward to 2010-11. Match funding required has not been fully identified and this scheme is under review.
		£10,000	Carried forward to 2010-11.

It is proposed to arrange a participative voting event in the New Year (February) to prioritise investment from the final £50,000. (The Area Committee will be asked to approve decisions, in line with financial procedures.)

The event will be open to town and parish councillors and volunteers currently involved in groups or services in Area North. Projects for discussion and voting will be drawn from an open process in the lead up to the event itself. Proposals will be invited from SSDC service managers, ward members, community organisations (including town and parish councils) and the voluntary sector.

The event will include brief presentations of the nominated projects (which will need to meet certain criteria), followed by a discussion session and voting. Criteria will include the need for proposals to contribute to SSDC corporate aims, Area North priorities and capable of being delivered by March 2012.

Due to the current context of public sector finance, the publicity and design of the event and overall process will emphasise the importance of investing in ‘community resilience’ for the coming months and years. Projects that will help build local capacity to deliver essential services or build more sustainable communities will be encouraged.

It is hoped that beyond the actual decisions on the Service Enhancement budget, the Area Forums will continue providing a basis for a close dialogue between SSDC and local communities.

Financial implications

None from this report. The current financial position of the Area North budgets is included in the next report.

Corporate Priority Implications

The set of six 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 2010-11.

Carbon Emissions and Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

None directly from this report. There are a number of local initiatives designed to promote carbon reduction including support to 'Transition' volunteers.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None directly from this report. The Area Development plan includes a number of projects and initiatives, which actively promote equalities and aim to remove barriers to discrimination.

Background Papers: *Community Priorities for SSDC Services and investment in Area North – May 2010.*

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