

Meeting AN 09M 10/11
Date 15.12.10

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held in the Village Hall, Long Sutton on **Wednesday 15 December 2010**.

(2.00pm – 3.50 pm)

Present:

Members: Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

Ann Campbell
Tony Carvin
Roy Mills

Paull Robathan
Keith Ronaldson

Jo Roundell Greene
Sylvia Seal

Officers:

Charlotte Jones
Les Collett
Katy Menday
Neil Waddleton
David Norris
Becky Sanders

Area Development Manager (North)
Community Development Officer (North)
Countryside Manager
Section 106 Monitoring Officer
Development Manager
Committee Administrator

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

104. Minutes (Agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

105. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jill Beale, Rupert Cox, Sue Steele and Derek Yeomans.

106. Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

107. 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 26 January 2011 at the Village Hall, Norton Sub Hamdon.

108. Public Question Time (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions from the public.

109. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman reminded members that all staff had now vacated the offices at Old Kelways. A front office service was being provided from the Langport Information Centre, and Area Development North) back office staff were temporarily working from the Somerton Community Office and the office at Petters Way.

He also informed members that a tour of the new South Petherton Hospital would be arranged for February or March 2011.

110. Reports from Members (Agenda item 7)

Councillor Paul Robathan commented he had attended the official opening of the Seavington shop and café, where the Community Development Officer had been praised for his support.

Councillor Ann Campbell reported that she had recently attended a Joint Village Halls Committee meeting, and expressed extreme disappointment that Somerset County Council were withdrawing from the partnership.

Councillor Sylvia Seal noted that she had attended the Annual General Meeting of the Somerset Rural Youth Project. She informed members that their budget had also been reduced which could have an impact on the moped scheme. The meeting had been attended by many young people and had been very inspiring.

111. Presentation - All Saints Hall, Stoke Sub Hamdon (Agenda item 8)

The Community Development Officer reminded members that in September 2009, the Committee had given a grant of £10,000 towards refurbishment of the All Saints Hall. He introduced the project leader, Judy Clark, who gave a brief presentation about the project including:

- The work done to the building.
- Breadth of activities currently happening in the hall.
- There was a vision to expand to offer healthy lifestyle opportunities and holiday activities.
- Many volunteers trained in bereavement and counselling skills.
- Private rentals of the hall had increased by 65% since refurbishment.
- Usage of the coffee shop was almost double what was originally projected.
- Youth club run totally by volunteers.

Ward member, Councillor Sylvia Seal, commented that the project was an excellent example of how bringing the right people together had driven a project forward.

There was a brief discussion during which members commended the project. The Chairman thanked Ms Clarke for her informative presentation and commented it was pleasing to see how much the project had developed since it had opened.

112. Presentation – The National Trust (Agenda item 9)

Richard Higgs, General Manager for the National Trust (NT) in South Somerset, gave a presentation detailing the properties in the area and plans for the future.

He reported that the properties in South Somerset were:

- Montacute House
- Barrington Court
- Lytes Cary Manor
- Tintinhull Garden
- Stembridge Tower Mill, High Ham
- Priests House, Muchelney
- Treasurers House, Martock
- The Priory, Stoke Sub Hamdon

Visitor numbers to the above properties totalled approximately 250,000 people annually. The business of the NT at the properties included six holiday lets and 500 acres of agricultural estate employing 30 full time staff, 30 seasonal staff and approximately 600 volunteers.

Members noted that the NT had a new strategy for the next three years in which they were aiming to reach every household. It was hoped that locally, people would view NT properties as an amenity rather than a visitor attraction.

It was explained that the NT wanted to increase membership. To achieve this, the visitor experience would be improved and extended to include promotion of the countryside as well as historic houses and gardens, and the year round opening of some properties.

Other key points of the presentation included:

- Opportunities arising at Barrington Court where derelict farm buildings were being converted – some already as craft workshops.
- The NT were aiming to reduce energy usage from fossil fuels by 50% in the next 10 years – this would involve using renewable energy as well as reducing consumption.

There was a lively ensuing discussion in which members raised various comments including:

- Commended the work done to encourage young visitors, and usage of sites
- Membership issues
- Acknowledged that NT attracted many visitors to South Somerset, and the area as a whole benefitted

In response to questions, Mr Higgs confirmed that the recession had impacted on the number of visitors – membership visitors and café income had increased, but non-member visitors and shop sales had decreased.

Members thanked Mr Higgs for his informative presentation.

113. SSDC Countryside Service – Annual Service Report (Agenda item 10)

The Countryside Manager presented the report to members and commented that the Countryside Service worked on sites owned and managed by SSDC but not Rights of Way as they had reverted back to the responsibility of Somerset County Council. She

explained that the information aimed to give an update on the work of the service across the district over the past year and some projects for the year ahead including:

- Yeovil Country Park, Ham Hill Country Park and Chard Reservoir all received Green Flag Awards
- 1300 volunteer days donated in the last financial year – equivalent to four full-time rangers.
- Events and activities – 112 events, approximately 7000 children and 7000 adults
- Secured further stewardship funding for the next 10 years
- Park Watch scheme launched at Yeovil Country park
- Planning permission secured for ranger base at Yeovil Country Park
- Confirmed presence of two nationally protected species at Moldrams Ground
- Eastfield Local Nature Reserve could be a prospective release site for the large blue butterfly, and work would continue with Butterfly Conservation
- Langport Visitor Centre - new picnic benches and new cycle route leaflets. New signs would be on site early in 2011.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Sylvia Seal commented that the team were very dedicated and that the work of the volunteers was invaluable. Members congratulated the team for all the work they had achieved and thanked the Countryside Manager for her informative report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Katy Munday, Countryside Manager
katy.munday@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462522

114. Section 106 Obligations (Agenda item 11)

(The Chairman informed members that the text under 'Public Interest' in the agenda report had been duplicated under 'Background' in error.)

The Section 106 Monitoring Officer presented the report as shown to members and explained that there were two purposes to the report: firstly to introduce himself and secondly to provide information regarding Section 106 obligations in Area North over the last three years.

He asked members to contact him directly should they have any queries on specific schemes that were not mentioned in the report.

The Development Manager explained that the Audit Commission had highlighted the lack of monitoring of Section 106 obligations and now the officer was in place he would be able to make regular reports to members.

In response questions from members the Development Manager and Section 106 Monitoring Officer responded that:

- The monitoring report only covered agreements over the last three years as the monitoring was worked backwards starting from the most recent, therefore older obligations would be monitored at a later date
- Criteria for Section 106 obligations were set by policy
- Section 106 obligations were a legal undertaking and could cover things that a planning condition could not

- Acknowledged there was some confusion in a few parishes as to the proportion of funding directly for the parish. The process used by leisure was part strategic and part local.
- The Section 106 Monitoring Officer could only monitor obligations that had been agreed
- Requests for Discharge of Planning Obligations (DPO) – there needed to be a set process. It was suggested that decisions for requests of DPO would go back to the officer or committee who had made the original decision on the planning application.
- Copies of finalised / completed /agreed Section 106 obligations could be sent to parish / town councils and ward members.

Members made a few suggestions to the format of the report and requested that future reports be made to Committee six-monthly.

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) Members noted the report and endorsed the actions taken in respect of the monitoring of Section 106 Planning Obligations and;
 - 2) Members commented on the report detail required and the regularity of presentation at future Area North Committee meetings.

*Neil Waddleton, Section 106 Monitoring Officer
neil.waddletoni@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462603*

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

Councillor Roy Mills commented that he thought the report on Huish Episcopi Sports Centre Management Agreement would be delayed.

The Area Development Manager (North) informed members that the planning update for Great Bow Yard would be made to the January meeting. She also noted that the report on the Links Community Transport would be moved to February to allow further information regarding the impact of budgets at Somerset County Council were better known.

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

*Becky Sanders, Committee Administrator
becky.sanders@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462077*

116. Planning Appeals (Agenda item 13)

Councillors 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*

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Chairman