

Area North Committee – 28 November 2012

## 11. Area Development Plan – Area North – 2012-13 – Update Report

*Strategic Director:* Rina Singh, Place and Performance  
*Assistant Directors:* Helen Rutter / Kim Close, Communities  
*Service Manager:* Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)  
*Lead Officer:* As above  
*Contact Details:* charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462251

### Purpose of the Report

To provide an update of the work undertaken by the Area Development (North) Service, since April 2012.

*Councillors are asked to contact the Area Development Manager (North) or other named contacts in advance of the meeting with requests for further information.*

### Public Interest

South Somerset District Council aims to build upon the local skills and knowledge found in local communities, through its well-established Area Working system, the Council's 'enable-partner-deliver' ethos, and its ambition *"to strive to deliver an improving quality of life for all"*.

Four SSDC Area Development teams support four Area Committees and 60 ward members to identify and address local social, economic and environmental priorities for Yeovil, the market towns and rural areas of South Somerset, in Areas West, North, South and East.

### Recommendation

Note and comment on the report and presentation highlighting any specific current priorities within wards and parishes.

### Introduction - The Area Development Service

The Area Development Service:

- Helps to create and supports investment into long term local economic, social and environmental well-being. The significant majority of work supported is community led – including business groups - and / or in close collaboration with other SSDC services and agencies.
- Promotes community involvement in planning, decision-making and problem solving.
- Provides local access to services for residents, businesses and visitors through SSDC Community Office service and Local Information Centres; and through publications, events, partnerships and networking.

The Area Committee helps directs the work of the Area Development Service supported by an annual budget for grants and projects, and a dedicated allocation of the council's capital programme.

## Area North 2012-13 Work Programme (Area Development Plan)

Agreement on local priorities (in keeping with the Council Plan) helps direct the allocation of time and finance held by the Area North Portfolio, and acts as a basis for work with SSDC services, other public agencies and communities.

Following the re-election of the Area North Committee in May 2011, priorities for Area North were reviewed and agreed as follows (for further details see report to Area North Committee November 2011).

- a) **Jobs** – we will aim to add value to the economy in Area North, through promoting sustainable economic growth, assisting with the delivery of the Somerset Rural Broadband Programme, promoting tourism and enhancing the offer to visitors.
- b) **Affordable Housing** – we will assist with the delivery of affordable homes in Area North, including support to test and develop new models.
- c) **Self-Help** – we will promote greater levels of self-help to promote the sustainability of local services and facilities for all ages.

Given the dispersed nature of Area North, addressing these priorities is often on a parish by parish (or even site by site) basis, with a range of distinctive projects supported. The default model for project delivery is to be community led.

**Appendix A** provides extracts from the SSDC Council Plan with links to the work programme of the Area Development (North) service and current priorities set by the Area Committee and by district councillors at a ward or parish level. The Council Plan can be viewed in full at:

<http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/408146/ssdccouncilplan2012-2015.pdf>

**Appendices B and C** report on progress towards a wide variety of projects, across Area North, contained within the work programmes of the Area Development (North) service.

Some recent highlights:-

- **Annual Meeting with Area North town and parish councils** - Three parish workshops arranged with Development Management / Spatial Policy for Area North town and parish councillors. Positive feedback from councillors, who have appreciated SSDC taking time (in small groups) to discuss Neighbourhood Plans, and other tools to influence local land-use and development. 121 follow up meetings are being offered to parishes on request.
- **Community Offices** - DX agreed to alter hours for community office service based in Langport Information Centre to better reflect demand and customer preferences. New hours from January 2013 – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9am to 2pm – total 15 hours per week, reduced from 22 hours per week.
- **SSDC and the Localism Act** – policy / approach being developed.
  - *Community Right to Bid* – DX approved policy Nov 2012
  - *Community Right to Challenge* – DX approved policy Oct 2012
  - *Neighbourhood Plans* – approach discussed with town and parish councils, and SSDC Councillors through a series of workshops Aug-Dec 2012.

Webpage <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/communities/ssdc-and-the-localism-act/>

- **“Walk Langport”** – new local pathways contracted by Langport Town Council using grant funding from Somerset Levels and Moors programme, and guidance from Area Development / Engineering teams. ‘Community Payback’ volunteers helped with refurbishment of existing pathways.
- **Langport Visitor Centre** – review of future use, together with marketing commenced. (See report to ANC October 12).
- **Martock Job Club and Business Forum** – Job Club doors opened in September 12. Around 40 people in first month visited to gain advice and information on local employment and training. **Martock Business Forum** – emerging forum (supported by Martock Parish Council) with well-attended business breakfast / evenings. Several projects underway including visual improvements to Business Park; webpages and e-newsletter established and promoting access to small business / employer support.
- **Lightgate Lane, Recreation Ground South Petherton** – Work underway, led by South Petherton Parish Council to install new facilities for play and recreation including use of SSDC grant and s106 obligations from past development.
- **Ilton community facilities** – good progress by local steering group agreed plan for additional land and facilities supported by small housing development, planning application expected late 2012.

#### And finally

- **Connecting Somerset – Superfast Broadband Programme** - Community engagement / demand stimulation programmes commencing now. Consultants appointed to work across Devon and Somerset during 2013 and beyond. Encouraging take up of new services (once available) and providing skills development to businesses and residents. Area Development and Economic Development teams working jointly to promote delivery of faster, better in South Somerset. Events programme will be promoted once agreed.
- **Somerset Levels and Moors** - Local Action for Rural Communities (LARC) – European investment programme. All grants awarded, and projects will complete by 2014. In total of 45 projects supported - 11 projects based in South Somerset and a further 12 covering the whole Levels and Moors area.
- **Somerset County Council - service reviews / change programmes.**
  - Community Wardens
  - Libraries
  - Young People
  - Local Choices event open to councillors / town and parish councils Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November.

Please refer to **Appendix B and C** – the Area Development Plan and Community Projects programme for further information on recent work to address area priorities including support to a range of community-led projects.

## **Financial implications**

None from this report. The Area North budget was approved by Full Council in February 2012. There is additional information within the Budget Monitoring report elsewhere in this agenda.

## **Council Plan Implications**

In the main the Area Development Plan is drawn from local priorities raised by community groups, residents, local businesses and Town & Parish Councils. In consultation with ward members, time and finance provided will be directly linked to corporate priorities as set out in the Council Plan. The most likely contributions to the Council Plan actions are shown in Appendix A.

## **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. In particular where we are asked to support buildings projects, applicants are expected to assess the business case for energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Opportunities for sustainable transport and promoting local self-containment are priorities.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None directly from this report. The Area Development Plan includes a number of projects and initiatives, which actively promote equalities through removing barriers to discrimination and promoting diversity.

***Background Papers:*** *Area North Development Plan 2012-13*

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