

Meeting AN 12M 12/13
Date 27.03.13

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held in the Millennium Hall, Seavington on **Wednesday 27 March 2013**.

(2.00pm – 4.20pm)

Present:

Members: Patrick Palmer (to 3.45pm) (Chairman)

Pauline Clarke
Graham Middleton
Terry Mounter

David Norris
Shane Pledger
Jo Roundell Greene

Sue Steele
Paul Thompson
Derek Yeomans

Officers:

Charlotte Jones
Mark Williams
Andy Stevenson
Katy Menday
Lynda Pincombe
Adrian Noon
Alex Skidmore
Becky Sanders

Area Development Manager (North)
Chief Executive Officer
Volunteer Co-ordinator for Rights of Way, SCC
Countryside Manager
Community Health & Leisure Manager
Area Lead North /East (Development Management)
Planner
Democratic Services Officer

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

143. Minutes (Agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2013, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

144. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roy Mills and Sylvia Seal.

145. Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 3)

Councillor Patrick Palmer declared a prejudicial interest in planning application 12/04945/FUL as his farming business has a contract with the applicant. He confirmed that he would leave the meeting for the presentation and consideration of the item.

146. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda item 4)

Members noted that the next meeting of Area North Committee would be at 2.00pm on Wednesday 24 April 2013 at the Village Hall, Chilthorne Domer.

147. Public Question Time (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public.

148. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman made several announcements:

- Refurbishment of High Ham Village Hall had been completed - he and the Ward Member had attended the opening event.
 - He had attended a flood meeting with local businesses hosted by Long Sutton Golf Club, where he had been invited to give some advice.
 - He had also attended the Somerset Flood Summit on 15 March which had been very interesting. A full report to members would be made in the next month or so.
 - A reminder to all members about the Area North Parish Workshop to be held at Long Sutton Golf Club on 23 May.
-

149. Reports from Members (Agenda item 7)

Councillor Paul Thompson commented about the reprieve for bus service 81 for one year. He wished to thank the efforts of officers and the Division member in securing the outcome.

150. Neighbourhood Policing in Area North (Agenda Item 8)

The new Neighbourhood Policing Team Sergeant for Area North, Rob Jameson, introduced himself to members. Members made a few comments including:

- When PCSO's attend parish meetings could they have an accurate summary of statistics available rather than referring people to a website.
- Appreciation for work done recently in Islemoor Ward and over the past few years in Martock.
- It would be helpful to parishes to know the exact location of instances of anti-social behaviour so that measures could be taken to address any issues.

The Chairman thanked the sergeant for attending the meeting.

151. River Parrett Trail Update Report (Agenda Item 9)

The Volunteer Co-ordinator for Rights of Way gave a brief update on the River Parrett Trail (RPT) and the role of volunteers. He commented that the RPT had not been forgotten but acknowledged it had a lower profile than 10 years ago due to lower funding levels and funding for a dedicated officer having ceased. Other points highlighted included:

- Over the last three years, parts of the trail had been re-routed so that the entire length was along Public Rights of Way and not reliant on sections of permissive routes.
- A network of volunteers, called Trailwatchers, adopted sections of the trail and cared for the route either directly or by liaising with officers.
- Across the county, almost 91% parishes had Parish Liaison Officers.
- Over 25% of parishes across the county had trained strimmer volunteers, who cleared paths in the summer months. This often provided path clearance over and above what Somerset County Council were able to provide.

In response to comments made by members, the Volunteer Co-ordinator and Area Development Manager (North) commented:

- There would always be on-going items and projects along the RPT requiring funding.
- The enthusiasm for a boardwalk along the river between Cocklemoor and Black Bridge at Langport/Huish Episcopi was noted.
- The new tenant of the Langport Visitor Centre building was a basket making business and they were content to continue to be an information point and to promote the RPT.
- Martock would be included, by name, on any future reprint of the RPT leaflet.

The Chairman thanked the Volunteer Co-ordinator for proving members with the informative update.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*Andy Stevenson, Volunteer Co-ordinator for Rights of Way, SCC
astevenson@somerset.gov.uk or 01823 358250*

152. Countryside Services Update Report (Agenda Item 10)

The Countryside Manager presented her report as shown in the agenda, and commented that the work of the team focussed mainly around practical work and community engagement. She explained that the report aimed to give an update on the work of the service across the district over the past year and some projects for year ahead including:

- Yeovil Country Park, Ham Hill Country Park and Chard Reservoir had retained Green Flag status.
- 1500 volunteer days donated over the past financial year – equivalent to over 6 full-time staff. The work of the volunteers was invaluable.
- Events and activities – had been very successful but challenging due to the weather.
- Training of apprentices in traditional land management skills. Links with local colleges remained strong.
- Higher level stewardship at two sites was going well and funding had been secured for Eastfield LNR and preservation work to the lime kiln at Ham Hill Country Park.
- Maintenance of sites had been challenging due to the weather. Some sites had also experienced heavy usage due to flooding elsewhere, which had led to erosion which would require remedial works later in the year.
- Archaeological dig at Ham Hill in 2012 - teams had returned for the second year and exciting finds had been found including round houses and iron-age gateways.
- The coming year would focus on sourcing external funding for projects including the Yeovil Country Park Ranger Centre and continuing to provide free, safe and attractive sites for the public.

After a short discussion and in response to comments made by members, the Countryside Manager commented:

- Kingston Maurward College were the education provider for the apprenticeships. It was a one year course after which the apprentices gained a C&G Level 2 Diploma in Environmental Conservation.
- At the time of writing the report there had been no known reported cases, of Ash die-back in South Somerset. No planting of Ash trees was taking place on SSDC sites.

The Chairman and members praised the work of the team and volunteers, and thanked the Countryside Manager for her comprehensive report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*Katy Menday, Countryside Manager
katy.menday@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462522*

153. Community Health & Leisure Update Report (Agenda Item 11)

The Community Health and Leisure Manager summarised her report as shown in the agenda. As part of her comprehensive presentation members noted key information including:

- The Community Resource Service had been transferred to a third party, 'The Hub', which would continue to deliver the same key services from April.
- A new play area and MUGA at Lightgate Lane, South Petherton were currently being installed, but had been delayed due to poor weather.
- Langport MUGA, one of the largest in the district, had been installed and would be opened at the weekend.
- Gold Star Awards – more than 500 people attended the last event which celebrated the achievements of youth and sport. There had been three awards to people/groups within Area North.
- Leisure strategies would be reviewed in 2013 and member input would be sought in the coming months.

During a short discussion members raised several comments including:

- There had been many compliments about facilities at Martock recreation ground, which had been delivered in partnership with SSDC and other parties.
- It was unfortunate the time taken for some projects to come to fruition, especially those where Section 106 monies were involved.
- Appreciation and congratulations to the team for the work achieved over the past year.

Members thanked the Community Health and Leisure Manager for her informative report.

RESOLVED: (1) That the report be noted.

- (2) That members contact the Community Health and Leisure Manager/team if they wish to discuss the current service delivery programme or recommend future priorities.

*Lynda Pincombe, Community Health and Leisure Manager
lynda.pincombe@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462614*

154. Area North Committee – Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

The Area Development Manager (North) updated members that an update report on the Environmental Health Service would be added to the Forward Plan for July. She clarified that at the current time it was unclear on the exact details regarding feedback from the Flood Summit on 15 March, but reassured members that they would receive a report in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.

*Becky Sanders, Committee Administrator
becky.sanders@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462596*

155. Planning Appeals (Agenda item 13)

The agenda report was noted, which informed members of planning appeals that were lodged, dismissed or allowed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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

(Councillor Patrick Palmer, having earlier declared a prejudicial interest left the meeting for the presentation and consideration of this item).

Councillor Shane Pledger in the Chair.

156. Planning Applications (Agenda item 14)

The Committee considered the applications set out in the schedule attached to the agenda. 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).

Planning Application: 12/04945/FUL Creation of a new dairy farm, on land at Lower Witcombe Farm, Thornhill Drove, Ash. Applicant: Mr M Cobden.

The Planner presented the application as detailed in the agenda. She provided members with several updates including:

- Reference to plans for the milking parlour had been omitted from condition 2 in error
- Three further letters of support had been received.
- Additional letters from residents had also been received raising concerns about traffic along Witcombe Lane and if site traffic could go via Burrough Street in the future.
- Since the agenda had been published, a response had been received from the County Archaeologist in which he had indicated there were no significant implications and no condition had been requested. Therefore, condition 14 in the agenda report could be disregarded.

Mr Wheeler, agent, made reference to declining numbers of dairy farms in the local area, and nationally. He commented that the existing dairy unit was over 30 years old and wouldn't meet regulations in the future and there was nowhere to expand due to the location of the gas main. He informed members that a Rural Economy Grant was available to farmers going that 'extra distance'. Modern practices would be installed and the proposal would create around seven jobs and a viewing platform for schools. Future

aspirations included photovoltaic panels on the roof of the building and a small anaerobic digester to deal with the waste.

Ward member, Councillor Graham Middleton, noted that no consultees had raised objections. He commented that passing spaces were needed now and that the applicant had kept the local community very informed about the proposal. He could see no reason to refuse the application.

During the ensuing discussion, members raised several questions and comments. (Due to the specific nature of some of the questions, the applicant was invited to respond.) Member comments included:

- An anaerobic digester should be prioritised for the future as it would provide power to the farm and fertiliser.
- Supportive of a rural industry in a rural area.
- Preference to see cows in fields but acknowledge size of proposal is needed to be viable.
- Concerns about how the slurry would be dealt with and the safety of the lagoon – the applicant indicated that slurry was, and would be dealt with by umbilical pipe and there was no need for slurry to be transferred by tankers along roads. The lagoon would have to be adequately fenced to meet Health & Safety legislation.
- Clarity if the cows were able to move around – the applicant responded that cows were able to wander through stalls and would be housed on sand bedding, which was the most welfare friendly surface.
- How many times a day would the cows be milked? – the applicant commented that there would not be a robotic system and cows would be milked three times a day.
- Morals about ‘battery style farming’ were not a planning concern.
- What was intended for the existing dairy? – the applicant indicated it would not be used for milking but for cattle.
- Concern about an increase in lorries using the road to deliver feed – the applicant informed members that much of the forage would be sourced from the farm and any additional forage would be sourced locally. It was acknowledged some feed would need to be brought in, but it was unlikely it would be substantially more than at the current time.
- If approved, during construction there would be additional traffic – signage and parking would be required – the applicant confirmed there would be local signage and parking provided for construction traffic.

In response to a comment made, the Planner clarified that one of the PowerPoint slides presented was that of Thornhill Drove and not Witcombe Lane. Witcombe Lane was a road but Thornhill Drove was not a road but a public footpath.

Members were generally supportive of the application and it was proposed to approve the application as per the officer recommendation as detailed in the agenda, subject to the deletion of condition 14 as no condition had been required by the County Archaeologist, and the addition of plans for the milking parlour to be added to condition 2 as it had been omitted from the agenda report in error. On being put to the vote the proposal was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That planning application 12/04945/FUL be APPROVED as per the officer recommendation and conditions as detailed in the agenda report, subject to:

- Condition 2 to be amended to include reference to plans of milking parlour (omitted from agenda report in error) – additional wording to read:

Parlour Building (Plans and Elevations) – 01920-05 / 01
received 24/12/2012.

- Deletion of condition 14 as no archaeology condition requested by County Archaeologist.

(Voting: Unanimous in favour)

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

.....

Chairman