

MEETING AW.11:0708  
DATE 19:03:08

## South Somerset District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Area West Committee** held in Crowshute House, Crowshute Link, Chard on **Wednesday, 19th March 2008**.

(6.00 p.m. – 7.55 p.m.)

### Present:

**Members:** Kim Turner (In the Chair)

Michael Best	Ros Roderigo
David Bulmer	Dan Shortland
Geoff Clarke	Angie Singleton
Nigel Mermagen	Jean Smith
Robin Munday	Martin Wale
Ric Pallister	

### Officers:

Andrew Gillespie	Head of Area Development (West)
Fiona Tame	Community Development Officer
David Norris	Planning Team Leader (North/West)
Andrew Blackburn	Committee Administrator

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

### 141. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 20th February 2008, and of the Area West Community Forum (Crewkerne) Sub-Committee held on 13th February 2008, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as correct records, were signed by the Chairman.

### 142. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Simon Bending, Nicci Court, Andrew Turpin and Linda Vijeh.

### 143. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 144. Public Question Time

No questions or comments were raised by members of the public, representatives of parish/town councils or county councillors.

## 145. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reminded members of the arrangements that had been made for the Area West Members Workshop, which was to be held on Wednesday, 2nd April 2008 from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. at Holyrood Lace Mill, Chard.

She also referred to the arrangements that had been made for a workshop for town/parish councils regarding the Local Development Framework Core Strategy Consultation, which would be held on Wednesday, 9th April 2008 from 7.00 p.m. – 9.00 p.m. at the Guildhall, Chard.

The Chairman referred to the Safer Somerset Awards ceremony and was pleased to inform members that Chard and Ilminster Community Justice Panel had won three awards as follows:-

- Community Safety Volunteers of the Year
- Outstanding Contribution to Engaging Local Communities
- John Lacey (Panel Chairman) was runner up in the Volunteer of the Year

She also reported that the Community Justice Panel Co-ordinator had commented that without the support of South Somerset District Council they would not be in their currently successful position and wished to thank the Area West Committee in particular for their continued support.

## 146. Police Performance and Neighbourhood Policing (Agenda item 6)

The Committee welcomed Inspector Andy Pritchard to the meeting who gave a short presentation on Police performance in the area and informed members of progress with the neighbourhood policing initiative.

Inspector Pritchard indicated that he was the Sector Inspector based in Somerton, which covered a large area between Chard and Wincanton. He referred to the objectives being to reduce the fear of crime, ensure that beat teams were accessible to the community, the reduction and detection of crime and to improve the time it took to bring offenders to justice.

In referring to performance he compared the years 2006/07 and 2007/08 and reported that crime had reduced overall by 5.5% and he gave the individual figures for the various crime types. He also explained the definition of detections which were 21.8% overall and commented that although that was good, he felt that it could be better. Individual figures for the various crime types were given. He commented that overall he felt that it was a healthy picture but hoped that the reduction in crime would continue and that detections improved.

Reference was made to the sector's operational bases and he explained which branches of the police operated from which offices with Somerton being the sector headquarters. With reference to the more immediate locality he mentioned that Chard Police Station would be provided with a custody facility, which would help to keep officers based locally as they would not have to escort offenders to other stations where such a facility existed. He also mentioned the introduction of "Police Posts", which involved a presence in more local areas such as Crewkerne and would improve accessibility to the community. Reference was made to the tasking process and Inspector Pritchard explained how various operations were linked. He also referred to tasking meetings that took place fortnightly where it was decided what the focus would be for that fortnight.

In referring to consultation, Inspector Pritchard mentioned that “Partners and Communities Together (PACT)” meetings were held to bring communities together with local police teams and key representatives from various partner agencies and organisations and allowed local people the chance to have their say on issues that mattered most to them and their community. Reference was also made to local “street briefings” to which the public were invited, attendance at Neighbourhood Watch meetings and Council meetings.

Inspector Pritchard then responded to members’ questions and comments during which a number of matters were mentioned including the following:-

- members commented that they were pleased that a custody facility was to be provided in Chard. Comment was also expressed by a member that he was encouraged by the presence of the PCSOs who he believed had helped in getting closer to the community;
- a member questioned whether Government targets and paperwork could hinder performance. Inspector Pritchard mentioned that bureaucracy could hinder delivery but he was confident that the separation between the response teams and the beat teams, including PCSOs, had assisted with overcoming that issue;
- Inspector Pritchard noted the comments of a member who indicated that one of her constituents could not make a statement at Crewkerne. He mentioned that this should not have been the case and confirmed that statements could be taken at any station. He noted, however, the comments made by the member;
- reference was made by members to the shift patterns of Police officers and PCSOs and comment expressed that it seemed that officers had the end of the week and weekends off when most incidents of antisocial behaviour occurred, particular reference being made to Crewkerne and Ilminster. Inspector Pritchard commented that shifts should ensure that cover was provided and he indicated that he would discuss this issue with the beat teams;
- Inspector Pritchard commented that although the size of the beat areas had increased, the responsibilities that beat officers had to deal with had reduced as they did not have to deal with response duties. PCSOs were also on hand;
- reference was made by a member to PCSOs having built a good relationship with the community, which was very positive. Comment was also expressed, however, that the public were often cynical about statistics and that there was a need to consider people’s perception and fear of crime. Other members also concurred with the comments made. Inspector Pritchard commented that he accepted that the fear of crime was important and a real issue, which was being tackled;
- support was shown by members for the multi-agency approach adopted by the Police when dealing with certain specific issues, e.g. licensing;
- members commented that they were pleased that Police services were moving back to smaller units in local communities rather than being centralised. Inspector Pritchard commented that he felt that smaller units was the right way forward;
- in response to a comment, Inspector Pritchard indicated that Community Speedwatch had been very successful in South Somerset, more so than in the rest of the County. He mentioned that the Police were content to support it. He referred to having met with those people leading on the Speedwatch scheme in order to draw up a service level agreement, which included what the Police would do under various circumstances. He felt that this showed the commitment of the Police to the Speedwatch Scheme;

- in response to a comment about the involvement of the Police in the Area West Community Safety Action Panel, Inspector Pritchard commented that the Police had a commitment to the Panel and to beat managers and PCSOs attending. He also referred to the public meetings held by the Police with groups of key stakeholders, which formed a part of local consultation;
- comment was expressed that the flow back of information from Police officers to ward members was a good positive point;
- reference was made by a member to the boundaries of the beat areas, particular reference being made to West Crewkerne parish being covered from Chard rather than Crewkerne. Inspector Pritchard commented that boundaries were always being looked at.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Pritchard for attending the meeting to update members and for answering their questions and concerns. Inspector Pritchard indicated that he would like the opportunity to visit the Committee again in six months to give a further update.

**NOTED.**

*(Andrew Gillespie, Head of Area Development (West) – (01460) 260426)  
(andrew.gillespie@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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## **147. Report on Opportunity Crewkerne held on Wednesday, 13th February 2008 (Agenda item 7)**

Reference was made to the agenda report, which updated the Committee on the outcome of Opportunity Crewkerne, the Community Forum event that took place at Wadham School, Crewkerne on 13th February 2008.

In noting the contents of the report, members concurred with the comments of the Chairman who suggested that, as a review of this and other opportunity events was to be undertaken at the forthcoming member workshop to be held on 2nd April 2008, any discussion be left until that time.

**NOTED.**

*(Zoe Harris, Community Regeneration Officer – (01460) 260423)  
(zoe.harris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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## **148. Opportunity Chard held on Wednesday, 12th March 2008 (Agenda item 8)**

Reference was made to agenda item 8 and members concurred with the comments of the Chairman who suggested that, as a review of the opportunity events was to be undertaken at the forthcoming member workshop on the 2nd April 2008, the outcome of the Opportunity Chard event be discussed at that time.

**NOTED.**

*(Fiona Tame, Community Development Officer – (01460) 260359)  
(fiona.tame@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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## 149. Reports from Members on Outside Organisations (Agenda item 9)

This item had been placed on the agenda to give an opportunity for members who represented the Council on outside organisations to report items of significance to the Committee.

Cllr. Geoff Clarke referred to Crewkerne Leisure Management and reported that the Crewkerne Aqua Centre had had a good year with the numbers of people using the wet and dry facilities having increased. He also mentioned the tremendous demand from customers, particular reference being made to the swim school and commented that the management were looking at recruiting more teachers to reduce the waiting time. A procedure had been approved for the promotion of the facilities and the management were looking carefully at costs bearing in mind rising fuel prices and the replacement of boilers. He paid tribute to the staff at the centre and commented that the Crewkerne Leisure Management Board were doing a good job without public subsidy. Prices for use of the facilities were also able to be kept competitive. He referred to the construction of the Waitrose store having had an impact on the Aqua Centre in terms of parking and mud on the roads. He looked forward to the positive benefits that would come with the completion of the store.

**NOTED.**

## 150. Conversion of Buildings into 39 Units and the Erection of 13 New Dwellings – Land at Tail Mill, Merriott (App. No. 07/02775/FUL) (Agenda item 10)

The Planning Team Leader (North/West) referred to the agenda report regarding the above planning application, which had been discussed previously at the meeting of the Committee held on 16th January 2008. Particular reference was made to the phasing of the development and to the Committee having agreed at the January meeting to require the factory building to be fully constructed prior to the construction (rather than occupation) of the new build element of the scheme. Members considered the reasons, as set out in the agenda report, for the Committee being asked to reconsider that requirement and instead to require the factory extension to be completed and ready for use prior to the occupation of any of the dwellings as had been agreed previously when an earlier planning application relating to this site had been determined.

The majority of members supported the officer's recommendation that the requirement relating to the phasing of the development be amended as requested.

Members also noted the latest position with regard to the provision of an independent assessment of the applicants' financial submission in respect of the scheme.

**RESOLVED:** that the requirement relating to the phasing of the development in respect of planning application no. 07/02775/FUL be amended to require the factory extension to be completed and ready for use prior to the occupation of any of the dwellings (rather than prior to the construction of the dwellings).

(10 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention).

*(David Norris, Planning Team Leader (North/West) – (01935) 462382)*  
*(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

### 151. Feedback on Planning Applications Referred to the Regulation Committee (Agenda item 11)

There was no feedback to report as there were no planning applications that had been referred recently to the Regulation Committee.

NOTED.

*(David Norris, Planning Team Leader (North/West) – (01935) 462382)  
(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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### 152. Planning Appeals (Agenda item 12)

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

The Committee noted the comments of a member who referred to having attended an informal hearing, which was not a practice that he had been to before, and thought it to be an excellent process.

NOTED.

*(David Norris, Planning Team Leader (North/West) – (01935) 462382)  
(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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### 153. Venue for Next Meeting (Agenda item 14)

The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held at Merriott Village Hall on Wednesday, 16th April 2008 at 5.30 p.m.

NOTED.

*(Andrew Blackburn, Committee Administrator – (01460) 260441)  
(andrew.blackburn@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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### 154. Planning Applications (Agenda item 13)

The Committee considered the application set out in the schedule attached to the agenda and the Planning Team Leader (North/West) 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).

**08/00478/FUL (pages 1-6) – The erection of single storey barn adjacent and linking to existing barn for mixed use of storage and carnival float construction (GR 338521/114126), land at junction of Park Lane and Longforward Lane, Kingstone – S Madge.**

The Planning Team Leader summarised the details of the application as set out in the agenda report. He informed members that the application was finely balanced and that there were community issues involved with the proposals. He explained, however, the reasons for the recommendation being one of refusal on planning and highway grounds.

In response to questions from members, the Planning Team Leader indicated that he did not believe that an assessment had been carried out by the Highway Authority on the vehicle use of the roads leading to the site but rather had given a response having regard to the nature of the local roads. He also indicated that he did not believe that agricultural use would attract a Highway Authority objection and that they would probably consider that, in principle, an agricultural use would be legitimate in this location as opposed to use by a carnival float. He also indicated that a refusal on landscape grounds for an agricultural use would be marginal. The Planning Team Leader further advised that if members wished to approve the application, the use of the site could be restricted to carnival or agricultural use.

The Committee noted the comments of Mr. G. Lawrence who was a member of Gemini Carnival Club. He referred to the site already being used by a local cider making company. He further informed the Committee of the proposed times of use and anticipated vehicle movements in respect of the use of the site for carnival purposes. He referred to the roads leading to the site and to the access that would be used for the arrival and departure of the carnival float, which he indicated would be a minimal use overseen by marshals who would be in radio contact with the float to warn of any approaching traffic. He referred to there being passing places in the road and that movement of the float would be outside of peak traffic times. He also mentioned that local police would be aware of when the float would be moving.

Mr. J. Gapper from Ilminster Carnival Committee spoke in support of the application. He referred to the Carnival Committee giving funding to a variety of charitable causes resulting from the Ilminster Carnival and expressed concern that without the larger main floats and the effort that was put in by the clubs, the public may not come to the carnival. Reference was also made to the varied age range of members of carnival clubs being from young to old and to people who joined the clubs learning many different skills. He felt that if venues were not available for clubs to build their floats, many people would suffer in the long run.

The applicant's agent, Mr. S. Rance, commented that Gemini Carnival Club had tried hard to find a site. He referred to this site being brownfield rather than greenfield and to their being an electricity supply already at the site. He mentioned that there would be no need to run a generator except at the end of the building of the float to enable the lighting to be tested. He referred to the barn being enclosed and in mentioning the times in which club members would be on site, he indicated that work on the float would not go beyond 10.00 p.m. He explained the route that would be taken by vehicles to the site together with the anticipated number of movements and mentioned that Gemini Carnival Club operated a car sharing policy. He also referred to the skills that could be learnt by members of the club, particular reference being made to the benefits to young people. If the Carnival Club were not successful in obtaining planning permission, he indicated that the club would find it increasingly difficult to participate in the local carnivals.

Cllr. Robin Munday, ward member, commented that when he first looked at the planning application report he imagined the site to be in open countryside. After having looked at the site, however, he felt that was not necessarily the case. He referred to the site having been used by a cider company and its vehicles and to hardcore on the site not being conducive to agriculture. He was of the view that the site could only be improved by the use applied for. He also expressed his view that the trees on the north side of the site did not form a natural part of the country scene. If the application was approved, he felt that there would be some control over its use whilst currently it could be used for garaging vehicles/machinery. In referring to the carnival float, he mentioned that there would be limited movements as it was stored elsewhere when the carnival circuit commenced. He felt that the application was of sufficient importance to the community to enable it to be granted.

In response to a comment, the Planning Team Leader clarified that the site could only be used for agricultural purposes at present.

During the ensuing discussion, members considered that there was justification for the granting of the application and did not feel that the reasons for refusal were appropriate in this case. Reference was made to the Planning Team Leader having commented that the application was finely balanced. Comment was also expressed that the applicants had adopted a sequential approach in looking for alternative sites and that the proposals comprised a community activity, which it was felt the Local Plan did not cover in this context. A member questioned the assertion that the proposals would cause unacceptable harm to the character of the landscape and commented that the existence of barns in the countryside was normal for Somerset. Reference was also made to the use of the barn being able to be conditioned. It was further commented that the use of the access would be minimal and that the unsuitability of the roads was not a valid consideration in this particular case. The view was also expressed that the issue regarding sustainability was not applicable in respect of this use. It was mentioned that some other Councils had a policy relating to carnival clubs and that perhaps this Council should do likewise. Reference was made to the community issues that were involved with this application and of the benefit to young people in learning new skills. It was felt that the application should be approved subject to conditions.

In response to a question from a member, the Planning Team Leader confirmed that no comments had been received from the parishes of Kingstone or Whitelackington.

For the reasons mentioned above, the Committee were of the view that the application could be granted subject to conditions. In referring to times of use, it was noted that a condition would not be appropriate given the location of the site.

**RESOLVED:** that planning permission be granted subject to conditions, which shall include:-

- the development being commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of the permission;
- a requirement to provide a properly drained, consolidated and surfaced turning area, parking spaces and access to be approved by the local planning authority;
- the development to be used only by the Gemini Carnival Club for the construction of and storage of carnival floats and should that use be no longer required then the building shall revert back to agricultural use only;
- the existing access at the junction of Longforward Lane and Park Lane to be used only for the carnival float in accordance with a management plan to be submitted and approved by the local planning authority;
- the submission of a landscaping scheme within three months of the date of the permission to be approved by the local planning authority;
- details of external lighting to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

(11 in favour, 0 against)

*(David Norris, Planning Team Leader (North/West) – (01935) 462382)*  
*(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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Chairman