

Joint Area Committee – West – 20th May 2009

6. Area Development Plan 2008/9

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Purpose of the Report

To inform members of the progress on activities and projects contained within the Area Development Plan against the milestones and targets set.

Recommendation

That members note the report.

Background

The former Area West Committee approved the Area West Development Plan in May 2008. The plan sets out the main actions that were proposed to be delivered in 2008/9 by the Area West Development Team.

Area Development Team Work

We are working with a whole range of staff across the Council and in other agencies. The Committee will be aware that much of what we do is partnering and enabling work, which means that we are often not in control of outcomes or timescales. Once again this year we have carried a number of vacancies to key posts. Inevitably this has had an affect on both the volume and pace of work undertaken. The team is now up to full strength once again. Reports on progress or issues for decision have been made to the Committee throughout the year on a project by project basis. The following brief paragraphs pick out some of the highlights. The numbers correspond with those on the attached plan (pages 6-12).

1. Chard Regeneration Scheme

After a long period of negotiation, agreement with key funding partner SWRDA was finalised in September 2008, and regeneration consultants appointed in November 2008. Work to develop a regeneration framework for Chard will be completed later in 2009. The work undertaken to bring forward this major regeneration scheme has been and will continue to be the subject of regular reports to JACW. More information is available on the SSDC website via the community pages (Community/Area Development/Getting closer to communities/Chard Regeneration Scheme).

2. Opportunity Chard

14 of the 20 projects put forward to improve the Chard Area were successful in receiving grants at the Opportunity Chard event held in the Guildhall in Chard on 22nd April. A total of £38,325 was awarded to local projects from Chard and surrounding villages.

The event was supported by 200 local residents who snapped up all available tickets and, through their votes, helped decide what would be done.

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New equipment for Chard Skate Park, a wildlife garden at Ferne Animal Sanctuary, a new mini bus for South Chard Church and Christmas Lights for Chard town centre each gained £5,000 grants, whilst a residential trip for members of Chard Youth Club won support for a £3,500 grant bid.

The Memory cafe for Alzheimer's sufferers also got the public stamp of approval, and Cloverleaf Productions were awarded just over £2,300 to buy new sound equipment for local public events.

3. *Chard Area Office Development - Promote increased local use*

Major changes were made to the Chard reception area to accommodate a new JobcentrePlus (JCP) service following the closure of their Chard office. A dedicated telephone line went live in September 2008, giving free access to a full range of JCP and related services. The Jobpoint went live in March 2009 and provides direct access to the JCP website with local and national job vacancy details. In the first 6 weeks of operation the Jobpoint was used by 900 people (average of 30 each day) and was used for 37 hours. 620 job details were printed off by customers to follow up. This is all new footfall for the office.

A payments machine was installed in October 2008 to receive payments for all SSDC services and housing association rents. This provides a local pay point for the community and accepts cash and card, with a free postal service for cheques.

The SSDC public access computer terminal had increased use with the introduction of Choice Based Lettings in autumn 2008. Customers were able to register for the housing list and apply for available properties on-line using the terminal.

Footfalls were 25% higher in 2008/09 than in 2007/08 (15,695 against 12,592), average 62 per day

4. *Ilminster Community Plan*

Work continues to support Ilminster Forum. Over the past year the group carried out an audit and feasibility study to look at the needs in the town for a new community hall. Ilminster Forum has started working with the Town Council to look at providing a new sports pavilion for the town. The Community Plan had shown that transport and getting about was an issue for many residents, therefore Ilminster Forum worked with the District and County Councils to produce a Transport Information Booklet, which was recently launched.

5. *Opportunity Ilminster*

Another successful event was held at the Shrubbery Hotel during October 2008. Nearly 180 people voted to decide how £20,000 would be spent in the area. Thirteen projects were awarded £20,290 between them, including new bus shelters on Canal Way, a drugs awareness course for parents, kitchen equipment for Horton Village Hall and funds to help put on the Ilminster Midsummer Experience, a large community event held over a weekend in June.

6. *Ilminster Community Office (North Street) - Promote increased local use*

More effective opening hours were introduced in June 2008. Instead of opening 2 full days (Tuesdays and Thursdays), it now opens 3 long mornings (9am to 1.30pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays). Footfall analysis showed that afternoons were

quieter, and in other offices Monday mornings were the busiest time. Opening until 1.30pm allows customers to call in during their lunch break.

The change was advertised, and customer number analysis showed an increase of 10% in the first month of use, with an even spread across the three mornings.

A Police Post now operates in the adjacent Council Chamber.

Footfalls were 15% higher in 2008/09 - 2,846 against 2,475 in 2007/08, average 18 per morning.

7. Ilminster Community Office Development

The basic requirements for a new multi agency facility have been established. A suitable development opportunity has still to be found.

8. Crewkerne Community Plan

A Better Crewkerne & District (ABCD) had a very successful 12 months. SSDC supported them through the process of becoming a registered charity. Their Urban Design Framework working group worked with the District to carry out a Conservation Area Appraisal, which resulted in an extension to the Area so it now covers the whole of the Town Centre. This group then commissioned a consultant to carry out a Shared Space Study and started working with Highways to look at the way Traffic is managed through Crewkerne. In addition ABCD have worked with Crewkerne Town Council, the Sports Clubs and users of West One Youth and Community Centre to forward the plans to build a new sports and community facility on Henhayes.

9. Opportunity Crewkerne

Nearly 200 people packed out the Victoria Hall in Crewkerne to vote to decide which of the 21 community groups would receive a share of £30,000. More people would have liked to partake in the participatory budgeting event, which is proving to be a popular way to decide how local budgets are spent. Altogether £34,559 was awarded to 13 community groups. Amongst the successful projects was Camelot Credit Union, which was awarded £3,700, enabling them to expand and open collection points in Crewkerne. They are now operating twice a week in the centre of the town.

10. Crewkerne Community Office - Promote increased local use

Increased office opening hours piloted in early 2008 were confirmed in March. The office is now open an additional 5 hours, with shorter closing at lunchtime (30 minutes) and later opening in the afternoons (5.00pm) on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. This is at no extra cost, as existing staff working hours are being used more efficiently.

A local consultation exercise on the extension of the Conservation Area was hosted at the office, where the community could examine plans of the proposals and record their comments.

A Police Post is hosted at the office once a week.

Footfalls for 2008/09 were 19% higher than the previous year - 10,204 over 8,524 - average 40 per day.

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11. *Area West Community Safety Action Panel*

The Panel continues to meet quarterly and work in partnership to provide solutions for community safety issues in Area West. A recent spin off was to establish the Area West Youth Network, this gives all groups and agencies working with young people the opportunity to get together and share information and good practice. So far there have been two meetings, which participants have found invaluable.

12. *Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster Community Justice Panel*

This year local Community Justice Panels in Area West dealt with 120 cases referred from the Police and Housing Associations. As planned the project is now expanding to include Areas East and North.

13. *Community Grants and Funding Advice*

The process of setting up Service Level Agreements with eight community groups began in early 2009. A number of groups were given funding advice and signposted to external grant funds when District Council funds were not available.

14. *Market Towns Vision*

Chard, Ilminster and Crewkerne continue to be represented on the Market Towns Investment Group and the towns have benefited from inclusion in the new Radio Link scheme, the deployable CCTV scheme, the local priorities (highways & environmental improvements) scheme, and the Visitor's audit scheme. Further details can be found on the SSDC Website Planning & Environment Page.

15. *Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership*

South Somerset District Council has been very involved in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs bid for European money under the Local Action for Rural Communities scheme. Last year the steering group heard that they had been awarded £2.4 million to spend over 5 years. The area eligible to apply for funds includes Chard, Tatworth, Combe St Nicholas and Donyatt, all areas just outside the AONB area. The Community Regeneration Officer is now a member of the LARC Programme Management Group on behalf of South Somerset.

16. *The Stop Line Way*

SSDC is a member of the steering group of local authorities and Sustrans. The group have appointed a project officer to help complete the whole project more quickly – the Target date is now 2010. More off road sections of the Stop Line Way have been opened this year and work to bring forward the remaining sections in South Somerset is continuing.

Further information

The Council website has been developed and since September 2006 anyone logging on can find out more about the work of the Area Development Teams by clicking on Community/Area Development – Getting Closer to Communities. In this section they can view;

- The Area Development Action Plans
- How to apply for SSDC grants including forms that can be downloaded
- Tips on other funding sources

- Getting involved in your community

We have been adding news stories about project work under development across the area. This section of the site, along with regular media coverage, is designed to raise the profile of our work.

Financial Implications

There are no new implications arising from this report.

Implications for SSDC Corporate Plan

The Area Development Plan supports all the main aims of the corporate plan.

Background Papers: *None.*