

MEETING AW.01:0910
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South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West Committee** held in the Shrubbery Hotel, Station Road, Ilminster on **Wednesday, 20th January 2010**.

(5.30 p.m. – 8.40 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Cllr. Kim Turner (in the Chair from item 2 onwards)

Simon Bending	Robin Munday (until 7.25 p.m.)
David Bulmer	Ric Pallister
Geoff Clarke	Ros Roderigo
Carol Goodall	Angie Singleton
Jenny Kenton	Linda Vijeh
Nigel Mermagen	Martin Wale (until 7.25 p.m.)

County Council Members:

Anne Larpent (until 6.40 p.m.)

Officers:

Andrew Gillespie	Area Development Manager (West)
Zoë Harris	Community Regeneration Officer
Colin McDonald	Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Andrew Blackburn	Committee Administrator

Also Present:

Judith Richardson	Head of Service, Schools & Achievement, Children and Young People Directorate, Somerset County Council
Rob Wilson	Area Review Manager, Schools & Achievement, Children and Young People Directorate, Somerset County Council
Inspector Jackie Gold	Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Sgt. Andy Lloyd	Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Gavin Saunders	Neroche Project Manager, Forestry Commission

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

1. Election of Chairman (Agenda item 1)

It was proposed and seconded that Cllr. Kim Turner be nominated as Chairman of the Committee.

There being no other nominations it was:-

RESOLVED: that Cllr. Kim Turner be elected Chairman of the Area West Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2009/2010.

(Cllr. Kim Turner in the Chair)

2. Election of Vice-Chairman (Agenda item 2)

It was proposed and seconded that Cllr. Mike Best be nominated as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

There being no other nominations it was:-

RESOLVED: that Cllr. Mike Best be elected Vice-Chairman of the Area West Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2009/2010.

3. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 3)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mike Best and Andrew Turpin and County Councillors Cathy Bakewell and Jill Shortland.

4. Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 4)

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Public Question Time (Agenda item 5)

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

6. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman referred to the Members' Workshop, which was to be held on Thursday, 28th January 2010 at 6.00 p.m. to enable a forward strategy to be discussed in respect of grant applications from local community and voluntary organisations. She hoped that as many members as possible would be able to attend.

7. School Organisation Proposals - Chard, Crewkerne & Ilminster Area (Agenda Item 7)

The Chairman welcomed Judith Richardson, Head of Service and Rob Wilson, Area Review Manager from Schools and Achievement, Children and Young People Directorate of Somerset County Council.

The Head of Service summarised the agenda report and explained the background to the review of schools in the Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster area and the subsequent school organisation proposals, which affected particularly the Ilminster/Crewkerne area, and were considered by the County Council's Cabinet meeting on 9th December 2009. The details of those proposals were set out in the agenda report and members were asked to note and comment upon them.

During the ensuing discussion, the Head of Service and Area Review Manager responded to members' questions and comments. Points addressed included the following:-

- an explanation was given of the reasons why it was difficult to recruit headteachers, in rural areas, especially in respect of smaller schools, both across the County and in the South West generally. It was confirmed, however, that salaries were on a par with national salary standards;
- a member commented on the reference to falling roll numbers and, in response to a question, the Head of Service gave examples of action that was taken to address matters concerning the demographics in an area;
- information was given regarding the County Council's position in respect of the likelihood of funding being received from the Government's "Building Schools for the Future Programme";
- the Head of Service indicated that the site for any rebuilding of Greenfylde School was likely to be on County farmland. Any proposals would be subject to Central Government commitments relating to rebuilding schools;
- reference was made by a member to the possibility of another school being provided in Ilminster should a two tier system be adopted in the future. The Committee was informed that, as the figures stood at present, it was not viable for an 11-16 school to be located in Ilminster. In response to a question, it was indicated that it would be a challenge to provide a secondary school if pupil numbers were under 550;
- in response to a question, the Committee was informed that the County Council could not require a school to accept federation status but only influence and encourage them to do so. Governors were made aware of the benefits and pitfalls of federation and it was then for the schools to make the decision;
- an explanation was given of the terms hard and soft federation and of the practical affect they had on the management of schools. Information was given on the advantages of federation, which included maximising the use of resources and expertise of teachers including those with particular specialisms;
- a member referred to people becoming concerned about the potential for closure of village schools when reviews took place. The Head of Service indicated that the new administration at Somerset County Council had given assurances about rural schools and that any decisions taken about school provision were based on what was best for the education of the children;
- it was indicated that, although there were not many examples, there was nothing to stop schools entering federation status across local authority boundaries but governors would need to be aware that they were dealing with two local authorities;
- it was confirmed that when looking at school provision, the authority took account of planning permissions that had been granted for future housing developments and also of the details contained in the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- concern was expressed by a member about the perception of who was in charge in a situation where one headteacher covered more than one school. It was confirmed that every school would have a headteacher even though they may not be on one site at all times. Also, in such circumstances, a senior teacher would be appointed as appropriate and there would be no doubt as to who was in charge;
- reference was made to the workload of governors and members were informed that where schools operated within a federation, there was a larger area from which governors could be recruited. Reference was also made to a Bill going through

Parliament suggesting that a wider base should be looked at together with a move from a more insular position;

- information was given regarding the standards being achieved by the local schools in terms of meeting the needs of employers.

The Committee then noted the comments of Mr. I. Hawkins representing Shepton Beauchamp Parish Council. He referred to Shepton Beauchamp Primary School being soft federated with St. Mary and St. Peter's Primary Schools at Ilton and Barrington, which he felt worked reasonably well. He referred to the provision of education in villages being important, and hoped that the schools would be retained. The Head of Service commented that progressing to hard federation status for those schools would be advantageous so that headteachers were not accountable to more than one governing body. She also indicated that there was no suggestion that the schools would close.

Mrs. M. Excell, Mayor of Ilminster, then spoke on behalf of the Town Council. She explained the reasons why the Town Council's aspiration was for a two tier system in Ilminster with the provision of a secondary school for 11-16 year olds together with primary schools, which she indicated was supported by professionals in the area. She also spoke of the need for better premises for Greenfylde School and to a new build being essential. It was not felt that rebuilding on the current site was an option. The possibility of using Swanmead School as a primary within a two tier system was also suggested. The view was also expressed that much of the argument for retaining a three tier system was the lack of capital but it was felt that this should not be a reason to retain the status quo. Reference was also made to the poor infrastructure in Ilminster, for example the need for a swimming pool and sports hall etc. and to the benefits that a two tier school system would bring for the community.

The Head of Service indicated that she would feed those observations back to elected members. She also commented that if a two tier system was looked at those were the sorts of issues that would be considered.

The Chairman also referred to the premises at Greenfylde School not being suitable for young children. With reference to a two tier system she queried whether Wadham School in Crewkerne could cope with both the potential development of the key site as well as any extra pupils from Ilminster. She felt that a two tier system in Ilminster itself should be looked at for the future.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked the Head of Service and Area Review Manager - Schools and Achievement for attending the meeting and for noting and responding to members' questions and comments.

NOTED.

(Judith P. Richardson, Head of Service, Schools & Achievement, Children and Young People Directorate, SCC - 01823 355772)

(jprichardson1@somerset.gov.uk)

(Rob Wilson, Area Review Manager, Schools & Achievement, Children and Young People Directorate, SCC - 01823 355804)

(rawilson@somerset.gov.uk)

8. Promoting Community Safety in Area West (Agenda Item 8)

Reference was made to the agenda report and the Committee considered the following two items, which related to the active promotion of community safety in Area West.

(a) Area West Community Safety Panel Update

The Community Regeneration Officer summarised her report on the agenda updating members on the work of the Area West Community Safety Action Panel and in particular the forthcoming Youth in Your Community Workshop that was being organised by the Area West Youth Network Group. It was noted that the aim of the event, which was to take place on Wednesday, 3rd February at the Henhayes Centre, Crewkerne at 6.00 p.m., was to highlight how the District Council, the Police, the County Youth Service and Somerset Rural Youth could provide support to anyone organising activities for young people.

In response to a question about the event being held in Crewkerne, the Community Regeneration Officer commented that the workshop was an event, which anyone in Area West could attend. The Community Regeneration Officer also noted the suggestion of a member that the youth officer from Ilminster Rotary Club could be invited to attend the workshop.

In referring to the Local Action Groups, the Community Regeneration Officer reported that a Community Safety Day was being organised by the Chard Group at Holyrood School to be held on 30th July 2010 and by the Ilminster Group to be held on a date in May.

Members noted the report and agreed to pass on the information regarding the Youth in Your Community Workshop to any relevant people in their community.

NOTED.

(b) Police Performance and Neighbourhood Policing

The Committee welcomed Inspector Jackie Gold and Sgt. Andy Lloyd to the meeting who gave presentations informing members of local issues, including crime trends and initiatives.

Inspector Gold referred to the Policing Pledge, which described how the Police engaged with the community. She also informed members of the personnel within the local Neighbourhood Policing Team. Inspector Gold further outlined the PACT (Partners and Communities Together) priorities in Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster, which included speeding, anti-social behaviour, distraction burglaries and parking. Information was given on the British Crime Survey statistics with particular reference to Area West, which showed that generally crime was down. Reference was also made to work presently being concentrated on countering common assault and violent crime.

Sgt. Andy Lloyd then outlined the latest position with regard to current activities in the local policing area including Community Speed Watch, Community Justice Panel, a Scam Wise event held in Chard and Crewkerne, anti-social behaviour, Neighbourhood Watch and local crime trends.

The officers then responded to members' questions and comments during which a number of matters were mentioned including the following:-

- a member referred to the expedited review of a Premises Licence in Area West, which had resulted in the licence being suspended and the premises closed for a three month period together with new conditions being imposed on the existing licence. It was the first expedited review that had taken place in the district;
- reference was made to the Zero Project coming to Chard, which was good news for 14-18 year olds who were not well catered for in the community and would help engender responsibility;
- in response to comments from members, Inspector Gold agreed to provide members with a breakdown of the British Crime Survey statistics for each of the areas of Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster;
- reference was made to Community Speed Watch and, in response to a comment from a member regarding activity in Chard, Inspector Gold agreed to forward information on the groups that operated in Chard. The comments of another member who referred to a lack of activity in Misterton and Crewkerne were also noted;
- a question was raised with regard to the operation of the Radio Link Scheme and officers agreed to brief members after the meeting;
- reference was made to the "Police Posts" which enabled the public to attend a local venue and raise issues with a police officer. In response to a comment, Sgt. Lloyd reported that the venue in the Town Hall at Crewkerne was not as well attended as he would like and he was looking at alternatives including the Aqua Centre. He indicated that the intention was to enable access to as many people in the community as possible;
- concerns were expressed about the numbers of people who parked their vehicles on the roadside where parking restrictions were in place. Sgt. Lloyd commented that although parking issues were looked at it was not necessarily a priority and that he would let members have statistics for Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster. Members suggested that a period of concentrated enforcement activity be undertaken in an effort to reduce the amount of parking on yellow lines;
- a member referred to the perception of the public and expressed his view that visible policing was important. In response to a question, Inspector Gold indicated that cases involving repeat offenders were highlighted immediately;
- reference was made to there having been a number of incidents in Crewkerne involving car fires. It was recognised, however, that not all vehicle fires were a result of crime.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked the officers for their interesting report and for responding to members' questions and comments.

NOTED.

(Zoë Harris, Community Regeneration Officer - 01460 260423)
(zoe.harris@southsomerset.gov.uk)

9. The Neroche Project (Executive Decision) (Agenda item 9)

The Community Regeneration Officer summarised her report on the agenda, which provided information about the achievements of the Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme from 2006 to date and highlighted legacy projects for the next five years to 2015. She further indicated that the report had originally been intended to be submitted at an earlier meeting of the Committee and consequently some of the information regarding the projects and funding was out of date. The Neroche Project Manager from the Forestry Commission would, therefore, update members accordingly.

The Committee was asked to consider a request for a funding contribution of £3,000 per annum for five years, beginning in the next financial year, to assist the Neroche Landscape Partnership to build upon the beneficial work that had been carried out so far and to deliver further projects over the next five years.

The Neroche Project Manager then made a presentation during which he explained the area covered by the Neroche Scheme and the benefits it had brought to the South Somerset area. He also updated members on the proposed projects, together with the associated funding targets, that it was hoped to deliver during the next five years, details of which had been amended from those shown in the agenda report. He further updated members on the funding that was being sought from partners. It was noted that although funding had been confirmed from the Forestry Commission and Natural England, the remaining partners had yet to confirm their contributions. The Project Manager commented that a small percentage from the partner local authorities would enable other funding to come forward.

During the ensuing discussion, the Project Manager answered members' questions on points of detail regarding the various projects. Cllr. Ros Roderigo mentioned that she was the Council's representative on the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership and made comments in support of the initiative. The Committee indicated its support for the Neroche Scheme and for funding assistance to be given but, given the current economic position, members did not feel that funding could be committed on a five year basis as requested. A member expressed his view that perhaps a one-off amount could be awarded for a particular project and an amount of £6,000 was suggested. It was also felt that an award would help lever in funding from other sources. The Committee indicated its support for the award of £6,000 towards capital projects.

- RESOLVED:** (1) that a contribution of £6,000 be awarded from the unallocated Area Capital Programme to the Neroche Landscape Partnership towards the delivery of new capital projects;
- (2) that the Community Regeneration Officer submit a further report in 12 months' time to enable the Committee to review progress with the delivery of the projects concerned.

Reason: To determine a request for financial support submitted by the Neroche Landscape Partnership.

(10 in favour, 0 against).

(Zoë Harris, Community Regeneration Officer - 01460 260423)
(zoe.harris@southsomerset.gov.uk)

10. Affordable Housing Development Programme (Agenda item 10)

The Corporate Strategic Housing Manager summarised the agenda report, which updated members on the current position of the Affordable Housing Development Programme for 2008/11 in relation to Area West.

The Corporate Strategic Housing Manager further mentioned that this report dealt with schemes where funding had been secured. He indicated that there were a number of other projects that were being looked at for funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, which may or may not be successful.

Cllr. Ric Pallister, Portfolio Holder for Housing, referred to Appendix B of the agenda report, which showed the projected programme remaining in Area West for 2009/10 and 2010/11. He mentioned that there were no schemes in Crewkerne within the projected programme, which had arisen because there were no options available for land at present. If nothing transpired over the next 12 months to bring land forward, he questioned whether there would be a need to look at the Local Development Framework and urban exception sites.

A member commented that he welcomed the report. In referring to phases 2 and 3 of the Jocelyn Park scheme in Chard, however, he mentioned that he had dealt with a lot of casework as ward member and expressed his view that although the principle of the development was good there was a need to consider issues regarding the broader infrastructure and community in the area when carrying out similar schemes in the future.

In response to a question from a member, the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager explained the basis on which housing needs surveys were undertaken and indicated the reasons why they could not be promised in every settlement.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager for his report and the Committee was pleased to note the current position of the Affordable Housing Development Programme for 2008/11.

NOTED.

*(Colin McDonald, Corporate Strategic Housing Manager - 01935 462331)
(colin.mcdonald@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

11. Area West Committee - Forward Plan (Agenda item 11)

Reference was made to the agenda report, which informed members of the proposed Area West Committee Forward Plan.

RESOLVED: that the Area West Committee Forward Plan as attached to the agenda be noted.

(Resolution passed without dissent).

*(Andrew Gillespie, Area Development Manager (West) - 01460 260426)
(andrew.gillespie@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

12. Reports from Members on Outside Organisations (Agenda item 12)

No reports were made by members who represented the Council on outside organisations.

13. Feedback on Planning Applications Referred to the Regulation Committee (Agenda item 13)

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

NOTED.

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

14. Planning Appeals (Agenda item 14)

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

NOTED.

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

15. Date and Venue for Next Meeting (Agenda item 15)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held in the Guildhall, Fore Street, Chard on Wednesday, 17th February 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

NOTED.

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

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Chairman