

Area West Committee - 21st May 2014

8. Area West Development Work Programme 2014-15

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Purpose of the Report

To present an overview of projects in the Area West Development Service Work Programme for 2014-15.

Public Interest

Area West Development works to address local community priorities in Chard, Ilminster and Crewkerne and the surrounding villages. We also provide an advice and support service for members of the public from the Chard Area Office and Ilminster and Crewkerne Community Offices. The report provides outline information on some of the project work being supported in the financial year 2014-15.

Recommendation

To note and comment on the report, highlighting any areas of concern or interest for current or requested activity by the Area Development Team.

Background

The Area West Development Team supports the Area West Committee to work with communities to influence the services that are delivered in our area and to press for improvement wherever possible. Area Committees provide a key mechanism for Councillors to represent the views of their constituents and local organisations in local decisions.

The Area priorities, together with a range of powers and functions delegated to the Area Committee by SSDC form the Area West Portfolio, held by the Chairman of the Area West Committee.

This brief report on the work of the Area West Development team provides an overview of the projects in our 2014 - 2015 work programme and further progress reports will be made later in the year.

The way we work

The SSDC Area system remains well placed to promote and enhance “localism” as a way of working, especially when this involves bringing together community led planning and neighbourhood (spatial) planning and delivery to achieve better, more efficient outcomes.

We continue to work closely with Parish, Town and County Councils, with partnerships, organisations and individuals to help make our communities better, safer places to live in, to encourage business and trade, to help develop skills and to improve the health of their citizens.

Our approach is rooted in the distinctiveness of each town and village and the different people and organisations that make each place what it is.

Every project, programme or strategy is always in response to local priorities and needs. We take a 'place first' approach that is strongly connected to the aspirations, strengths, creativity, energy, needs and drive of local people.

From this, the roles and responsibilities of those involved can be adopted generally and adapted locally to better meet local needs and to seize opportunities.

Investing our time and effort to promote networking, relationships and joint working between service providers at a local level brings about good responses to local challenges and builds capacity in the community to do more of this over time.

What we work on

We support projects in towns and villages that lead to improvement in the health and wellbeing of those living and working in Area West.

This involves creating and managing projects directly or providing planning and development support through work with other SSDC specialist service teams and external partner organisations.

It is a mixed and wide ranging portfolio that reflects both established and emerging local priorities. It also supports the four key goals of the adopted Council Plan for 2012-15:

- a strong economy which has low unemployment and thriving businesses
- an attractive environment to live in with increased recycling and lower energy use
- decent housing for our residents that matches their income
- communities that are healthy, self-reliant, and have individuals who are willing to help each other

The Area Budget

The budgets available to support project development and grants in Area West are made up from the revenue budget which is set annually, the area (revenue) reserve and a capital reserve which are fixed sums that we can draw down as needed and do not have to be used within a single financial year.

Members are reminded that community grants of up to £1,000 may now be made under officers' delegated authority, with the agreement of ward members.

This year the revenue budget to support community grants is £26,240.

The sums available in the reserves will vary over time depending on the ambition of the Committee and the scope of projects being developed.

The ability to underwrite proposals by "putting some money on the table" continues to be of great benefit in unlocking complex development projects, even if ultimately some of the original funds are not needed and can be "de-allocated" and then used to support other work.

Examples of this include the development of local Markets and our “tapering” community grants scheme. Hence, the committee has previously agreed to the following commitments:

Area Reserve (as at 01.05.2014)

Committed but not vired yet	
Underwrite Community Grants	39,620
Markets (Nov. 2010 Committee)	13,500
Total	53,120

When both of these projects are complete, I anticipate that a sizeable proportion of this reserve will remain available for re allocation to underwrite other projects.

Capital Programme

The Area West Capital Programme is attached at Appendix 1. In 2013-14 the Area West Committee agreed to offer grant aid to 7 local projects to the value of £40,492. We were able to make 6 grants to the total value of £27,992. It is anticipated that the remaining grant offer towards the Forton Community Hall project will be taken up shortly. An additional £5,250 was spent on the Pig Lane improvement project. An unallocated balance of £74,239 remains in the capital reserve.

Taken together, these budgets give the Area Team significant capacity to develop work that local members support.

Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. However it should be noted that projects in the planning stage may not be fully funded. Ways in which funding can be secured are addressed as part of that planning process.

Council Plan Implications

The work and recommendations are in line with the Council Plan (2012-15). The service team considers the implications for the Council Plan when negotiating support for local projects, handling enquiries and assessing grants.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Equality and Diversity implications are now considered as part of project management. Our aim is to ensure that no-one is excluded from participating in or benefiting from any of the work we undertake on grounds of race, gender, disability, faith, age or sexual orientation.

Background Papers: *None*