

AW.12:13/14
DATE 16.04.14

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West Committee** held on **Wednesday 16th April 2014 at the Shrubbery Hotel, Ilminster.**

(5.30 p.m. – 7.23 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Cllr. Angie Singleton (in the Chair)

Mike Best	Nigel Mermagen (to 7.00pm)
Dave Bulmer	Sue Osborne
John Dyke (to 6.45pm)	Ric Pallister
Carol Goodall	Ros Roderigo
Brennie Halse	Andrew Turpin (to 7.00pm)
Jenny Kenton (to 5.45pm)	Linda Vijeh (to 6.30pm)
Paul Maxwell	

Officers:

Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Greg Venn	Conservation Officer
Andrew Gunn	Planning Area Lead West
Catherine Hansford	Welfare Benefits Team Leader
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
David Julian	Economic Development Manager
Angela Cox	Democratic Services Officer

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

Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED: that the following item be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under Paragraph 3: "Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)."

139. Historic Buildings at Risk (Agenda Item 1) (Confidential)

The Conservation Officer summarised the agenda report, which outlined the work of the Conservation Team in respect of historic buildings at risk and updated members on current cases in Area West. The Committee was asked to note and comment on the report.

The Conservation Officer, with the aid of photographs, then detailed a number of examples of case work relating specifically to historic buildings at risk in Area West.

The Conservation Officer responded to members' questions on points of detail regarding specific cases. At the conclusion of the debate, Members requested that the Conservation Officer provide a further update to Committee in six months time.

NOTED.

*(Greg Venn, Conservation Officer – 01935 462595)
(greg.venn@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

140. Minutes (Agenda Item 2)

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2014, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

141. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 3)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kim Turner and Martin Wale.

142. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 4)

There were no declarations of interest.

143. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 5)

No questions or comments were raised by members of the public.

144. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

There were no announcements from the Chairman.

145. Area West Committee - Forward Plan (Agenda Item 7)

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

Members were content to note the Forward Plan as attached to the agenda.

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

(Resolution passed without dissent)

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

146. **SSDC Welfare Benefit Work in South Somerset (Agenda Item 8)**

The Welfare Benefits Team Leader provided Members with a short power point presentation on the work of the team during 2012/13. She advised that:-

- across the whole of South Somerset, they had undertaken casework for 730 clients and had achieved an increased income for them in excess of £1,600,000.
- within Area West, they had dealt with 289 clients, generating £119,872 in lump sum payments and achieving an increased annual income of £689,531 on their behalf.
- the team had saved 12 tenancies which would have resulted in the loss of the tenancy but for the intervention of the Welfare Benefits Team. Based on the cost of dealing with a homeless application, the 12 saved tenancies equated to a saving of £32,640.
- they had maintained 50 tenancies by working with clients to help them to maintain their tenancy rather than allowing them to progress to the stage where tenancy would have been lost.
- they had assisted 105 clients to appeal their welfare benefit decision – over 3 times last years figure of 34 – and of those 75 were successful.
- they had assisted 54 cases at tribunal level and won 48 of them – a 89% success rate which was above the national average of 70%.
- they had been progressing partnership working with other agencies such as Yarlington Housing Group and South Somerset CAB amongst others

In response to questions from Members, the Welfare Benefits Team Leader advised that:-

- Because of its rural nature, Area North Committee provided additional funding for a Welfare Benefit Adviser to assist residents in that area for one day per week.
- The team were already preparing for the changes which Universal Credit would bring, particularly to vulnerable groups without access to the internet.
- Regular meetings were held with partnering organisations and they had drawn up a memorandum of understanding to prevent duplication of work between them. But the main aim was to signpost clients to the most appropriate agency to assist them.
- There was now a Vulnerable Customers Network to identify and progress benefit appeals quicker for these people.
- There had been an increase in the number of people needing help from the local food bank in Yeovil and people in temporary accommodation often did not have access to cooking equipment so food parcels had to be tailored accordingly.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked the Welfare Benefits Team Leader for attending to present her informative report.

NOTED.

(Catherine Hansford, Welfare Benefits Team Leader – 01935 462737)

(Catherine.hansford@southsomerset.gov.uk)

147. **Update on Chard Regeneration Scheme (CRS) (Agenda Item 9)**

The Economic Development Manager provided Members with a short powerpoint presentation on the proposed redevelopment of the former ACI factory site and Boden Mill in Chard. He advised that the Council had now exchanged the development

agreement with the developer, Henry Boot Ltd and a press release would be issued shortly. The redevelopment proposal included a food retail unit, 4 shops, public open space, housing and undercroft parking. In the Conditional Development Agreement, the developer must now secure a food store operator and gain planning permission for the site. Once this had been done the Agreement became unconditional and the project would move to the construction stage.

The Assistant Director (Economy) advised that the Economic Development Manager and the Legal Services team had worked very hard to achieve an excellent scheme and the site was now very marketable in its town centre position.

In response to questions from Members the Economic Development Manager and the Assistant Director (Economy) advised that:-

- The retail foodstore would be approximately 45,000sq ft. and due to its town centre location there should be fewer restrictions on the type of goods sold.
- SSDC's contribution to the scheme were the two existing public car parks at the site and a proportion of the receipt of the sale reflecting the value of the two car parks would be returned to SSDC.
- The developer would operate the undercroft car park but would enter into a car park agreement with SSDC. Also, the car park would not be exclusively for users of the retail foodstore.
- It was unlikely that there would be sufficient space for the Chard Museum to relocate to the ground floor community space of the Boden Mill.
- Section 106 funding would be required for highway improvements but as SSDC were part of the development the negotiations would be finely balanced.

During discussion Members expressed their pleasure that the scheme was progressing and commented that the design of the scheme was key in the town centre location.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman asked that a letter of thanks be sent to the Principal Solicitor who concluded the legal agreement prior to his retirement.

NOTED.

*(David Julian, Economic Development Manager – 01935 462279)
(david.julian@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

148. Feedback on Planning Applications Referred to the Regulation Committee (Agenda Item 10)

There were no planning applications referred to the Regulation Committee.

149. Planning Appeals (Agenda Item 11)

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

NOTED.

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

150. Date and Venue for Next Meeting (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 21st May 2014 at 5.30pm at The Guildhall, Chard.

NOTED.

*(Jo Morris, Democratic Services Officer – 01935 462055)
(jo.morris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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Chairman