

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West Committee** held as a **Virtual Meeting - using Zoom meeting software on Wednesday 18 November 2020.**

(5.30 - 7.10 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Jason Baker (Chairman)

Mike Best	Tricia O'Brien
Dave Bulmer	Sue Osborne
Martin Carnell	Robin Pailthorpe
Brian Hamilton	Oliver Patrick
Val Keitch	Garry Shortland
Jenny Kenton	Linda Vjeh (until 6.15pm)
Paul Maxwell	Martin Wale



Officers:

Jo Morris	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Angela Cox	Specialist (Democratic Services)
Martin Woods	Director (Place)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Commissioning)
Debbie Haines	Locality Team Leader
Adrian Moore	Locality Officer
Nathan Turnbull	Locality Officer
Anna Matthews	Chard High Street HAZ Project Manager
Kirsty Larkins	Director (Strategy and Commissioning)
Nicola Doble	Specialist - Economy
Natalie Fortt	Regeneration Programme Manager

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

339. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 16th September 2020 (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th September 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

340. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

There were no apologies for absence.

341. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Cllr. Oliver Patrick declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Community Grant to Ilchester Hall, Chiselborough, as the Ward member.

Cllr. Linda Vjeh declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 – Community Grant to Horton Parish Council Playing Field Project, as the Ward member.

342. Date and Venue for Next Meeting (Agenda Item 4)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Area West Committee would be held on Wednesday 9th December 2020 and would be a virtual meeting using zoom on-line meeting software.

343. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public.

344. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman referred to the Chard Regeneration Scheme and informed members that work on the swimming pool was proceeding at great pace and the new pool had been constructed and was in the process of being tested.

345. County Highway Report to Area West Committee (Agenda Item 7)

The Assistant Highway Manager presented the report which informed members of the various highway maintenance operations that have been undertaken and completed by the Highway Authority in the last 6 months and the future maintenance operations that are programmed for delivery.

During the ensuing discussion, the Assistant Highway Service Manager responded to questions regarding issues within Area West which included the following:

- Overhanging trees in Dowlish Wake.
- Vegetation growing onto the footway along both sides of the Convant Link Road, between the mini roundabout at Millfield and the main traffic lights in Chard.
- Blocked gullies in Chard along the A358 northbound from Church Street down to the Convent Link Road.
- Lack of winter salt and gritting along roads in Ilminster and problems with accessing the A358 in snowy and icy conditions.
- Recent accident on the A356 in relation to high kerbs.
- Query in relation to Broadway, Merriott being included in the winter maintenance programme.
- Issues raised by local residents in relation to works currently being undertaken in Merriott.
- Completion date for repairs to the bridge at Misterton.
- Issues with roadworks at Lang Road, Crewkerne.

- Road lines on the roundabout at junction of A356 and A30 requires remarking. Maybe a need for more frequent remarking due to the type of paint being used.
- Concerns raised by residents over HGVs going through North Perrott and the implementation of a 20mph voluntary speed limit.
- Issues with diversion signs in Crewkerne.

The Chairman and members thanked the Assistant Highway Service Manager for his report and for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

346. Community Grant to Ilchester Hall, Chiselborough (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 8)

The Locality Officer presented the report and advised that Ilchester Hall, were requesting funding towards the cost of an extension to create storage space and that an application for planning permission was approved in September 2020. The hall in Chiselborough was one of the main hubs in the village and was used all year round for various events. Currently there was various pieces of equipment kept in different places around the hall and comments had been received in relation to health and safety issues over the storage of the equipment. The hall were hoping to have a storage facility to enable functions to go ahead safely and to prevent loss of income.

The Locality Officer concluded that the cost of the project was £39,426 and the hall had secured £27,924 of funding and were requesting a grant of £12,500.

During the discussion, a member queried the figures outlined under the funding plan on page 11 of the report. In response the Locality Officer mentioned a possible error to the village benefactor figure.

At the conclusion of the debate, members indicated that they were content to approve a grant up to £12,500 subject to further clarification over the calculation in the report which could reduce the grant figure. A vote was taken and members unanimously approved the application.

RESOLVED: That a grant of up to £12,500 (in view of the calculation in the report) be awarded to Ilchester Hall, Chiselborough to be allocated from the Area West capital programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (Appendix A)

Reason: To consider awarding a grant towards the cost of an extension to create storage space at Ilchester Hall, Chiselborough.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

347. Community Grant to Horton Parish Council Playing Field Project (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 9)

The Locality Officer introduced the report. He advised that the project included the purchase of play equipment, safety surfacing, multi-use sports wall, paths and

landscaping. Members noted that a representative from the Parish Council was present at the meeting to answer members' questions.

The representative from the Parish Council advised members that Horton had approximately 850 villagers and had seen a number of infill developments and another large development was also currently being discussed which would increase pressure on the nearby town. He mentioned that the playing field had tired and uninspiring facilities and that the project had involved all of the residents in the village to achieve something that would encourage people to use the facilities. This was especially important in the current times as well as there being no public transport available in the village.

In response to a comment regarding the funding plan, it was confirmed that a funding bid had been submitted to Clarks Foundation but they were not willing to commit funding until the project was at the point of being delivered. If Clarks Foundation were not willing to commit funding a plan was in place to cover the shortfall.

During consideration of the item, a number of members expressed their support for the project. Comment was expressed in relation to the amount of hard work and fundraising that had been undertaken which was considered to be an exemplar model for other communities wishing to take forward similar projects.

At the conclusion of the debate, members unanimously supported the recommendation outlined in the report and wished Horton Parish Council every success with the project.

RESOLVED: That a grant of £12,500 be awarded to Horton Parish Council for The Horton Playing Field Project, the grant to be allocated from the Area West Community Grants Programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (Appendix A)

Reason: To consider awarding a grant towards the purchase of play equipment, safety surfacing, multi-use sports wall, paths and landscaping to Horton Parish Council for the Horton Playing Field Trust.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

348. Chard Regeneration Scheme - Gateway Scheme (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 10)

The Chard High Street Heritage Action Zone Project Manager presented the report. She explained that there was an opportunity for the Gateway Scheme to progress alongside the public realm works taking place as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone project. She referred to the gateway being a long term aspiration for the area to be improved and was a priority scheme identified in the Council's Public Realm Strategy for Chard.

Since the report considered by the Area West Committee in January 2019, the designs for the eastern gateway had been developed in line with the Council Public Realm Strategy to create an entrance to the town and a safer crossing over Silver Street. The previous report outlined a rough estimate project cost and the design process which had been developed over the last couple of years had looked at the real costs for implementing the scheme.

During the discussion on the item, comments made by members included the following:

- The project had been a long term aspiration and dovetailed with the other work taking place in the High Street;
- This was a good opportunity and was a properly funded and thought-out project;
- Concerns over the increase in costs;
- Concerns over the amount of money being taken from the Area West Capital Budget which may leave a shortfall in funding for other projects which may come forward in the future;
- Queried whether some of the funding from MTIG could be used to contribute towards the cost of the project;
- Query over the possibility of the pedestrian crossing coming under the Small Improvement Scheme which had been reinstated by Somerset County Council;
- Grave reservations over the Council spending a substantial amount of money on a project when there were a large number of people in the area who were about to become or were already in a position of unemployment.
- There were high levels of poverty in Chard and concerns were expressed over the reputational risk to the Council;
- The scheme was an important part of the bigger picture for Chard;
- If changes were not made to the town centre, it was less likely to attract visitors which could result in a downward spiral.
- That there was a need to smarten up the area and a desire to improve the visual impact but it was not the right time to take the scheme forward.

In response to questions, the Chard High Street Heritage Action Zone Project Manager, Locality Team Leader and the Director of Place informed members of the following:

- In order to improve the safety of the crossing over Silver Street, the design also took into account the other side of the road which contributed to an increase in costs;
- The detailed design phase looked at the real costs of the materials and the cost of works etc. which was unknown when the previous report was considered;
- The cost of materials had increased due to stop start demand associated with covid-19;
- The figure included 10% contingency which had been incorporated as a buffer;
- If the scheme were to be approved, there would be £63,802 remaining in the Area West Capital Budget;
- An additional top up bid of £25,000 to the Area West capital budget in April would be considered by District Executive through the annual capital budget round;
- The Locality Team had sought grant funding but no funds had been identified that were relevant for this type of scheme.

At the conclusion of the debate, it was proposed and seconded to approve the recommendations outlined in the report. A vote was taken and there were 9 votes in favour, 4 against and 1 abstention.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That members noted the content of the report, including progress made towards delivering the scheme and changes in project management.
 2. That members agreed to increase the commitment from the area capital reserve to £51,880 in order to progress to implementation of the scheme, alongside the Town Council's commitment.

3. That members agreed to delegate final design development for the scheme to the project team leading Chard's public realm projects with the final sign-off by Chard Regeneration Board.

Reason: To note progress on the Chard Gateway Regeneration Scheme and to agree the next steps and resources to progress implementation of the scheme.

(Voting: 9 in favour, 4 against, 1 abstention)

349. Market Towns Investment Group (Agenda Item 11)

The Specialist – Economy presented the report and explained that expressions of interest had been received for a wide variety of projects. She updated that since the report was published an expression of interest had been received from Ilminster for some town signs and the total allocated figure was more likely to be in the region of £240,000. The final applications were required to be submitted by 31st January 2021 and therefore there could be some changes to the projects outlined in the report.

The Specialist – Economy responded to members' questions on points of detail and informed members that the Market Towns Investment Group regularly met throughout the year.

The Chairman thanked the Specialist – Economy for her report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

350. Reports from Members on Outside Organisations (Agenda Item 12)

Ilminster Forum

Councillor Val Keitch advised that there was no update from Ilminster Forum as there was still a query over whether a representative from the Council was required.

Meeting House Arts Centre, Ilminster

Councillor Val Keitch explained that during the first lockdown, the Arts Centre had closed and reopened again on 1st September after 6 months of closure due to the covid pandemic. The Arts Centre was missed not only as a meeting and cultural centre but also as a key land mark in the town and as a place people attended to learn new skills and refresh old ones in the workshops, to buy locally made goods in the gift shop and enjoy locally sourced food in the café.

The venue was made safe within the covid guidelines to protect visitors, volunteers and staff. However, along with rest of the arts world they remained fearful for the future. The concerts which were the main source of revenue to the Ilminster Arts Centre were not able to run. Prior to covid, the Arts Centre had been able to generate significant funds from a wide range of genres but social distance considerations and nervousness by artists, musicians and audiences dictated that they could not offer a programme for the foreseeable future and this has had a major effect on cash resources.

As a well-run and proven charity they looked forward during the early weeks of the pandemic and took immediate action to reduce costs whilst cash balances remained. They have looked at all their overheads and outgoings and reduced these where possible and were fortunate that their rent had been reduced through the support of the landlord. As reserves have fallen they were looking at approaching other sources of funding. There were challenging and unknown times ahead.

Following her report, Councillor Val Keitch responded to members' comments and questions.

351. Area West Committee Forward Plan (Agenda Item 13)

The following updates were made to the Forward Plan:

- An update on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel would be given by Councillor Martin Wale at the January meeting.
- A community grant to North Perrott Cricket Club to be added to the Forward Plan for December.

RESOLVED: That the Area West Committee Forward Plan be noted.

352. Planning Appeals (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted the report which gave details of appeals that had been received, allowed and dismissed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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Chairman