



District Executive (Informal)

Thursday 6th January 2022

9.30 am

**Virtual Meeting
using Zoom meeting software**

The following members are requested to attend the meeting:

Jason Baker
Mike Best
John Clark
Adam Dance
Sarah Dyke

Peter Gubbins
Henry Hobhouse
Val Keitch
Tony Lock
Peter Seib

Any members of the public wishing to address the meeting at Public Question Time need to email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk by 9.00am on Wednesday 5 January 2022

The meeting will be viewable online at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA

For further information on the items to be discussed, please contact democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk

This Agenda was issued on Wednesday 22 December 2021

Jane Portman,
Chief Executive

**This information is also available on our website
www.southsomerset.gov.uk and via the Modern.gov app**

Information for the Public

In light of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), District Executive Committee will meet virtually via video-conferencing to consider reports. As of 7 May 2021 some interim arrangements are in place for committee meetings.

At the meeting of Full Council on 15 April 2021 it was agreed to make the following changes to the Council's Constitution:

- a) To continue to enable members to hold remote, virtual meetings using available technology;
- b) To amend Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Council's Constitution to allow those remote meetings to function as consultative bodies and delegate decisions, including Executive and Quasi-Judicial decisions, that would have been taken by those meetings if the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 had continued in force to the Chief Executive (or the relevant Director in the Chief Executive's absence) in consultation with those meetings and those members to whom the decision would otherwise have been delegated under Part 3 of the Constitution;
- c) The delegated authority given under (b) will expire on 31 July 2021 unless continued by a future decision of this Council;

For full details and to view the report please see -

<https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=2981&Ver=4>

Further to the above, at the meeting of Full Council on 8 July 2021, it was agreed to extend the arrangements for a further 6 months to 8 January 2022, and at the Council meeting of 16 December 2021, a further extension to 8 July 2022 was agreed.

For full details and to view the reports please see -

<https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=3033&Ver=4>
[Agenda for South Somerset District Council on Thursday 16th December 2021, 6.30 pm](#)

District Executive

Meetings of the District Executive are usually held monthly, at 9.30am, on the first Thursday of the month (unless advised otherwise).

The District Executive co-ordinates the policy objectives of the Council and gives the Area Committees strategic direction. It carries out all of the local authority's functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the Council. It delegates some of its responsibilities to Area Committees, officers and individual portfolio holders within limits set by the Council's Constitution. When major decisions are to be discussed or made, these are published in the Executive Forward Plan in so far as they can be anticipated.

The Executive Forward Plan and copies of executive reports and decisions are published on the Council's web site: <http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

Agendas and minutes can also be viewed via the modern.gov app (free) available for iPads and Android devices. Search for 'modern.gov' in the app store for your device, install, and select 'South Somerset' from the list of publishers, then select the committees of interest. A wi-fi signal will be required for a very short time to download an agenda but once downloaded, documents will be viewable offline.

Public participation at meetings (held via Zoom)

Public question time

We recognise that these are challenging times but we still value the public's contribution to our virtual meetings. If you would like to participate and contribute in the meeting, please join on-line through Zoom at: <https://zoom.us/join> You will need an internet connection to do this.

Please email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk for the details to join the meeting.

If you would like to view the meeting without participating, please see: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA

The period allowed for participation in Public Question Time shall not exceed 15 minutes except with the consent of the Chairman and members of the Committee. Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.

If you would like to address the meeting at Public Question Time, please email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk by 9.00am on Wednesday 5 January 2022. When you have registered, the Chairman will invite you to speak at the appropriate time during the virtual meeting.

Virtual meeting etiquette:

- Consider joining the meeting early to ensure your technology is working correctly.
- Please note that we will mute all public attendees to minimise background noise. If you have registered to speak during the virtual meeting, the Chairman will un-mute your microphone at the appropriate time.
- Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.
- When speaking, keep your points clear and concise.
- Please speak clearly – the Councillors are interested in your comments.

District Executive (Informal)

Thursday 6 January 2022

Agenda

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 02 December 2021.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (as amended 26 February 2015), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting.

Members are reminded that they need to declare the fact that they are also a member of a County, Town or Parish Council as a Personal Interest. Where you are also a member of Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council within South Somerset you must declare a prejudicial interest in any business on the agenda where there is a financial benefit or gain or advantage to Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council which would be at the cost or to the financial disadvantage of South Somerset District Council.

4. Public Question Time

5. Chairman's Announcements

Items for Discussion

6. **District-wide strategic grants - funding arrangements with Citizens Advice South Somerset and Spark Somerset 2022/2023** (Pages 5 - 64)
7. **Project Closure Report - Chard Leisure Centre** (Pages 65 - 69)
8. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23** (Pages 70 - 75)
9. **District Executive Forward Plan** (Pages 76 - 82)
10. **Date of Next Meeting** (Page 83)
11. **Exclusion of Press and Public** (Page 84)
12. **Briefing on Local Government Reorganisation (Confidential)** (Page 85)

District-wide strategic grants – funding arrangements with Citizens Advice South Somerset and Spark Somerset 2022/2023

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Mike Best - Health and Wellbeing Portfolio
Director:	Jan Gamon, Director – Place and Recovery Peter Paddon, Acting Director – Place and Recovery
Service Manager:	Peter Paddon, Lead Specialist – Economy
Lead Officer:	David Crisfield, Specialist – Strategic Planning
Contact Details:	peter.paddon@southsomerset.gov.uk (01935 462060) david.crisfield@southsomerset.gov.uk (01935 462240)

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks the approval of District Executive on the funding of our two strategic voluntary sector partners, Citizens Advice South Somerset (CASS) and Spark Somerset (hereinafter referred to as Spark) for the year 2022 to 2023

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of January 2022.

Public Interest

3. SSDC supports a range of voluntary and community sector groups, organisations and projects via its one-off community grants programme, administered by the Area Committees. It also supports, through regular funding, a small number of strategic district-wide organisations approved by District Executive. This financial investment in the sector not only provides direct support to groups working in the local community but also assists the council in the delivery of the council plan.

Recommendations

4. That District Executive -
 - a) Agrees a one-year core funding agreement for the period April 2022 to March 2023, for Citizens Advice South Somerset and Spark Somerset.

Background

5. South Somerset District Council has maintained a long-term service delivery and funding relationship with the above two organisations over many years.



South Somerset District Council

The organisations are considered strategic voluntary sector partners for the District Council delivering services across the whole district that support some of the most vulnerable residents and contribute to a resilient and thriving voluntary and community sector.

In January 2021 District Executive agreed that one year agreements be awarded for the period 2021/2022 and that future funding will be subject to the outcome of a wider piece of commissioning activity in the case of VCS Infrastructure (Spark) and the outcome of a county-wide programme of Citizen Advice service transformation work in the case of CASS.

Covid19 had a huge impact on the 'Business as Usual' of both organisations. How they responded and the crucial work they undertook with our communities throughout 2020 and 2021 has been universally recognised and commended across the public sector in Somerset. Their COVID 19 achievements were conveyed to DX members as part of the report presented in March 2021. In addition, members received presentations from the CASS and Spark CEO's.

Because of Covid19 the current operating environment remains very demanding and the future extremely challenging.

The transition to one council for Somerset has created an additional set of challenges and pressures for the two organisations which has led to a degree of uncertainty about their long term futures.

Funding of both organisations has been subject to District Executive approval with performance also reported to District Executive.

6. CASS

- i. CASS is an independent charity and part of the Citizens Advice network across England and Wales. They work in partnership with other agencies and groups.
- ii. CASS is the major provider of free, confidential, independent and impartial advice in the South Somerset area. Advice services are quality assured under the national Citizens Advice Membership Scheme
 - In addition, the organisation aims to improve policies and practices that affect people's lives.
 - CASS has been serving the community of South Somerset since 1961.



South Somerset District Council

- iii. CASS provides free, confidential, advice to help people resolve their problems and also campaign to raise awareness about the big issues that affect people's lives.
- iv. They provide advice on a wide range of issues including benefits, debt, employment, consumer, housing and family relationships. Their goal is to help everyone find a way forward no matter what problem they face.
- v. It was agreed by District Executive Committee in March 2021 that CASS would be funded, with an additional one off payment to support Covid recovery work, for a further 12 months (April 2021 to March 2022).

7. Spark Somerset

- i. Set up in 1981, Spark Somerset is part of a national network of what were once known as Councils for Voluntary Service (now commonly called Voluntary & Community Action). These are civil society development organisations, whose main purpose is to support the work of other organisations in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS); particularly smaller and volunteer run community groups.

Its role includes:

- Helping new initiatives to develop and new organisations to form
 - Providing advice and information on all aspects of running and managing the organisations they work with, including effective governance, recruiting volunteers and accessing sustainable funding or generating income.
 - A leadership role within the sector, encouraging organisations to work together in collaboration and partnership.
 - Representing the views of its members to statutory bodies and others.
- ii. With closure of the voluntary sector support provided by Engage in 2020, Spark Somerset became the single countywide VCS infrastructure organisation, funded by all Somerset's councils, whose principal purpose is to support the wider voluntary and community sector.
 - iii. It was agreed by District Executive Committee in March 2021 that Spark Somerset would be funded, with a small inflationary uplift, for a further 12 months (April 2021 to March 2022) and that a Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Service would be newly commissioned with effect from 1st April 2022.

8. Performance 2021/22

- i. The most up to date performance data comes from the most recent contract monitoring reports covering the period April to September 2021. In the case of Spark, as a county-



South Somerset District Council

wide organisation many of their services are offered on a county-wide basis and as we now do joint monitoring across all 5 councils, much of the data produced is county-wide. However where we have specific South Somerset data this has been included in the summary below.

a. CASS

- Client Data
 - **3,841** clients
 - **8,240** client issues generating **7,980** activities on their behalf
 - **3,864** cases
- Top 5 wards where most number of clients helped
 - Chard (Avishayes, Combe, Crimchard, Holyrood, Jocelyn) – **322** clients
 - Yeovil College – **232** clients
 - Yeovil Lyde – **210** clients
 - Yeovil Westland – **190** clients
 - Yeovil Summerlands – **182** clients
- Age Groups with over 10% of the total number of clients
 - 25-29 years
 - 30-34 years
 - 50-54 years
 - 55-59 years
- Urban/Rural Split
 - **46%** of clients urban
 - **54%** of clients rural
- Most prevalent issues
 - Benefits and Tax Credits – **1,048** clients with **1,983** issues
 - Housing – **602** clients with **1,062** issues
 - Relationships and family– **463** Clients with **760** issues
 - Universal Credit – **446** clients with **749** issues
 - Employment – **412** clients with **751** issues
 - Debt - **409** clients with **787** issues
- Top Debt Issue – Council Tax Arrears
- Top Benefit Issue – Personal Independence Payment
- Financial Outcomes for Clients
 - **£38,448** of debts written off
 - **£74,595** of income gained for clients

b. Spark

- Support and Guidance for VCS Groups
 - One to one advice and support to **95** South Somerset groups
 - Issues covered by support and guidance
 - Governance/set up/business planning
 - Funding advice & support
 - Covid-19
 - Volunteering
 - Connections/partnerships
 - Community events & activities
 - Legal issues
- Online Training Courses attended by **20** South Somerset groups – subjects covered
 - Volunteer Management
 - Trustee training
 - Child Protection
 - Mental Health Awareness
 - Trustee Training
 - GDPR
 - Emergency First Aid at Work
- **9** South Somerset groups received bespoke One-to One funding support.
- Volunteering
 - **77** new south Somerset volunteers recruited via Spark a Change platform
 - **8** new South Somerset organisations registered on Spark a Change
 - **67** new south Somerset volunteering opportunities placed on Spark a Change
 - **7** South Somerset residents given in depth volunteering support
 - **15** south Somerset organisations supported with Volunteering enquiries
- Supporting community groups to support unpaid carers.
 - Spark Somerset holds a sub-contract from the Community Council for Somerset to deliver part of the Somerset Carers Service –

supporting volunteer led support groups across Somerset. Of the 24 (pre-Covid, current and potential groups) being supported, **13** are in South Somerset - Langport, Martock, Somerton, Keinton Mandeville, Chard, Ilminster, Wincanton, Castle Cary, Bruton, Crewkerne, South Petherton and Yeovil.



- South Somerset Wellbeing Directory
 - An online directory that provides useful information about community-based social prescribing activities. The website had **4213** users and **10,905** page views. The top 3 pages were: Directory, Older People and Mental health.

- South Somerset Outcomes – testimonies
 - Yeovil Men’s Shed: Spark supported following their reopening with the new committee. Supplied them with a Safeguarding Policy pro forma, involved them with dementia project, reconnected them with Westfield Community Garden and attended ‘Meet the Funder’. *“Thank you for all the help you are giving us.”*

 - Well Be Hub, a new CIC delivering Mental Health Training: This new community interest company wanted to make connections in the area and offer free spaces on courses to volunteers in community groups in the area. Spark linked them with the Chard based Active Learning and Skills.

 - Helped St Michael’s Yeovil get a grant of £1,500 to start a simple garden planting project at Birchfield Rec. *“I received an email today offering me the complete £1500. That was the best news of this week... I am very grateful for your help in finding this funder! It would not have happened without your help.”*

 - Worked with an attendee of Chard Connect who had left her full-time job pre-pandemic due to mental health issues and had gone on to undertake some peer support work with Chard Watch. She became heavily involved with the COVID 19 support group and during COVID went gone on to set up a ‘meals on wheels’ delivery type service based out of south Chard Church. This small business became an invaluable service for some of the more vulnerable and elderly members of the community in Chard. Spark supported in identifying funding opportunities and helped her to write a successful bid for the Open Mental Health Grants. The money has enabled this vital community service to continue and support people with moderate or severe mental health issues, isolation and other vulnerabilities.

- South Somerset groups also benefit from the services that are delivered on a county-wide basis. So for example, South Somerset groups will be amongst the beneficiaries of the **308** DBS applications that were processed and amongst the **430** delegates attending the **36** thematic Fora.

- ii. The Spark 6 month monitoring report and CASS 6-month Dashboard have been attached as Appendices to this report (Appendices 1 and 2)
- iii. In addition to the monitoring report Spark have published an Impact Study, '**Reflecting on a year like no other - 2020/21 Impact Report**'. A copy of this report can be found at Appendix 3.

9. Impact of Covid19 and Local Government Re-organisation

- i. Both CASS and Spark continue to deal with the impacts of Covid19 and conduct activities that support the recovery of our residents, volunteers and voluntary and community sector organisations. For example, in the period April to September 2021 CASS saw its client numbers increase **31%** over the same period in the previous year; a direct consequence of the effects of Covid on employment, income, debt and poverty. Spark, whilst seeing much traditional volunteering being curtailed, has successfully stood up the necessary infrastructure to provide vital support for the network of 100+ newly established Covid support groups.
- ii. Coming fast on the heels of Covid19, the announcements regarding the creation of a single council to serve Somerset have presented further challenges and generated a new set of concerns for CASS and Spark.
- iii. The principal concerns relate to the status of their funding, their ongoing sustainability and security, and ultimately to their very existence.

9.1 Spark

- i. In the run up to the final announcement on One Somerset, the District Councils had already been working collaboratively with the County Council regarding better joined up working with Spark including arrangements for joint contract monitoring and discussions on creating coterminous funding arrangements. Once the decision on One Somerset was made, this effectively created a lack of confidence as to whether this could be achieved.
- ii. In 2021 Spark commissioned a research study titled 'Reflect, Recover, Renew - Working together to create a roadmap to recovery for the Somerset VCSE'. The research has the following 3 objectives
 - 1) **Reflect** on how the pandemic impacted VCSE groups in Somerset, and the people/communities they support.
 - 2) Understand the **recovery** needs of VCSE groups in Somerset, and the people/communities they support.

- 3) Identify what the VCSE sector in Somerset needs to **renew** and thrive as it emerges from the pandemic and faces uncertainties such a Local Government Reorganisation.
- iii. The research comprised a survey, focus groups, interviews, 2 visioning sessions and involved over 300 participants and 185 groups.
- iv. Whilst the full report is not due to be published until January 2022 the initial findings highlight 7 key issues that require action in order to aid recovery
 - Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing
 - Support for Young People
 - Care and Carers
 - Supporting physical health
 - Poverty, Benefits and Housing
 - Transport
 - Climate Change and conserving nature

And the following 5 requirements to achieve renewal

- A vision for a better Coordinated VCSE
- A vision for a properly funded VCSE
- A vision for a collaborative VCSE
- A vision for a VCSE that is community-led
- A vision for a VCSE that has the recognition it deserves

9.2 CASS

- i. Similarly, the District Councils and County Council have been working collaboratively with the five Somerset Local Citizens Advice (LCA's) on the transformation Programme which was sponsored by the joint Somerset Councils' CEO's and initiated at the end of 2018; progress on which was reported to members as part of the District Executive report in March 2021.
- ii. With the work close to its completion, the outcome is that we now have an agreed single Somerset Core Advice Offer that provides consistency in terms of the services that will be provided under the core funding given by each of the District Councils to their respective LCA. This means that each District Council SLA will be identical in terms of the description of the services provided. The LCA's themselves have signed up to a Memorandum of Agreement on how they will work together and a unified set of monitoring date are in the process of being agreed, in line with the Somerset Core Advice Offer, allowing for joint monitoring to take place.

9.3 Proposed Funding Arrangements 2022 to 2023

- i. The decision to create a single council for Somerset has had a fundamentally adverse impact on the original plans to recommission VCS infrastructure services as agreed at District Executive in March 2021 and has required a different approach to be adopted. With the creation of a single council for Somerset, independently commissioning VCS Infrastructure for South Somerset (the service currently provided by Spark) ceases to be a viable or rational proposition given that in the very near future the new council will itself be clearly be looking at commissioning single countywide services. Current arrangements are such that all the Districts, County Council and CCG are core-funding Spark. Of the Districts, two (Mendip and Sedgemoor) already have funding agreements in place up to March 2024. With the move to a single council now only 14 months away, for South Somerset to commission unilaterally something potentially different for the 12 months to 31st March 2023, would be seriously destabilising to Spark at a time when security of funding is critical.
- ii. At the time of writing this report, the approach taken by the One Somerset Programme Board has involved tasking the finance work stream with collating data on the total amount of grant provided to regularly-funded voluntary organisations across all five councils. This is for the purpose of considering a commitment to honour this funding for the first year of the new council (2023/24) in order to provide security and stability for key VCSE partners.
- iii. Once this data collection exercise is complete the One Somerset Joint Committee will consider a report on VCSE funding for the first year of the Unitary (2023/24) at its first meeting in the New Year in order to build in future financial support to the VCSE sector into the Somerset Council 2023/24 budget proposals.

Constitutional implications

Grants to Outside Bodies are covered by SSSC's Financial Regulations (15.3).

Financial Risks

CASS

The CASS draft budget for 2022/23 is

- Forecast income: £614,072
- Forecast expenditure: £719,789
- Deficit: £106,000

Please note: £106,000 of reserve funds are to be designated to provide a debt casework service. This is a strategic investment that will ensure that we maintain specialist debt



South Somerset District Council

services and provide the time needed to secure alternative funding to replace the MaPS contract. (see below)

Due to a national re-commissioning of Debt Services (Money and Pensions Service - MaPS) and of Universal Credit Help To Claim, CASS forecast a £191,000 drop in income for provision of specialist help during 2022/23. The tender specifications differ significantly from the current contract (moved from a focus on local delivery and face to face to national or sub regional delivery with little or no face-to-face provision). The service specifications (volume targets and payment in arrears on result) represent a substantial cash risk to the organisation that could undermine the stability of all our work. For these reasons, the Trustees have opted not to participate in either contract.

SPARK

Spark Trustees are in the process of finalising their 2022/23 Budget. However, it is likely that as a minimum, if Somerset West and Taunton and SSDC do not fund in 2022/23, there will be as a minimum a deficit of circa £100,500 (Mendip and Sedgemoor agreed funding to 2024 last year).

Management of the deficit is most likely to be by the withdrawal of services from Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset and redundancies.

If this position is clearer by the time of the meeting Spark's CEO will be able to update members verbally.

Financial Implications

The recommendation to Members is to approve a one-year agreements with CASS and Spark, with the second year costs (2023/24) being met by the new Somerset Council. The

costs, including a 2% inflationary uplift, can be met from the proposed 2022/23 VCSE grants budget.

CASS

- CASS's core funding of **£121,730** for 2022/23 will be subject to a 2% inflationary increase

Spark

- SPARK's core funding of **£77,020 per annum** for 2022/23 will be subject to a 2% inflationary

Current and proposed payments to these two organisations are summarised in the following table:

Organisation	2021/22			2022/23		
	Core Grant	One Off Uplift/Inflation	Total	Core Grant	Inflation	Total
CASS	£121,730	£11,335	£133,065	£121,730	£2434.60 (2%)	£124,164.60
SPARK	£75,520	£1,500	£77,020	£77,020	£1540.40 (2%)	£78,560.40
Total	£197,250	£12,835	£210,085	£198,750	£3,975	£202,725

In addition to the above there is a further **£7,000** in the Corporate Grants budget, which is allocated to support SSDC's contribution to the countywide Disability Consultation and Engagement Service.

Summary

2022/23

- The 2022/23 budget for strategic district-wide voluntary and community sector grants is **£238,960**
- The proposed levels of funding for 2022/23 for CASS and Spark, including 2% inflationary uplifts totals, **£202,725**.
- In addition there is a **£7,000** allocation in the 2023/23 budget as a final contribution to the Somerset Disability Engagement and Consultation service
- All of the above commitments can, therefore, be met from within the grants budget i.e. the total of the above commitments in 2022/23 is **£209,725**. This will leave a balance of **£29,235**

Risk Matrix

If the officer recommendation is not supported i.e. to not award funding for 2022/23, there will be significant risks to CASS and Spark and implications for SSDC. The critical risks are:

- Complete closure of CASS in 2022 with the transfer of any remaining assets to another LCA and with all staff made redundant.
- The termination of all of Spark's dedicated South Somerset resources e.g. no discrete South Somerset Voluntary Sector Adviser, no one-to-one group support, no access to dedicated volunteering support. This would leave South Somerset groups with access to only generic countywide services such as the 'Spark a Change' volunteering portal and general forums/training.
- Because our core grant also contributes to other key Spark posts and services there could be additional redundancies or posts subject to a reduction in hours.

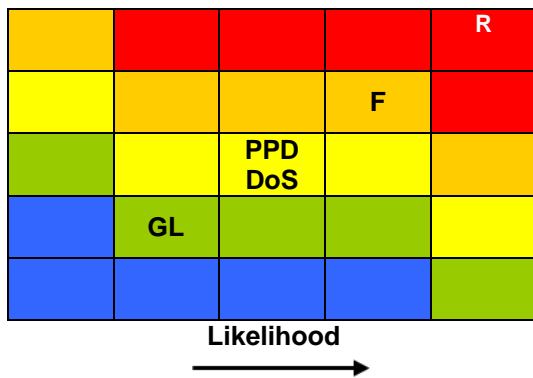


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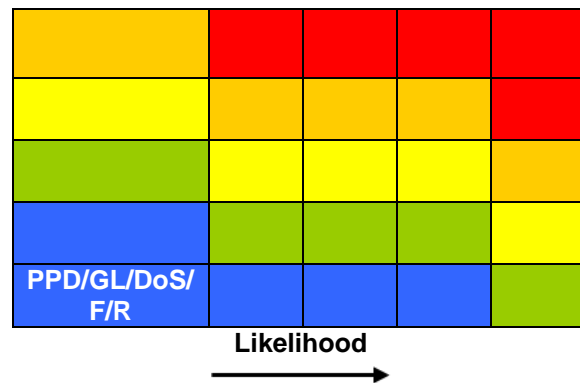
- Implications for the councils
 - Significant reputational damage to the council
 - An increased and unsustainable demand on the council (and potentially other public services) to fill the vacuum and meet the advice needs of the community.
 - Potential breach of our requirement to have 'Due Regard' under the Public Sector Equality Duty in the absence of means to mitigate the negative impacts (see Equality Impact Assessment for detail)

The Risk Template is attached at Appendix 4

Risk Profile before officer recommendations



Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key

Delivery of Services – DoS	Catastrophic impact and likelihood certain Significant impact and likelihood probable Moderate impact and likelihood possible Limited impact and likelihood unlikely Minimal impact and likelihood remote
Health and Safety - HS	
Governance and Legal – GL	
Financial - F	
Project/Programme Delivery - PPD	
Reputation - R	
Staffing and Capacity - SC	

Council Plan Implications

The work of both CASS and Spark helps the Council deliver on the following values and priorities in the 2020/24 Council Plan:

The work of both CASS and Spark contributes to the following elements of the council Corporate Plan

Aim: Delivering for our communities

Values: Working collaboratively - Working with partners to enhance outcomes for our communities

Theme: 'Healthy and Self Reliant Communities' and the following priorities

- Work with partners to keep, and help our residents feel safe in their homes and communities
- Work with partners to reduce the impact of social isolation and create a feeling of community
- Work with partners to support people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Enable quality cultural, leisure and sport activities
- Proactively support residents facing hardship
- Help tackle the causes of economic exclusion, poverty and low social mobility
- Support older people to live and age well by increasing independence, reducing loneliness, and improving financial security

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of the consequences of not supporting the recommendation to fund. This shows that that a decision not to fund CASS and Spark in 2022/23 will have negative impacts on all the Protected Characteristics

A copy of the EIA is attached at Appendix 5

Privacy Impact Assessment

None

Background Papers

District-wide strategic grants – funding arrangements with CASS and SPARK 2021-2022
District-wide strategic grants – funding arrangements with CASS and SPARK 2020-2021;
Funding for Citizens Advice South Somerset (CASS) February 2019; District-wide strategic grants – Proposal for new two -year funding agreements with Access for All, CASS and SPARK 2018-2020; District-wide Voluntary Grants 2017-18; District-wide Voluntary Grants 2016-17; District-wide Voluntary Grants 2015-16;

Spark Somerset – Monitoring Report

1ST APRIL 2021 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021



In the last 6 months ...

258
GROUPS



received 1-2-1 support

£395,648



was raised for local groups,
with more to come!



239 volunteering
opportunities



308
DBS CHECKS

**Spark a
Change**

62
organisations

261
volunteers

35
Groups received
strategic funding
& bid-writing
support

529



training/forum
attendees

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The report is based on the following key themes, as per the contract:

1. Sector and Partnership Development	Support the establishment and growth of VCSE groups, improve their effectiveness and governance, and demonstrate impact. Develop collaboration and partnerships to address local and strategic priorities.
2. Funding	Identify and promote funding opportunities and facilitate collaborative approaches to maximise funding for Somerset organisations; develop VCSE groups' capacity and expertise to secure external funding.
3. Volunteering and Social Action	Stimulate social action; supporting volunteers and encouraging businesses and individuals to take a greater role in their communities.
4. Voice, Influence, & Engagement	Improve and support communication and collaboration within and between sectors; strengthen the voice and influence of the sector to shape and design policy and delivery; act as independent advocate for Somerset's VCSE sector.
5. Support development of social prescribing activity	Support and develop formal and informal volunteering opportunities; communication of health and care-related topics; develop and maintain networks with VCSE groups and other stakeholders involved in social prescribing.

1 SECTOR & PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Support the establishment and growth of VCSE groups, improve their effectiveness and governance, and demonstrate impact. Develop collaboration and partnerships to address local and strategic priorities

1.1 SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR VCS GROUPS

In the 6 months from April to September 2021, one to one advice and support has been given to 258 groups:

- 95 groups in South Somerset
- 73 in Somerset West and Taunton
- 54 groups in Sedgemoor
- 36 groups in Mendip

Please note that, in addition to the District-funded posts, we also have Community Development workers in Chard, Bridgwater and Taunton, funded by the Lottery, that have positively impacted on these figures. Many groups come to us with a variety of needs and we often need to spend time working with them on more than one issue. Of the groups we worked with:

Governance/set up/business planning	84
Funding advice & support	63
Covid-19	26
Volunteering	55
Connections/partnerships	116
Community events & activities	43
Legal issues	7
Training	21

As a registered DBS provider, we offer advice for groups and a checking service. During this period:

- 308 DBS applications were processed
- 20 new organisations registered

Case studies and testimonials from each District can be found in the Appendices.

Case Study

“At South Chard Church we have a large focus on community. We have projects that connect with the lonely, with struggling parents and with the disadvantaged. We are also in the process of developing a new building project to create a community space to facilitate the work we are doing.

“The last few years has been tough for charities. But we have been supported in so many ways by Spark Somerset. Over the past six months they have continued to be available to us for any queries around funding (having provided us with bespoke fund-raising training for two of our volunteers earlier in the year). This ongoing support has been so encouraging to us as we are relatively new to the fundraising world.

“Through the work of Leonie Cole from Spark we now have access to Chard Connect. By pulling together representatives from the local VCSE sector, this group has facilitated multiple positive outcomes for us. We have met with people we would have never engaged with and those connections have produced opportunities for us to collaborate.

“We have also been able to access training for our volunteers and paid staff at an affordable rate (and at times free) through Spark Somerset. More recently we have trained two people in first aid and two people attended a dementia awareness training day. This access to training has proved invaluable to us. We are amazed at how Spark is there for us when we have questions around training. When we contact Penny Schofield with any queries around training needs (which we have done around bereavement training and trustee training, to name a few) she always gets back to us. Even if Spark Somerset can't provide the training, Penny takes the time to sign post us, reassuring us that we can come back to her if we need any further help.

“In short, the team have been outstanding. They are an absolute support to us and as we move forward with our community projects, we are so grateful to have them at our back.”

1.2 TRAINING

Much of our training support continued online throughout this period. We held 9 training workshops, attended by 99 delegates.

Date	Training Course	Total attendees	Mendip	S Somerset	SWT	Sedgemoor	Countywide
2/21	Volunteer Management	20	4	4	3	1	8
3/21	Trustee training	25	6	7	4	2	6
7/21	Sedgemoor Community Connect	20	-	-	-	20	-
4/21	Child Protection	15	2	2	7	-	3
4/21	Mental Health Awareness	15	2	-	2	1	3
6/21	Trustee Training	17	2	2	8	1	4
7/21	GDPR	9	-	1	2	2	4
9/21	Emergency First Aid at Work	12	2	4	2	-	4
9/21	Emergency First Aid at Work	11	11		-	-	-
TOTAL		99	8	20	21	24	18

Feedback on our training has been more difficult to gather since we have gone online. When the meetings are in person, forms can be completed in situ. However, participants are less likely to respond to request for feedback by email. That which we have received has been very positive – with some examples provided below:

“Thank you to all involved, for such an enjoyable and profitable morning yesterday. I shall be recommending the course on 6th May to my fellow trustees.”

Prior Confidence Average (1 not at all, 10 extremely): 5.6

Post Confidence average: 8.6

(Trustee Training, 25th April 2021)

“Like many others during the past 40 years I've attended numerous First Aid and HSE workshops. Yesterday's was by far the most engaging and valuable. I would certainly recommend the training to even the most experienced but uncertified people.”

How knowledgeable/confident did you feel about the topics covered before the session?

Average answer - 3.7

How knowledgeable/confident do you feel about the topics covered now you've attended the session?

Average answer – 8.7

(Emergency First Aid at Work, 29th September)

1.3 NEWSLETTERS AND ONLINE SUPPORT

In addition to the one-to-one support we provide for VCSE organisations, we also send regular bulletins and disseminate information and guidance via our website and social media.

Newsletter:

- 1610 subscribers
- 3 ‘general’ newsletters (news, events, funding opps)
- 14 targeted newsletters:

I'm currently jumping around with joy and had to let you know that we were awarded IKEA Places called Home TNL community Fund today!

We applied for funding for our Community Clay Project. BUT a big thank you goes to your newsletter that I saw the opportunity on so please pass this onto your team and keep up the good work!

Chantelle, OSR Projects

Spark Somerset Website:

- 14,118 users
- 54,805 page views
- Top 5 pages visited:
 1. volunteer 3,869
 2. latest/jobs 3,279
 3. news-events 2,882
 4. somerset-funding-portal 1,611
 5. Training 1,277
- 197 downloads of the [Covid Confident Communities booklet](#), which was translated into Arabic, Polish, Portuguese and Romanian (working in partnership with Diversity Voice). Hard copies of the booklet have also been distributed to VCSE groups across Somerset.
- 750 downloads from the Resource Library (including guidance on Setting up, Governance etc)

1.4 FORUMS

In addition to training sessions focused on specific topics (see next section) we held a number of general networking and information Forums for VCSE groups. 36 events took place between April and September, attended by 430 delegates.

Month	Forum	Attendees
April	Mens Shed	14
	Mendip Community Forum	15
	Bridgwater Connect Forum	21
	Terms of Reference (Somerset Youth Work Alliance)	4
	Training Group (Somerset Youth Work Alliance)	4
	Community Food Forum	14
	Taunton Connect	19
	OMH Workshop	14
	Mens Shed	14
	May	Covid Confident in the Community
Training Group (Somerset Youth Work Alliance)		5
Bridgwater Connect		19
Covid Confident in the Community – Dealing with Anxiety		16
Chard Connect		10
Community Food Forum		17
Mens Shed		9
Terms of Reference (Somerset Youth Work Alliance)		5
Getting your Group Going		32
June		Volunteer Coordinator Forum
	Bridgwater Connect Forum	21
	Taunton Connect Forum	9
	Grow for Good Forum	11
	South Somerset Voluntary Sector Forum	13
July	Somerset Youth Work Alliance	13
	Bridgwater Connect	17
	Community Food Forum	6
August	Mens Shed	6
	Bridgwater Connect Forum	15
September	Terms of Reference and Training Group (Somerset Youth Work Alliance)	4
	RP (Research Project) SALC	
	RP Sedgemoor Swapshop	5
	RP Steering Group	3
	RP Community Resilience Cell	8
	RP Volunteer Coordinator Forum	12
	RP Chard Connect	12
	RP Funding Forum	14
Total		430

1.5 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Partnerships and collaboration are at the heart of what we do. All of our work – face to face, events and online – seeks to encourage collaborative working. Many of the forums above have a clear focus on partnerships e.g. the Connect Forums, Grow for Good, Mens' Sheds etc.

Open Mental Health (where we Chair the VCSE Alliance) also continues to go from strength to strength and is being viewed as a model of good practice, both in Somerset, and nationally.

Other new work established in this period include:

Consortium approach to support commissioning of Children's Homes

We acted as an independent central point of contact for VCSE organisations who wished to form a consortium to apply for a contract to provide residential care and therapeutic education to children in Somerset. We supported the County Council by convening two partnerships meetings, liaising with interested partners and asking clarification questions of the commissioners on behalf of the group.

Somerset Youth Work Alliance

During the period April to September we held regular meetings of two working groups looking at:

- a) possible governance options for a formal alliance of youth work organisations across the County and
- b) ways to reinstate a professional youth work training offer within Somerset.

Ten key youth work providers from across the whole county have been actively engaged with this process and we expect to sign an agreement before the end of the year. Strode College are looking to deliver Youth Work qualifications (Level 2 Certificate and Level 3 Diploma) from early next year and we have been promised access to some of the funding from DCMS for the region to offer bursaries for training.

"Many thanks Penny and Alice. You guys at Spark are ideal to facilitate this... neutral and knowledgeable. Very much appreciated."

Craig - Director / Youth & Community Worker Youth Unlimited CIC

Mental Health Hub

We successfully won funding from Public Health to host the Mental Health Hub – continuing the progress already made by Mind in Somerset. The Hub will seek to encourage partnership working and collaboration between the wider VCSE sector, to support mental health in Somerset. A new Partnerships Manager joined our team in October 2021 (after the period of this report) and we will provide an update on this in due course.

2 FUNDING:

Identify and promote funding opportunities and facilitate collaborative approaches to maximise funding for Somerset organisations; develop VCSE groups' capacity and expertise to secure external funding

2.1 SUPPORT FOR GROUPS

35 groups from across Somerset have received bespoke, 1-2-1 support from the Spark Funding Team (this is in addition to the funding support provided by the Advice Team, detailed in the previous section):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| - South Somerset | 9 |
| - Somerset West and Taunton | 7 |
| - Sedgemoor | 4 |
| - Mendip | 11 |
| - County Wide | 4 |
- 14 of these groups received bespoke funding searches identifying numerous new funding potentials
 - 11 of these groups received support with bid writing,
 - 10 of these groups were supported by one of our specialist associate bid-writers,
 - £395,648 has been raised by the organisations supported in the last 6 months – however, we expect this figure to increase, as we await outcomes.

2.2 HIGHLIGHTS:

- £330,000 awarded to PROMISEworks from the National Lottery. The Spark Funding Team worked closely with their Trustees to put the application together.
- We supported Meare and Westhay Village Hall Committee with an application to Viridor for their brand new, state of the art community centre. They are into the final rounds with a potential £120,000 to be awarded. Outcomes due early in 2022. (We also supported them in a previous application which has resulted in £50,000 from Sports England)

Case Study: Stoma Heroes

"When I was asked by Shane (the founder of Stoma Heroes) if I would help trying to get such much needed funds for the charity, I thought "No problem, how hard can this be?" I put together a letter detailing what the charity is about and why we needed the funds and promptly set about posting dozens of letters to different associations, details of which I found on the Spark Somerset website. Months and months passed, and no one got back to me. I was obviously doing something wrong. I then saw that Spark were hosting a fundraising zoom meeting event, so I signed up.

"I would highly recommend it as there were so many people sharing ideas and talking about their experiences. Following on from this zoom meeting I was offered some 1:1 training from Spark Somerset to help me when completing applications for funding. I also had offers of help and ideas from the event.

"I am not going to lie - it's a minefield getting your head around these application forms...With Spark's help I have now secured a grant of £2,000 for the charity. This means we can now afford to run not one but 2 monthly groups across Mendip and South Somerset, we can afford to buy merchandise to promote ourselves, cover our printing costs and enhance our website. All I can say is a huge thank you to Spark Somerset, I was struggling, and they came to my rescue!"

Pam – Volunteer Fundraiser, Stoma Heroes

"I just wanted to thank you for all your help and support in putting me in touch with your bid writer. Over the last couple of days, I feel like I have learned so much about bid writing and I understand much more about how to get to grips with what the funder is actually asking for and what their priorities are. It's been very beneficial and a pleasure to work with him.

"Not only that, but the work done by yourselves in researching more appropriate funds for us to apply to, really refined the whole bid writing process. Due to the combined help from Spark and your consultant bid writer, we have received a £5,000 donation from one of the funders suggested.

Sonja, Trustee, Rails to Trails

2.3 PARTNERSHIPS

We continue to take a strategic approach to funding in Somerset, seeking opportunities to develop partnerships and support collaborative working. Some highlights are as follows:

Introduction of our new ‘Meet the Funder’ sessions launched with the National Lottery in June 2021. 20 VCSEs from across Somerset coming together for an informal, friendly introduction to the National Lottery with an extended Q&A session with the aim to encourage relationship building. The next session is with the Clark’s Foundation in October.

Worked with the two NHS Trusts to co-produce a proposal to NHS Charities Together (Captain Tom money). The first stage of this process is complete, with the final decision due in December. If successful, this will result in more than £250k being made available to fund grassroots projects that support young peoples’ mental health and carers.

Community Resilience Fund. We are working in partnership with numerous organisations on three partnerships bids to this fund. It has just been announced that all three have been successful, with work commencing in the next month. The proposals are as follows:

- Social Enterprise support – with the School for Social Entrepreneurs, Somerset Community Foundation and CCS (£600k+)
- Digital skills for the VCSE – with Cosmic and Deedmob (the social enterprise that host Spark a Change) (£320k+)
- Community development to support routes into employment – with PLUS, Cosmic, SASP and Inspired to Achieve (£570k)

We continue to chair and provide administrative support to the **Open Mental Health Community Grants Fund**. The panel comprises representatives from Somerset Community Foundation, Citizens Advice, Rethink Mental Illness, Age UK Somerset, as well as an ‘expert by experience’ (person with lived experience). During this period, grants totalling £176,997 were awarded to 31 local community groups. Over the coming months, our Development team will also work with Open Mental Health partners to develop the eco-system of VCSE organisations supporting mental health and wellbeing in our communities. Rather than just administering grants, we will be supporting successful projects to become sustainable, grow and share learning from groups in other parts of the County.

3 VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL ACTION

Stimulate social action; supporting volunteers and encouraging businesses and individuals to take a greater role in their communities.

In the last six months, we supported the following activity through Spark a Change, Somerset’s digital volunteering platform:

- 261 volunteers recruited
- 62 groups signed up
- 239 volunteering opportunities promoted

Between 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021 there were 12819 unique on-line visitors to Spark a Change, averaging over 2000 per month. The table below shows KPIs by district:

	SWT	MDC	SSDC	SDC	Countywide / Other	Total
No. of volunteers recruited	111	47	77	38	18	261
Number of organisations	12	14	8	5	23	62
No. of opportunities	71	38	67	32	31	239

The numbers above include volunteer applications as at 14/10/21 for the period 1/4/21 to 30/9/21. This means that the numbers may change slightly for example if an applicant withdraws or is unsuccessful.

Group members of Spark a Change identify up to 3 causes their charity / group exists to help with. In the last 6 months the most popular causes undertaken by groups were:

- health & wellbeing;
- family
- community;
- people with disabilities.

By contrast only one group identified being 'faith based' or supporting 'refugees and minorities' as its cause, and two groups identified gender equality. This data means we are continuing to try to reach groups which work with different sections of the community, as one way of increasing awareness and access to a diverse range volunteering opportunities.

3.1 SUPPORT FOR ORGANISATIONS

During this period, the Volunteering Team supported 103 organisations with volunteering enquiries.

	South Somerset	Sedgemoor	SWT	Mendip	Countywide*	total
Number of enquiries	15	15	33	14	26	103

The table above is a record of help given to VCSE groups.

*Countywide includes groups where no district was allocated, and includes help given to national / regional groups providing services in Somerset.

The table below is the breakdown of the types of help requested:

Type of Enquiries	
Using Spark a Change to recruit / manage volunteers	28
Corporate Volunteering (matching employers with voluntary groups)	8
Volunteer management – advice and support on best practice / problem solving help	57
Other	9
Total	103

Our popular Volunteer Coordinators' forums have continued on-line. We arranged two between April and September.

	South Somerset	Sedgemoor	SWT	Mendip	Countywide*	Total
2x Volunteer Coordinator Forums	3	3	8	5	10	33

Case studies:

- **A major employer from Mendip** asked for help to identify a range of volunteer opportunities for its staff team of over 100 to take part in for their annual volunteering day. The Spark team identified a number of local groups, connected them together and (on request) provided guidance to both parties on ways to stay safe.

“The team found the day really inspiring; learning about some of the brilliant community projects that are close to our Quarry kitchen. They were amazed at how such a small amount of their time could make a significant difference to the projects... the team enjoyed spending time together – many had worked

remotely over the prior year – and it was a really great opportunity to reconnect whilst also giving back to our local community”.

Lauri Duncan, Charlie Bighams (Head of People)

- **A VCSE group based in Taunton**, covering the South West asked for advice transitioning service users into volunteering roles. The Spark team provided best practice advice to support this approach.
“I really can't thank you enough as it's area we are working on and it's good to hear our thought processes are correct and we just need to ensure the implementation now.”
- **A social enterprise in Glastonbury** asked for help with volunteer policies – the Spark team shared some of its on-line resources, and had a phone call to talk things through with the volunteer coordinator.
- **A county wide VCSE** is reviewing its existing volunteer policy to cover a wide range of projects, the Spark team gave feedback on a draft, based on our experience and national good practice.
- **A new community group** is taking over a building and plans to open and run a visitor centre in **Cheddar**, to be managed by volunteers. The Spark team provided guidance and advice by phone to talk through their plans - we've offered to keep in touch as the project progresses.
- **A community group in the Minehead area** was concerned at the poor behaviour of one its volunteers and sought urgent advice on how to end the relationship fairly. The Spark team responded quickly to give our best understanding of the legal framework affecting volunteering and some practical steps for the group to move forward.

3.2 PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

We have also worked in partnership - offering help and expertise for volunteer management alongside a number of public sector partners:

- Advised and worked with Somerset West and Taunton Council to review their policy for volunteering in order to create capacity at local employment advice hubs
- Gave help to SCC to find local VCSE groups to host service teams' volunteering days (ongoing) – see update on Corporate Volunteering
- Provided advice and practical support to Somerset Foundation Trust and other vaccination providers for involving volunteer stewards – see update on Vaccination Programme
- Supported SCC and Somerset Rivers Authority to plan the Somerset Prepared conference programme (October 2021)
- Supported the Armed Forces Covenant day at RNAS Yeovilton, led by SCC.
- Taking part in discussions with SCC – Civil Contingencies Unit to revise policy for Spontaneous Volunteering, and with Somerset CCG to consider VCSE / volunteer involvement in coping with demand pressures.
- Helping to develop a strategic approach to volunteering within the Integrated Care System – (see update on Somerset Integrated Volunteering Steering Group)
- Working with the South West Museums Development Service to support the Somerset community museums network, with a focus on digital skills and remote volunteering opportunities for volunteers

3.3 SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Our requests from individuals are mostly for help to find local volunteering opportunities. Most volunteers access our help through Spark a Change, which is designed to be an easy-to-use tool to discover local or cause related opportunities. As noted above there were 12,800 unique visitors to Spark a Change in the first six months of 2021-22.

In addition, we provided in-depth support as follows:

	South Somerset	Sedgemoor	SWT	Mendip	Countywide*	District not allocated	Total
Enquiries from Individuals	7	1	0	2	3	8	27

Between 1st April and 30th September the number of followers of our Facebook group 'Volunteers in Somerset' grew by 148 to a total of 861.

Around 20% of visitors to Spark a Change come through Facebook.

During Mental Health Awareness Week we shared the story of Alex, a volunteer for whom volunteering at local land-based charity, ARK at Egwood had significantly improved his mental wellbeing. His blog had 198 hits during May.

3.4 SPECIAL PROJECTS

Increasing the take up of Trustee roles

We have identified that trustee roles are particularly difficult to recruit. Over the past few months we have talked to new and existing trustees to better understand their perspective. We planned two training events for the Autumn – one for new trustees and one for groups seeking to recruit. We have been putting together some communications to use during Trustee week in November.

Employer supported volunteering

Over the past 6 months Spark Somerset has seen an increase in employers approaching the organisation to help them arrange group volunteering days for their employees. This tends to be for wellbeing reasons – and a preference for the outdoors. Since April, we have helped secured group volunteering experiences for 129 individuals which has benefited around 6 voluntary sector organisations across Somerset.

Recently we have had 4 further enquiries from other employers in Somerset also wanting to carry out group volunteering days for their employees which we aim to arrange over the coming 6 months.

Siobhan Kelly, Harmony Fires' Events Coordinator explains why they chose corporate volunteering as a team building activity:

"We wanted to carry out a volunteering day as it fitted perfectly with our charitable foundations' ethos of supporting social and local communities and providing young people with opportunities. Helping at ARK seemed the perfect way of combining a team building day with doing good in the local community".

Nigel Bell, Director of ARK at Egwood explains:

"Having volunteer days like this is a massive help to us here at ARK. A job like this for one of our team would take over a week, so to get this done in a day is fantastic!"

Somerset Integrated Volunteering Group

The steering group exists to help develop and deliver the longer term vision for volunteering and social action in the Somerset system. Members are drawn from the public and voluntary sector, the latter being some of the larger health and wellbeing related charities in Somerset using large numbers of volunteers.

The group is convened by Spark Somerset – related activity during the past six months includes:-

- A review / evaluation of the NHS Volunteer Responders scheme, contributing to the national evaluation led by NHS England
- Drafting a set of principles for change / development of volunteering
- 2 webinars and a presentation to the Somerset ICS People Board to better share and understand the challenges and opportunities for volunteering within the future ICS
- Sharing insight from around the system, and getting to know each other more.

Open Mental Health – volunteering support

Spark Somerset manages a contract with Rethink as part of the Somerset VCSE Alliance, focussed on volunteering infrastructure. We network volunteer coordinators together to share and develop a more unified approach – simpler to navigate and easier to access. We also provide support to people seeking volunteering as part their own recovery journey by connecting them to a Volunteer Buddy.

Covid Champions and Vaccination Buddies

Spark Somerset was commissioned by the Public Health team to develop a network of Covid Champions and Vaccination buddies to offer objective and accurate information to the community to help take steps to prevent infection and to help reduce hesitancy for the Covid vaccine.

To date we have recruited 15 buddies (speaking a range of languages) and handled 30 referrals from health professionals. A network of over 100 Covid Champions (although activity is reducing over time has been widely acknowledged for its contribution in engaging with communities.

“Being a Covid Community Champion has been so beneficial, I've been able to reassure friends and family regarding the vaccine programme, offer advice to those unsure about PPE and signpost those wanting more information.

“Its been really nice knowing I am helping people through the Covid crisis so thank you for this.”

Somerset Covid Champion 2021

Somerset Vaccination Programme

Spark has continued to provide support to vaccination centres by helping to recruit volunteer stewards to help with parking, a welcome and directions. To date (since December 2020) we have attracted over 1500 volunteers to help with the programme. Volunteers are directly managed by individual sites, and we provide guidance and support to create safe and positive ways of working as integrated staff & volunteer teams.

Somerset Carers Service – supporting community groups to support unpaid carers

Spark Somerset holds a sub-contract from the Community Council for Somerset to deliver part of the Somerset Carers Service – supporting volunteer led support groups across Somerset. The majority of groups were forced to close during the last 18 months although this is now changing and we have built up a picture of 24 pre-Covid, current or potential groups at Bridgwater, Burnham, Langport, Martock, Somerton, Keinton Mandeville, Chard, Ilminster, Wincanton, Castle Cary, Bruton, Crewkerne, South Petherton, Yeovil, Wells, Street, Cheddar, Frome, Wellington, Taunton (Wellspring), Williton, Bishops Lydford, Dulverton, and Minehead. 14 groups are open already or soon to be.

Volunteers' Week

During Volunteers' week (1-5 June) we shared a series of volunteer stories to raise awareness of the range of volunteering opportunities available for individuals and groups of employees in Somerset and inspire people to get involved.

- On Twitter we earned 16.7k impressions and averaged at 2.4k per day (average per day for reporting period is 1k per day)
- On Facebook our average post reach for the period is 2686* (compared to 781 for reporting period)
- *The Spark iT intro post shared on 1 June to coincide with start of Volunteers Week reached 13,224 people
- The blog posts themselves received 480 hits during the month of June. The story of Alex, a volunteer talking about how volunteering at Ark at Egwood has improved his mental health was the most popular at 158 views.
- The posts on Instagram reached a total of 687 accounts.
- Total number of volunteer sign ups during the week were 36.

4 VOICE, INFLUENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

Improve and support communication and collaboration within and between sectors; strengthen the voice and influence of the sector to shape and design policy and delivery; act as independent advocate for Somerset's VCSE sector

4.1 STRATEGIC REPRESENTATION

As public sector services across the country reach out to the VCSE sector through formal health and care strategies, the range, speed and scale of collaboration is increasing – and Somerset already has a firm foundation on which to collaborate further. However, it is crucial that the VCSE sector has a strong voice to share concerns, is able to contribute strategically as equal partners, and is funded adequately to do so. The first 6 months of this reporting period have been extremely busy and challenging, mainly due to the shifting environment we find ourselves in – namely Local Government Reorganisation and the Integrated Care System. Both of these processes present huge opportunities for the VCSE, but also challenges. As a result, we have been working hard to ensure that the voice of our sector is heard and that VCSE organisations are embedded in the development stages.

Regional/National

- NHS Responders
- SEVAG/AAVAG
- SW LRF (Local Resilience Forum)

Countywide:

- ICS lead for the VCSE
- Local Government Reorganisation Advisory Board
- People Board for Health and Social Care
- Enhanced Occupational Health and Wellbeing Task & Finish Group
- Collaboration Forum (Systems leads from across the ICS)
- Community Resilience Partnerships Group
- Chair of Open Mental Health
- Mental Health and Learning Disability Strategic Cell
- The Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Strategic Cell
- Chair of Open Mental Health Grants Panel
- Multi-agency Recovery Cell
- Homelessness Reduction Board
- Local Nature Partnership
- Somerset Community Foundation Grants Panel
- Provider Development Committee (NHS Trusts)
- Social Prescribing Framework group
- Community Hospitals Strategy Group

District-wide:

- VCSE rep on numerous PCN Boards
- Wellington One partnership
- Mendip Health and Wellbeing Forum
- Mendip Comic Relief Grants Panel
- South Somerset Care Board
- Yeovil Connect

We also support the coordination of the following:

- Somerset Youth Work Alliance
- Somerset Group of Charities
- Integrated Volunteering Steering Group
- Chard Connect
- Bridgwater Connect
- Taunton Connect

Key highlights of this work include:

Integrated Care System (ICS) – Spark is the VCSE representative for the development of the new ICS (where health and the local authority will be co-commissioning health and care services). The ICS design framework makes clear references to involving the VCSE in the strategy for supporting our communities. Therefore, it is imperative that the VCSE and wider community are involved in coproduction throughout this process, so that we can ensure a balance of power and build capacity within our communities in a sustainable way. Spark have been involved in initial conversations, including participating in the

engagement panels for recruitment of the ICS Chair and CEO. We will be clarifying involvement of the VCSE over the coming months to ensure that the wider sector is suitably informed and involved.

Local Government Reorganisation – Spark are representing the VCSE on the Advisory Board for this transformational work, that will see Somerset move to a unitary authority. We ran a workshop on the VCSE at a recent conference for Town and Parish Councils and will continue to work with partners to ensure that the VCSE is integrated into the new model. In particular, we are keen to influence and support the development of the Local Community Networks.

VCSE Participation Fund - For partnership working with statutory partners to flourish, funding models and timescales need to reflect the time taken to collaborate and the capacity required to do so effectively. To this end, we developed a proposal for the CCG (in partnership with key stakeholders from Somerset Group of Charities, NHS and the County Council) to establish a Participation Fund so that more VCSE organisations can actively participate in stakeholder meetings. By contributing to staff costs and any related travel expenses, this demonstrates that the time of VCSE organisations is valued – and that VCSE does not mean free. Funding has now been agreed, with Spark Somerset acting as a coordination point for this work.

4.2 CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

We consult with the sector through our daily work and use these conversations to shape and adapt our services. Our team, based in the community, gather intelligence face to face and via our forums and events. We also engage significantly through online means and social media is a key communications tool for our charity. We continue to see our followers increase significantly. We use our social media channels to promote events, disseminate information and updates, consult with the sector and share good news.

Socials:

- Facebook
 - Total page likes are now 1689 (116 increase over period)
 - Total likes are now 1616, (110 over period)
 - Average organic page reach for the period is 781
- Twitter
 - 95.4k impressions for the period (average 1k per day)
 - Current followers 2415, 168 new followers over the period
- Instagram
 - 601 followers
- LinkedIn
 - 155 followers

Key activity during this period includes:

Somerset Community Hospital Strategy

We have been working with Somerset Foundation Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Group since early 2021 to support engagement around the vision for community hospitals in Somerset. We have been able to bring our knowledge of the VCSE sector into the design process for the engagement and ensured that community partners have been a part of the conversation.

Reflect, Recover, Renew

During this period, our consultation work focussed on this research project which aims to identify the strengths of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector in Somerset and understand what it needs to thrive in the future. We are supported by a steering group comprising Somerset County Council, Somerset Association of Local Councils, Somerset Community Foundation, Frome Town Council, Community Council for Somerset, Diversity Voice and Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership.



Throughout the process, led by an independent academic researcher, we brought together a diverse range of voluntary and community organisations from across the county to develop a shared vision. The process consisted of:

- A survey (150 participants)
- 13 focus groups (including themed sessions with anchor organisations; equality, diversity and inclusion, etc.)
- 24 interviews with VCSE leaders
- 2 visioning sessions, attended by VCSE leaders and key stakeholders

“I thought that the recent Spark visioning session was very well done and really demonstrated the work you are all doing to look at how Spark moves forward and the potential for the voluntary sector to make changes in how we work together and communicate with each other.”

Patricia Roche, Headway Somerset

The findings of this work and a co-produced ‘roadmap’ for the VCSE will be published in late-November.

5 SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL PRESCRIBING ACTIVITY

Support and develop formal and informal volunteering opportunities; communication of health and care-related topics; develop and maintain networks with VCSE groups and other stakeholders involved in social prescribing

The KPIs for this element are mainly covered earlier in the report i.e. supporting the VCSE and enabling social action. The majority of our work enables VCSE activity, which in turn creates a thriving eco-system for social prescribing activity – as reflected in most of the case studies and testimonials provided throughout.

However, we thought it was useful to provide some additional specific examples:

- We have developed a proposal for a Carer Aware benchmark programme for GP surgeries to support carers – based on Carer Support Wiltshire’s Investors in Carers GP accreditation scheme. This has been broadly adopted by SCC commissioners and the CCG and will be taken forward by CCS.
- Supported a small group of local organisations & the GP surgery health coaches & Alzheimer’s Society support worker to enable Queen Camel to become a Dementia Friendly Community. Plans in-hand to offer 1-hour Dementia Friendly training to local people as well as finding three Safe Places for people with dementia and setting up a Memory Cafe.
- Setting up a programme to support people with long-term chronic pain conditions, enabling them to find a range of non-medical ways of managing pain – developing a small multi-agency working group to create a tailored programme for the PCN.
- Supported a mindfulness organisation in Somerset West and Taunton to gain funding to deliver courses to adults suffering with poor mental health.

5.1 THRIVING COMMUNITIES SOMERSET

Although not funded by this contract, we are also working in partnership with health, art and nature organisations to run this funded project, designed to support the social prescribing agenda. The project aims to develop a programme of activities aimed at individuals with long-term conditions, unskilled young-people, care home staff and those with long-covid. Seven activities have been identified including dance, singing, creating raised beds and word play.

We have established networks with local, regional and national projects and four roadshow events to promote social prescribing will be held across the county from November onwards.

5.2 WELLBEING DIRECTORIES

We continue to host and manage two online directories that provide useful information about community-based social prescribing activities. Undoubtedly, Covid has had an impact on these resources, not least because many of the activities promoted on the directories have had to cease. Despite this, usage has remained steady and we envisage this increasing as we emerge from the pandemic and activities re-start.

Wellbeing Sedgemoor

- **Website** had 798 users and 4402 page views. Top 3 pages were:
 - Directory
 - Mental health Support
 - Community and Talking Cafes.
- **Facebook** (published in June)
 - 93 followers
 - Total likes are now 85 (42 over period)
 - Average organic page reach for the period is 65
- **Twitter** (Profile created in July)
 - Current followers 72
 - 13.4k impressions (average 147 per day)

Wellbeing South Somerset

- **Website** had 4213 users and 10905 page views. Top 3 pages were:
 - Directory
 - Older people
 - Mental health
- **Facebook**
 - Total page followers are 517 (65 increase over period)
 - Total likes are now 492 (60 over period)
 - Average organic page reach for the period is 280
- **Twitter**
 - Current followers 750, 40 new followers over the period
 - 11.1k impressions for the period (average 122 per day)

6 APPENDIX – ADDITIONAL TESTIMONIALS & CASE STUDIES

6.1 MENDIP

- Success in linking St Edmunds Hall, Glastonbury with ENGIE (Sanctuary Housing) in order to facilitate discussions re-grading support for their growing project.
- Working with The Good Heart Frome to provide advice in many areas; *“over the course of five months we received skilled professional support in identifying next steps, an appropriate organizational structure, and how to upgrade our website.”*
- Worked with Wells skateboard park to help them identify funding sources and gave advice on their applications.
- *“Spark’s support has been invaluable in our quest to raise a substantial amount of money to build a new Village Hall in Meare They are professional, efficient and always willing to help wherever they can, they will always be our first point of contact in our future fundraising efforts.”* Alan, Trustee, Meare and Westhay Village Hall

Case Study – Mendip Disability Forum

I spoke with Carole from the Mendip Disability Forum as they were struggling to fill the committee roles for the forum. I attended a committee meeting and was able to provide advice and support regarding the best way forward. I was able to support them in their calls with the National Lottery regarding their funding and also helped them with looking at alternative options and ways forward which would reach more people with a disability in a more effective way.

6.2 SOUTH SOMERSET

- Yeovil Men’s Shed: Visited to support now they have reopened and have a new committee in place to support the new Chairman. Supplied with Safeguarding Policy pro forma, involved with dementia project, reconnected with Westfield Community Garden and attending Meet the Funder. *“Thank you for all the help you are giving us.”*
- Well Be Hub, a new CIC delivering Mental Health Training: This new community interest company wanted to make connections in the area and offer free spaces on courses to volunteers in community groups in the area. We linked them with Active Learning and Skills (Chard based) and also offered spaces to In The Mix Project (SWT) and The Space Project (Mendip).
- Helped St Michael’s Yeovil get a grant of £1500 to start a simple garden planting project at Birchfield Rec. *“I received an email today offering me the complete £1500. That was the best news of this week. I am very grateful for your help in finding this funder! It would not have happened without your help.”*

Case study - Chard Connect

I approached an attendee of Chard Connect who had been heavily involved with the COVID 19 support group and during COVID has gone on to set up a ‘meals on wheels’ delivery type service with a friend who does the cooking, based out of south Chard Church. This small business has become an invaluable service for some of the more vulnerable and elderly members of the community in Chard, because the owner provides a personal delivery service and phone calls; she is also very well connected and makes referrals to the One Team, to healthcare providers and liaises with the CCS village agent about specific mental/physical health needs of her clients.

She had left her full-time job pre-pandemic due to mental health issues and done some peer support work with Chard Watch. I met with her to discuss funding opportunities she could access, and helped her to write a bid for the Open Mental Health Grants, which was successful (end of August/September). The money will allow this excellent community service to continue and support people with moderate or severe mental health issues, combined with isolation and other vulnerabilities, in Chard.

6.3 SEDGEMOOR

- Following our help, Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign were successful in their application to Somerset Community Foundation and are now starting to recruit a staff member.
- Supported Rusty Road 2 Recovery to expand means that local people with mental health problems are able to continue to go there, where they will always get a warm welcome and support.
- The Hamp community engagement team were looking to expand on ways to engage ASB youth and their families. I connect them to the Bridgwater Area Community Sports Trust who run a 6-week summer football camp. And since then we have looked at more long-term courses to keep engaged with the targeted youth.

Case Study – Active Living Group

We have been offering regular online forums for ALG members encouraging them to collaborate and return to meeting post Covid. We are now planning some in person meetings.

Maggie Harrison from Nether Stowey ALG joined the ALG Forum. She talked with the 2 other ALGs present about how they were planning to open up, and practical steps they could take to reassure members and volunteers.

“I found the meeting last week very helpful in thinking about how we start back with our Wednesday Club and following that we had a very productive Committee Meeting the next day, so we are all set to restart the Coffee Mornings as before lockdown, with a view to starting back full time in September.... Once again many thanks for your support of the Active Living Groups.”

6.4 SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON

- We supported Oake Friendship club to receive funding to ensure the club can continue.
- We started a Duke of Edinburgh initiative, linking local schools/colleges and VCSE groups which is developing well.
- We facilitated meetings between the food pantry manager and the owner and service manager of *My Day*, a service for adults with additional needs. A group of adults is now on the rota to support the Food Pantry regularly.

Case Study – Bicknoller Village Playing Fields

We have been supporting Bicknoller Village playing fields to look at their governance structure and support them in changing it from a constitution dating from 1949. They are looking to become a CIO but also have some land in trust which they want to ensure is appropriately transferred. They had been given some information which had led them to believe they are not operating properly and I have been able to seek some advice for them and talk them through its implications. I have been taking them through the steps they need to take in winding up their current organisation, transferring their assets and starting the new organisation, including signposting them towards further guidance and advice where required. This is due to be discussed at their upcoming AGM with an application to be made to the charity commission shortly.

Citizens Advice South Somerset 6 Month Report to SSDC and SCC Public Health
1st April 2021 – 30th September 2021

Core Funded Service

Key Statistics

South Somerset (member)

01/04/2021 30/09/2021



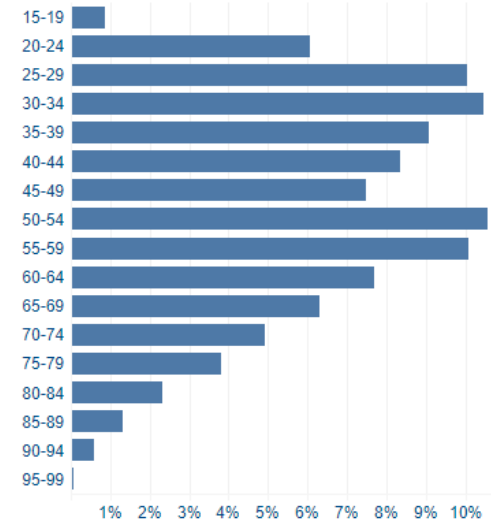
Summary

Clients	3,841
Quick client contacts	
Issues	8,240
Activities	7,980
Cases	3,864
Outcomes	
Income gain	£74,595
Debts written off	£38,448
Repayments rescheduled	£1,652

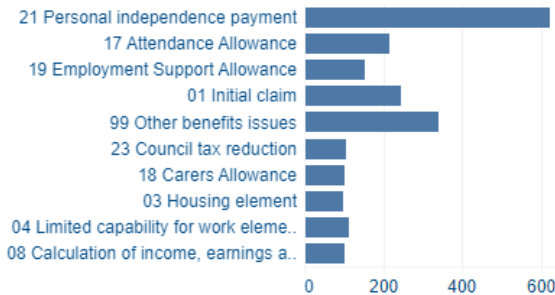
Issues

	Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	1,983	1,047
Benefits Universal Credit	749	446
Consumer goods & services	444	296
Debt	787	409
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	2	1
Education	38	30
Employment	751	412
Financial services & capability	159	128
GVA & Hate Crime	38	31
Health & community care	211	124
Housing	1,062	602
Immigration & asylum	141	73
Legal	378	278
Other	393	318
Relationships & family	760	463
Tax	83	66
Travel & transport	129	108
Utilities & communications	132	82
Grand Total	8,240	

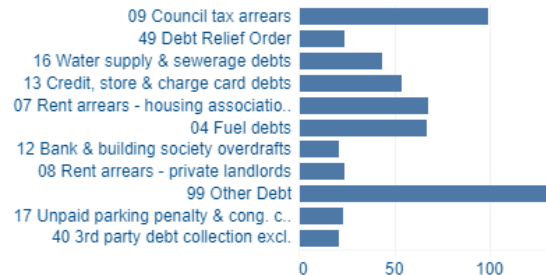
Age



Top benefit issues



Top debt issues



2020 2021 Data for April to September

Number clients: 2,927

Increase of 31%

Rural and Urban analysis by Local Authority - Issues

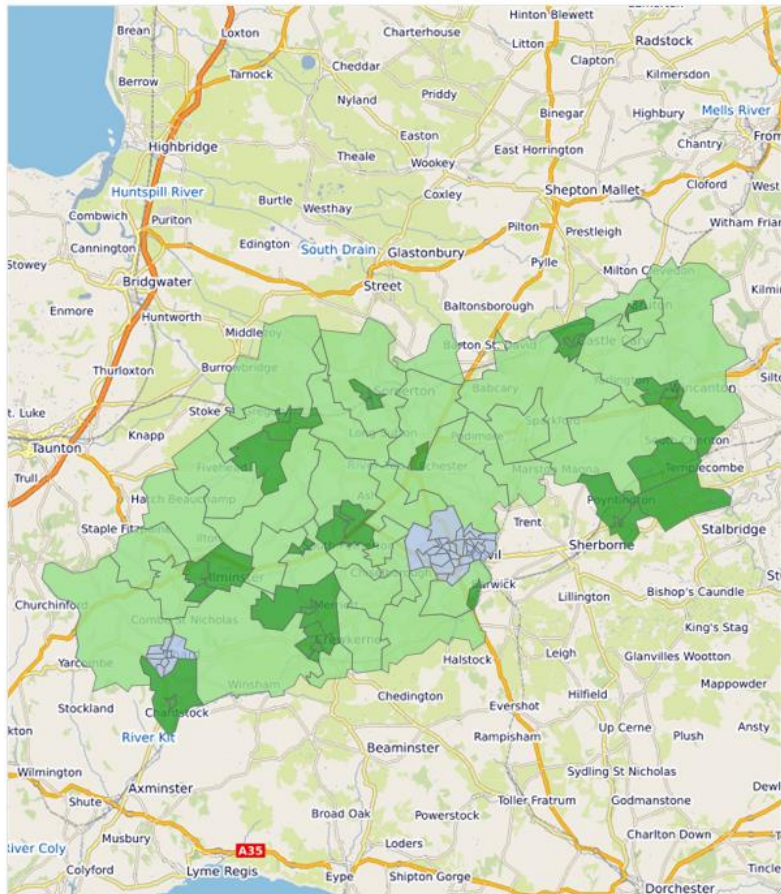


Local Authority

South Somerset

Dates

4/1/2021 3/31/2022



	Urban 46%	Rural 54%
Urban	46%	1,539
Rural	54%	1,808
Grand Total	100%	3,347

	%	Clients
Urban city and town	46%	1,539
Rural town and fringe	31%	1,053
Rural Village	23%	755
Grand Total	100%	3,347

■ urban city and town
■ rural town and fringe
■ rural village

Urban city and town Rural town and fringe Rural Village

Issue	Urban city and town	Rural town and fringe	Rural Village
Benefits & tax credits	45%	33%	22%
Benefits Universal Credit	49%	29%	22%
Consumer goods & services	41%	36%	23%
Debt	47%	34%	19%
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	33%	33%	33%
Education	41%	27%	32%
Employment	52%	29%	19%
Financial services & capability	42%	33%	25%
GVA & Hate Crime	46%	26%	29%
Health & community care	48%	27%	24%
Housing	48%	32%	20%
Immigration & asylum	62%	24%	14%
Legal	41%	33%	26%
Other	52%	29%	18%
Relationships & family	47%	29%	23%
Tax	46%	28%	26%
Travel & transport	42%	32%	26%
Utilities & communications	51%	28%	21%
Grand Total	46%	31%	23%

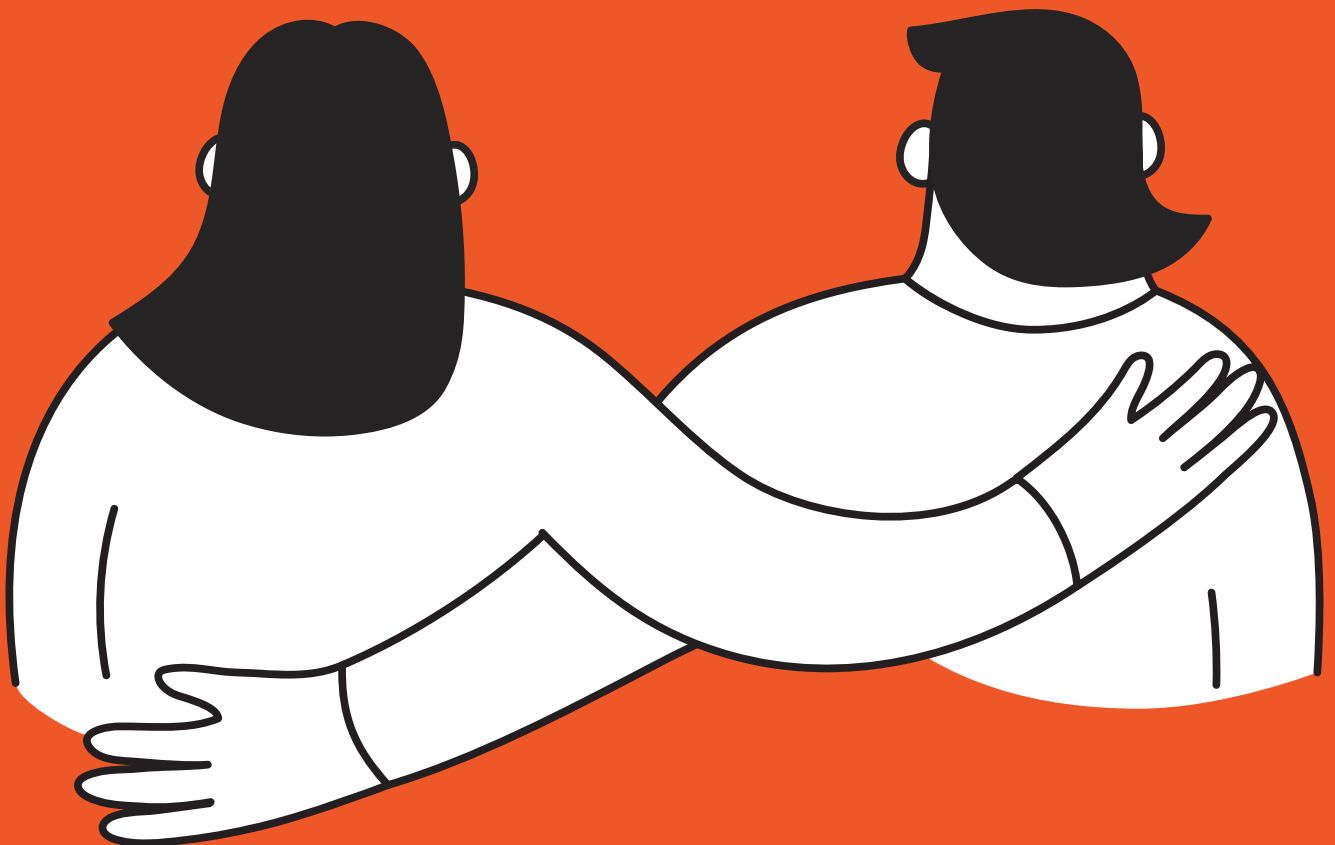
Issue	Urban city and town	Rural town and fringe	Rural Village
Benefits & tax credits	614	442	304
Benefits Universal Credit	300	179	136
Consumer goods & services	101	89	57
Debt	237	168	94
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	1	1	1
Education	9	5	7
Employment	192	109	70
Financial services & capabil.	132	105	78
GVA & Hate Crime	16	9	10
Health & community care	60	34	30
Housing	242	184	100
Immigration & asylum	39	15	9
Legal	88	72	55
Other	158	88	55

Top 15 South Somerset Wards – Clients Helped

Ward	Number of Clients
Chard (Avishayes, Combe, Crimchard, Holyrood, Jocelyn)	322
Yeovil College	232
Yeovil Lyde	210
Yeovil Westland	190
Yeovil Summerlands	182
Crewkerne	140
Brympton	141
Northstone Ivelchester	138
Yeovil Without	120
Martock	119
Wincanton	112
Blackmoor Vale	103
Wessex	100
Cary	94

Reflecting on a year like no other

2020/21 Impact Report



A year like no other...

The effect of Covid-19 on people and communities across Somerset has clearly illustrated how in touch local groups and charities are with the needs of their communities.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of local knowledge, adaptability and responsiveness – all the things that the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector is known for.

Somerset is so lucky to have such a strong, diverse and vibrant VCSE sector. Embedded within their communities, the majority of VCSE organisations in Somerset work at a very local level, supporting people on the doorstep. They are adept at accessing under-represented and vulnerable groups; able to advocate on their behalf and provide practical and emotional support.

Since the pandemic hit in March 2020, people have faced some of the most difficult times of their lives. From the initial lockdown to the 'learning to live with it', from the social isolation to the challenges of home schooling, from the fear of losing loved ones to the reality of losing jobs.

Within days, community groups across the county – formal and informal – networks, neighbours and social enterprises, rallied round to help people in need. At a time of crisis, the VCSE and 'community action' really came into its own.

In a year like no other, we have been overwhelmed by the response of voluntary groups and communities. It has been a real privilege to work with such amazing organisations and fantastic volunteers, especially during such challenging times.

Never has our VCSE sector been more needed. A huge thank you to you all.

#NeverMoreNeeded

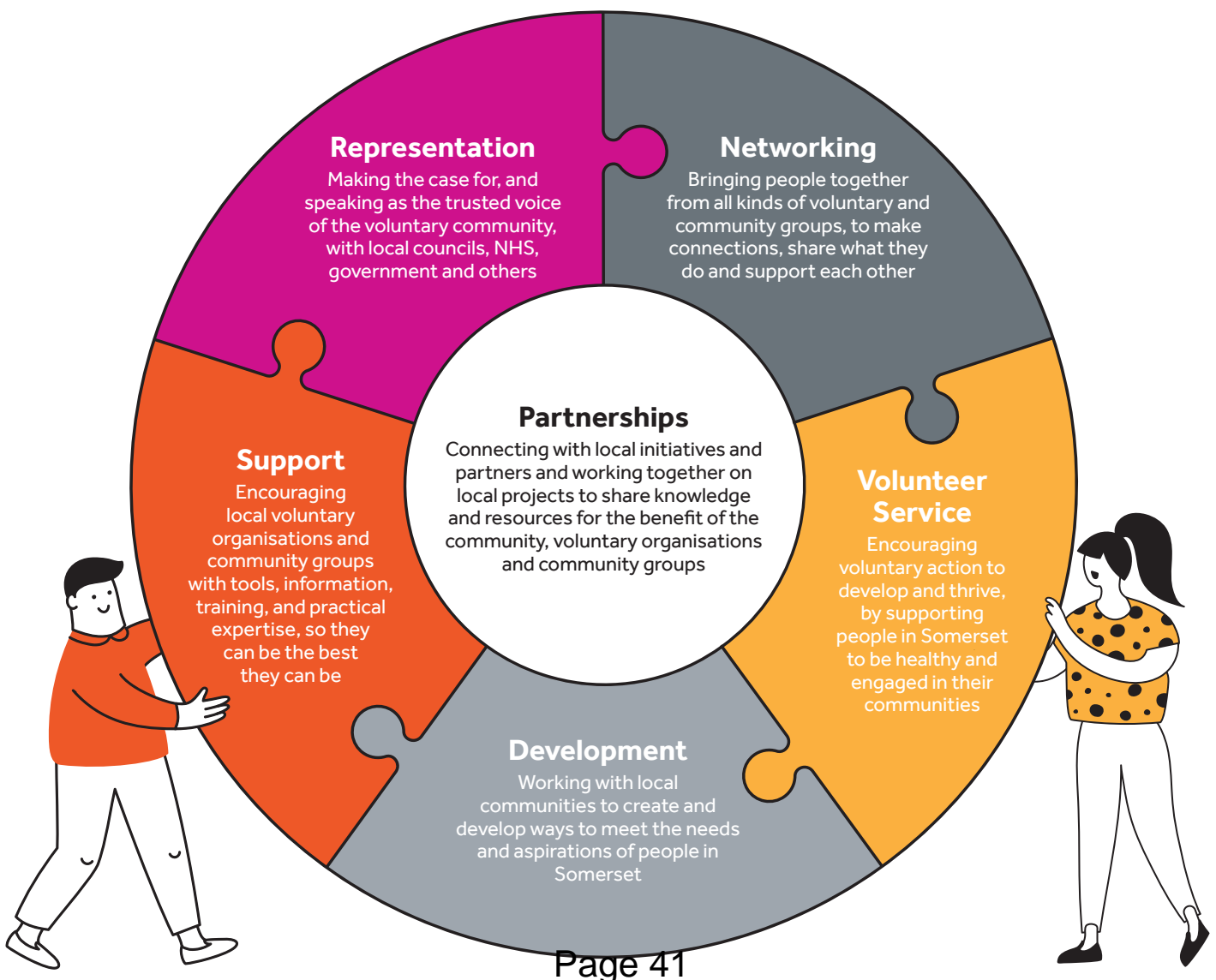


Inspiring communities

Here at Spark Somerset, we support and champion the local VCSE sector. We do this by providing a range of services, training and advice to inspire, change lives, and help build resilient communities.

We also believe that everyone should have the opportunity to thrive. So, we work with local partners to provide volunteering opportunities for all. We are passionate about the value of social action – to tackle loneliness, to overcome adversity, to improve health and wellbeing, to develop skills and confidence, and to build stronger communities.

As a countywide charity, we can work at scale, sharing our expertise, making connections, advocating on behalf of the sector and building partnerships to make an even bigger impact.





Navigating a year like no other...

Our team, along with the rest of the sector, stepped up to provide a range of extra support in response to the pandemic.



- Recruitment of Vaccination Volunteers commences
- Funding secured for Covid Confident Communities booklet

MARCH 2020

March 20
Coronahelpers online volunteer platform launched



March 23
PM announces the first lockdown in the UK, ordering people to "stay at home"

Late March
Support developed for Covid groups (including online resources, 121 support, Facebook group, webinars, chat facility and coaching)

APRIL

- Spark go countywide
- Small essential items fund administered (for unconstituted groups offering Covid-19 support)
- Spark Training goes online



August 14
Lockdown restrictions eased further

- New Funding Team established advising and supporting on funding and sustainability

AUGUST



- Free Emergency First Aid at Work training delivered to enable socially distanced Men's Shed meetings



September 14
'Rule of six' introduced banning indoor and outdoor social gatherings above six in England

SEPTEMBER

DECEMBER

December 2
Second lockdown ends after four weeks

- Launch of Open Mental Health Community Grants (on behalf of the Somerset Mental Health Alliance)

Open
Mental Health

NOVEMBER

October 31
Second lockdown in England announced (to prevent a "medical and moral disaster" for the NHS)

JANUARY 2021

January 6
England enters third national lockdown

- First Open Mental Health volunteers begin registering



- First Food Forum takes place to support local groups addressing food poverty

- Lottery funding awarded to recruit three place-based Community Development Workers (in Bridgwater, Taunton and Chard)



- Countywide, fortnightly online Carers Forum commences (for Somerset Carers Service and supported by Alzheimer's Society)



April 16
Lockdown extended for 'at least' three weeks

April 30
PM says "we are past the peak" of the pandemic

● Spark employees contribute to Health & Care workforce wellbeing projects (led by the CCG, to address the high levels of anxiety and exhaustion experienced by some staff & volunteers during Covid)

● Volunteer Pack launched



June 1
Phased re-opening of schools in England commences



June 1-7
Volunteers Week

MAY

JUNE

● Launch of 'Celebrating Somerset's Vital Volunteers' video
● GP Helper Scheme launched to match socially isolated patients with volunteers

June 23
PM announces relaxing of restrictions and 2m social distancing rule

June 15
Non-essential shops reopen



● Somerset VCSE State of the Sector Report 2020 published
● Somerset Community Foundation funding awarded to offer targeted training to meet emerging needs

● Cuppa Campaign supported by Miles Tea & Coffee, Design Hive and Somerset Cricket Club

JULY



September 15
Inaugural 'Integrated Volunteering Steering Group' meeting held

● Spark a Change volunteering website launched



● Spark appointed Local Liaison Lead for national VCS Emergencies Partnership



● Bank of skilled fundraising consultants recruited (to provide hands-on support for grant applications)

● 'Money into Somerset' report provides analysis of where further support is needed
● Dedicated funding social media channels launched (to share news, updates and enable more user participation)
● Somerset NHS Foundation Trust agree funding for new Digital Inclusion project

● Covid Community Champions network launched



OCTOBER

● Community Cookbook commissioned (Take Part Project)



FEBRUARY 2021

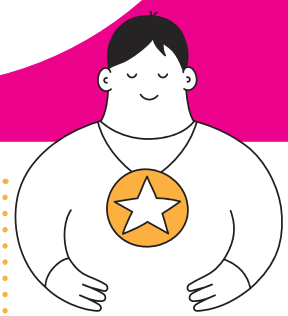
● Digital Inclusion Project Manager joins Spark Somerset

MARCH 2021

● £50k secured for the Thriving Communities project



● 1,300+ Vaccination Volunteers recruited



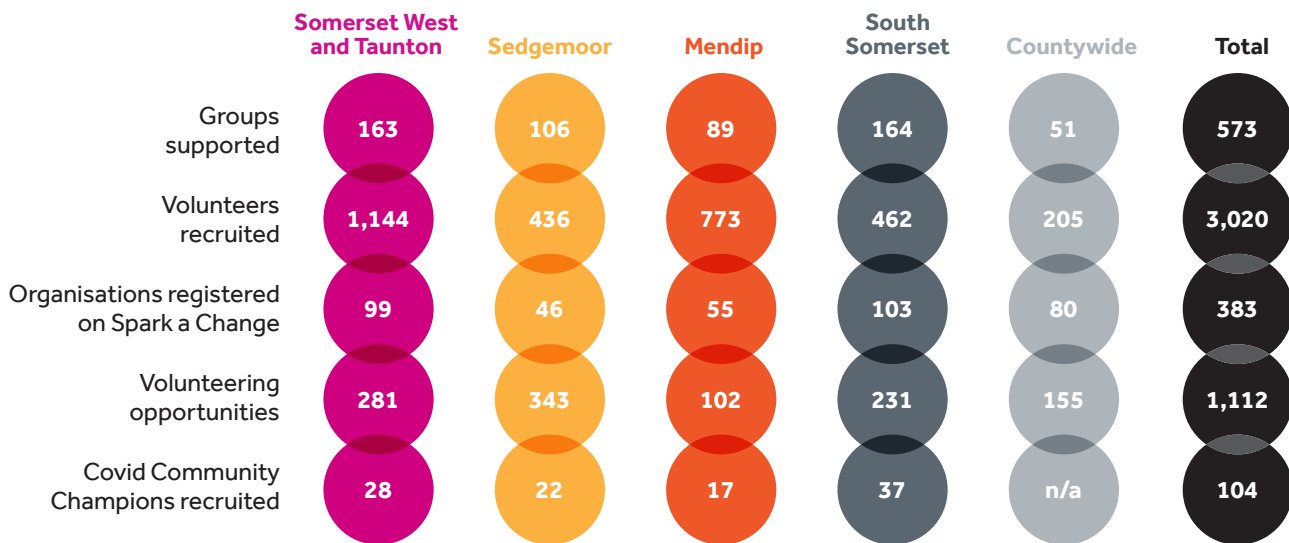
● 104 Covid Community Champions recruited

Countywide support and expertise

On 1 April 2020, we became a countywide charity and now provide services across Somerset. Throughout the region we provided advice and support to over 1,000 groups. This included help with governance, funding, volunteering, forming collaborations, and community events.

Our countywide reach brings enormous benefits to our charity and the groups that we support, as it allows us to widen the scope of our work. It also means that the VCSE sector has a stronger voice, with a clear route via Spark Somerset as an 'honest broker' to key stakeholders and decision makers.

That said, our team are embedded in our local communities, working everyday with groups, staff and volunteers at a grass roots level. We turn this local knowledge and passion into action, working in collaboration and sharing our expertise so that we can make an ever-bigger impact.



Quantock Eco

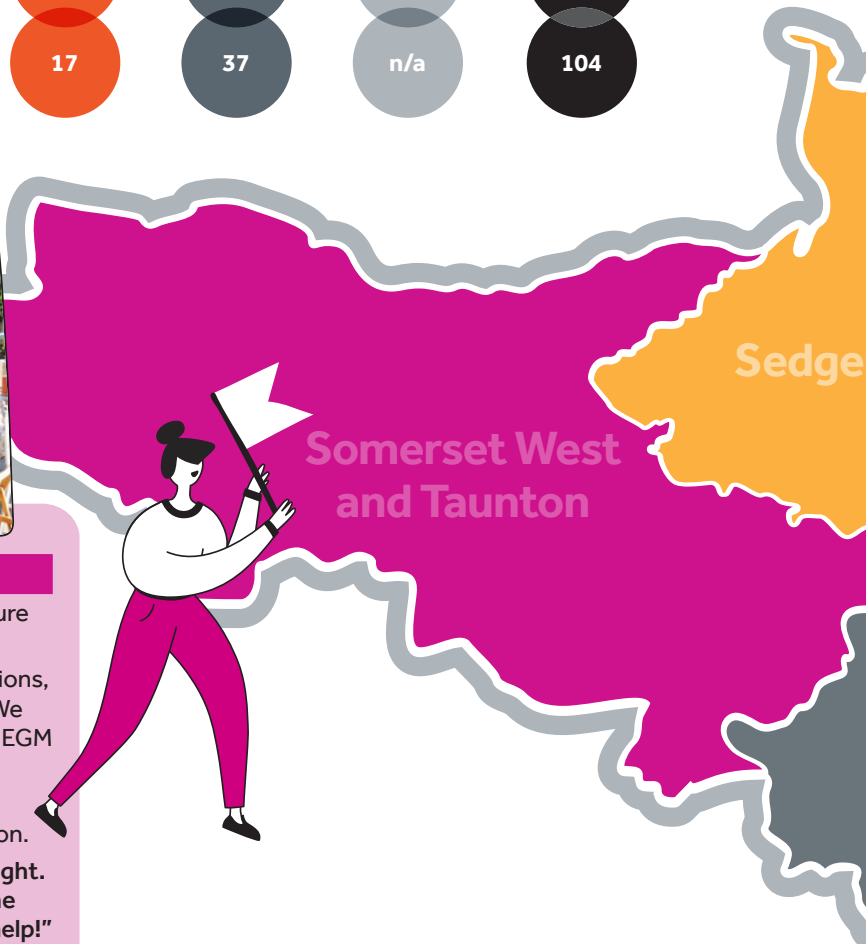
Quantock Eco needed support to change their legal structure to a CIO.

We reviewed their constitution, made some recommendations, and suggested several areas they may wish to reconsider. We also advised on the next steps to take, including holding an EGM and registering with the Charity Commission.

The group now have a new constitution that is fit for purpose and awaiting approval from the Charity Commission.

"Jenny made it much, much easier for us to get our task right. We may well call on Spark Somerset again, but for the time being thank very much. We couldn't have asked for better help!"

Julian Anderson, Chairman, Quantock Eco





Nether Stowey Active Living Group

We have been supporting the Active Living Groups across the county, delivering Forums for the coordinators. The groups, which connect older people, have been hit especially hard during the pandemic, so they have appreciated the chance to talk to us and each other:

"I found the meeting last week very helpful in thinking about how we start back with our Wednesday Club and following that we had a very productive Committee Meeting the next day, so we are all set to restart the Coffee Mornings as before lockdown, with a view to starting back full time in September. Many thanks for your support of the Active Living Groups."

Maggie Harrison, Wednesday Club, Nether Stowey



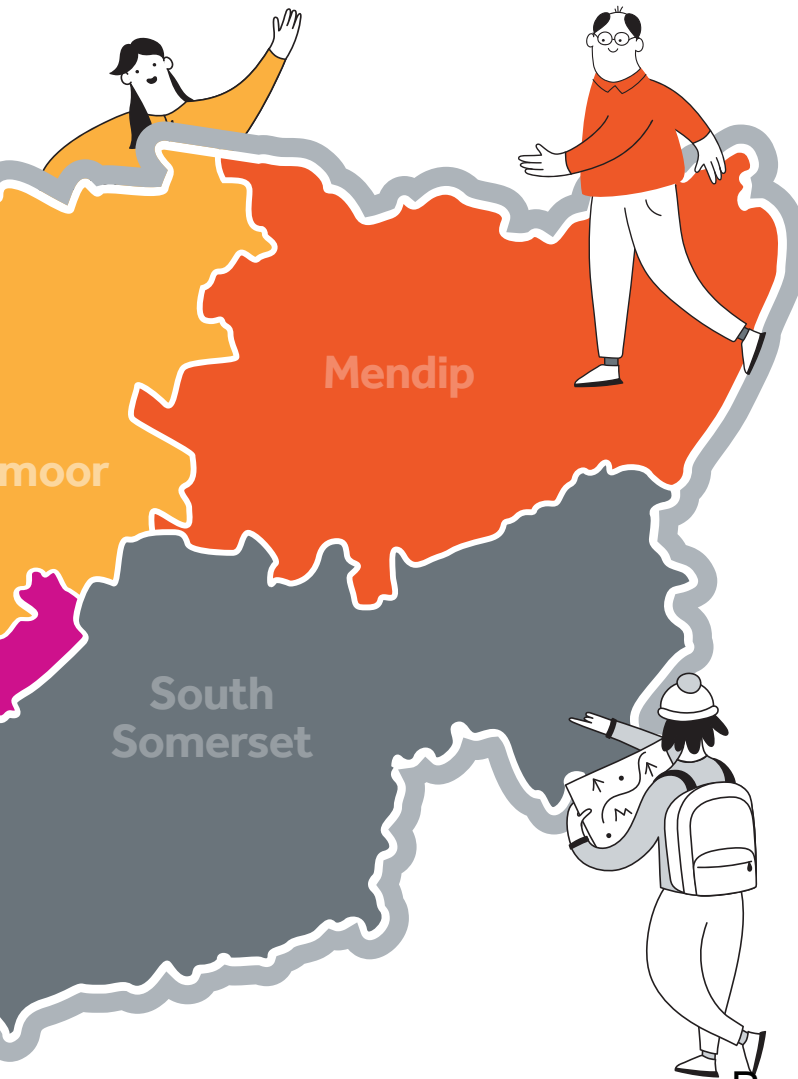
Shepton Together

Spark has been a key partner in the set-up of a new befriending scheme in Shepton Mallet. Along with Health Connections Mendip, MHA Communities and Shepton Mallet Town Council, we facilitated a series of meetings to gauge community interest and begin the process of forming a group to run the project.

The group now runs a weekly drop in session and supports 27 people on a regular basis with a waiting list to support more. We're working with them to recruit more volunteers.

"Having sought help and guidance, the Active & In Touch model was set up and called Shepton Together. This is now going from strength to strength with the only constraints being volunteers and additional funds, both of which Spark are supporting us with."

Dougie Brown, Active and In Touch Manager



ACE Arts and Central Somerset Outdoor Learning Partnership

When Somerset Community Foundation invited bids for their Corona Response and Recovery Fund, Spark Advisor, Penny, approached ACE Arts and Central Somerset Outdoor Learning Partnership to make sure they were aware of the fund and explore ideas for relevant projects.

We supported them with the completion of a successful bid which secured £3,000 for a Woodland Wellbeing project. The grant provided five, art-based activity sessions for 12 participants to spend time in Hallr Woods, exploring their experiences of the pandemic and building their resilience. These were then followed by two sessions involving local school children who worked with the art to create stories and play scenarios to understand their lockdown experiences and provide positive memories. The project involved four volunteers and directly benefitted 72 people.

"What started as a group to which people brought their experiences of real pain, grief, isolation and struggle, over the weeks offered a space of sharing, support, joy and creativity."

Cealia Lunniss, Central Somerset Outdoor Learning Partnership

Never more needed

We have been overwhelmed by the community response to the pandemic. Within days of the start of the first lockdown, dozens of groups popped up around the county to help people in need. From shopping to prescription pick-ups, friendly phone calls to hot meals, we are so grateful to the wonderful groups and passionate staff and volunteers who joined together to help.

In a year like no other, our team provided vital support for the network of 100+ newly established Covid support groups, by offering help and advice to manage volunteers and provide local help to communities. This included:

- A central point on our website to offer quick and easy access to all the latest guidance for Covid response groups.
- An online chat facility to make it easier for groups to contact us directly.
- A Facebook group of Covid-19 Group Coordinators to provide a space for them to network, address challenges, and share ideas and peer support.
- A confidential telephone support service for Covid-19 Group Coordinators, delivered by a qualified coach.

We also continued to support existing VCSE groups, but the focus of much of our work inevitably reflected the challenging circumstances in which we all found ourselves.



A range of support

Crewkerne Community Church had just set up a local 'Be A Good Neighbour' scheme when the lockdown started. Like many Covid groups, they quickly mobilised with volunteers delivering food and prescriptions to vulnerable people. They have a professional kitchen which they used to prepare meals but needed a modest amount of funding in order to continue. They also wanted to start a befriending service.



We worked with the group to successfully apply for £2,500 and advised them on making an application to become incorporated. Their volunteers also wanted a better understanding of mental health as they were supporting vulnerable people, so we arranged for ten of them to attend Mental Health First Aid training. We also discussed how their phone befriending service was operating, including dealing with safeguarding concerns.

The funding has secured the medium-term future of the meals service. Their volunteers are now more confident when encountering people with mental health issues, understand the boundaries of their role and know what other support is available.

"Spark Somerset's support has been very helpful in both securing funding and advising us on operating safely."
Stephen Gray, Group Leader, Crewkerne Community Church

Online befriending for children

Purple Elephant in Frome offer a range of support and activities to vulnerable families and children, culminating in the annual Children's Festival. Most of their services had been restricted during Covid and they had been looking for innovative ways to continue to offer help to their families.

They were successful in gaining funding to provide online befriending for children and were one of the first groups to offer such a service. We provided advice around GDPR, safeguarding and using video-conferencing and supported them in ensuring they were adhering to the Covid guidance in offering a safe space in family homes.

"The advice I was given by Spark was relating to our online befriending service, which supports children aged between five and 12 years old, who need a trusted adult and positive role model in their life, and a dependable friend! This was quite a new direction for us, so we needed guidance around working alone with children, working online and working with volunteers. We wanted to make sure that we got it right in terms of safeguarding, privacy and volunteer safety. "We've supported 12 children through the service for varying lengths of time and have six volunteers who are currently active with us. The advice you gave was very helpful and enabled us to choose the most appropriate way to deliver the service."

Sue Willis, Director, Purple Elephant



Supporting sustainability

Training and networking

Our forums and training workshops are a really popular and effective way of providing information and support to VCSE organisations, and also provide valuable networking opportunities. We ran a range of events, from workshops to bespoke training sessions, general community forums and events that focus on a specific theme.

In response to Covid-19, we had to adapt our approach, moving from face-to-face events to online webinars and meetings. We quickly created a webinar series to address urgent needs. We then sent a survey out in September which confirmed a clear, ongoing need for low cost, locally delivered training to address gaps in knowledge and expertise. Whilst this brought challenges in the short term, it has enabled us to reach out to far more groups than we would have been able to before.

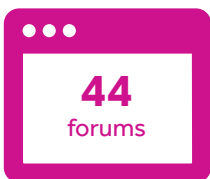
Whilst we're keen to resume face-to-face events, we've had our eyes opened to new digital possibilities which we're exploring.



"Thanks very much for the webinar this morning. It was really useful to have a professional's opinion on all this stuff. I think a lot of us are risk assessing activities and writing policies and we're not always doing this from an informed place, other than following the news and some quite often opaque government advice. It was great to have an overview of the practicalities but also the emotional needs of our staff and volunteers too."

Rupert Farthing, Carymoor Environmental Centre

Key stats:



Men's Sheds

The Men's Shed Forum was a particular success and Sheds who were looking at reopening were keen to continue meeting to share knowledge and learning as they started to prepare for the safe return of their members.

"The Spark Men's Shed Forum brings together like-minded people and facilitates dialogue and ideas to make positive differences for social inclusion in our communities. The benefits include helping us to remain active – within restrictions – during the pandemic and come out well-prepared to help and support people in the short, medium and long-term future."

John Ryves, Secretary, Axe Valley Men's Shed



Workshops	Attendees
In at the Deep End	63
Organising and Supporting Your Volunteers	19
Tools to Help You Organise	6
Finding Support From Home	17
Looking After Yourself	27
Looking After People's Data	6
Understanding Mental health and Building Resilience	9
Managing Your Charity in a Remote Environment	7
Effective Volunteer Management	5
Improving your Charity's Reach and Marketing	12
Mental Health First Aid	37
Adult Safeguarding	13
Operating a Covid Secure Environment	19
Dementia Friends Training	15
Emergency First Aid at Work	19
Child Protection Basic Awareness	14
Finance Training	8
Measuring Impact	21
Managing Volunteers	20
Trustee Training	24
Total	361



Funding and sustainability

During 'normal' times, most groups come to us needing funding support.

In a year like no other, groups have focussed on emergency planning and survival, rather than planning ahead, therefore, the support we were asked to provide has been much more about resilience, governance and adapting to Covid.

More recently, we have seen a marked increase in demand for funding support, as groups begin to turn their minds to recovery. The Spark Funding Team has provided free funding support via our website and social media and has sent regular updates to groups on the latest funding opportunities. We have also advised organisations on applying for funds, provided bespoke training and run a bid checking service.

"The support Children's World has received from Spark has been fantastic! New funders were suggested and have since given us great financial support. We also received excellent support with bid writing, which helped a lot when we were short of time and struggling to complete all the applications on our own. This also brought in funds. Couldn't recommend Spark highly enough!"

Kristen Lindop, formerly of Children's World



Support for South Somerset

"Since ARK's inception, Spark has regularly advised us of the funding options available and provided advice and guided where needed. We wanted to apply to Somerset County Council for funding to set up a support service for those experiencing dementia and memory loss and their carers. We had no experience of applying to the council for funding, but with support, guidance and training from Spark, we successfully submitted an application for funding.

It's particularly helpful to be able to contact Spark when seeking funding for a specific project as they come back to us with a number of funders, who would support that kind of activity.

I have no doubt that without the help, support and guidance of the Spark Funding Team, ARK would be in a very different financial position."

Nigel Bell, ARK at Egwood



So far...



£352,226
raised for
local groups
(so far)



121
groups
supported



100%
of Live Chat
funding enquiries
rated 'Excellent'

Opportunity to thrive

At Spark Somerset, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to thrive. So, we work with local partners to provide volunteering opportunities for all.

When Covid-19 struck in March 2020, it was clear that there needed to be a community wide response – and in Somerset this happened almost overnight. We saw a surge of ‘people-power’ in our communities, with thousands of local residents giving up their time to support those most in need.

In a year like no other, many ‘business as usual’ volunteering opportunities were curtailed due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, different ways of helping communities emerged instead, including shopping, dog walking and friendly phone calls to those self-isolating. Within 2 weeks of lockdown we stood up a digital platform, Corona Helpers, where local groups could recruit and manage their volunteers.

During the summer, we launched Spark a Change, a new digital platform which offered greater functionality, ease of use and efficiency for both groups and potential volunteers. The system went live in September 2020 and featured over 250 organisations and 450+ opportunities migrated across from the old system.



“Spark a Change offers an effective means of recruiting volunteers. It is easy to interact with potential volunteers through the messaging system and the ability to share the opportunity directly to social media pages is a useful feature. Chloe has been really helpful and answered any queries I have had. We have just added some new roles to the site and are hoping to have a similar success with these!”
Leonie Girling, Operations Coordinator, Chard Watch CIC

Key stats:



3,020
volunteers registered



1,112
volunteering opportunities promoted



383
groups signed up

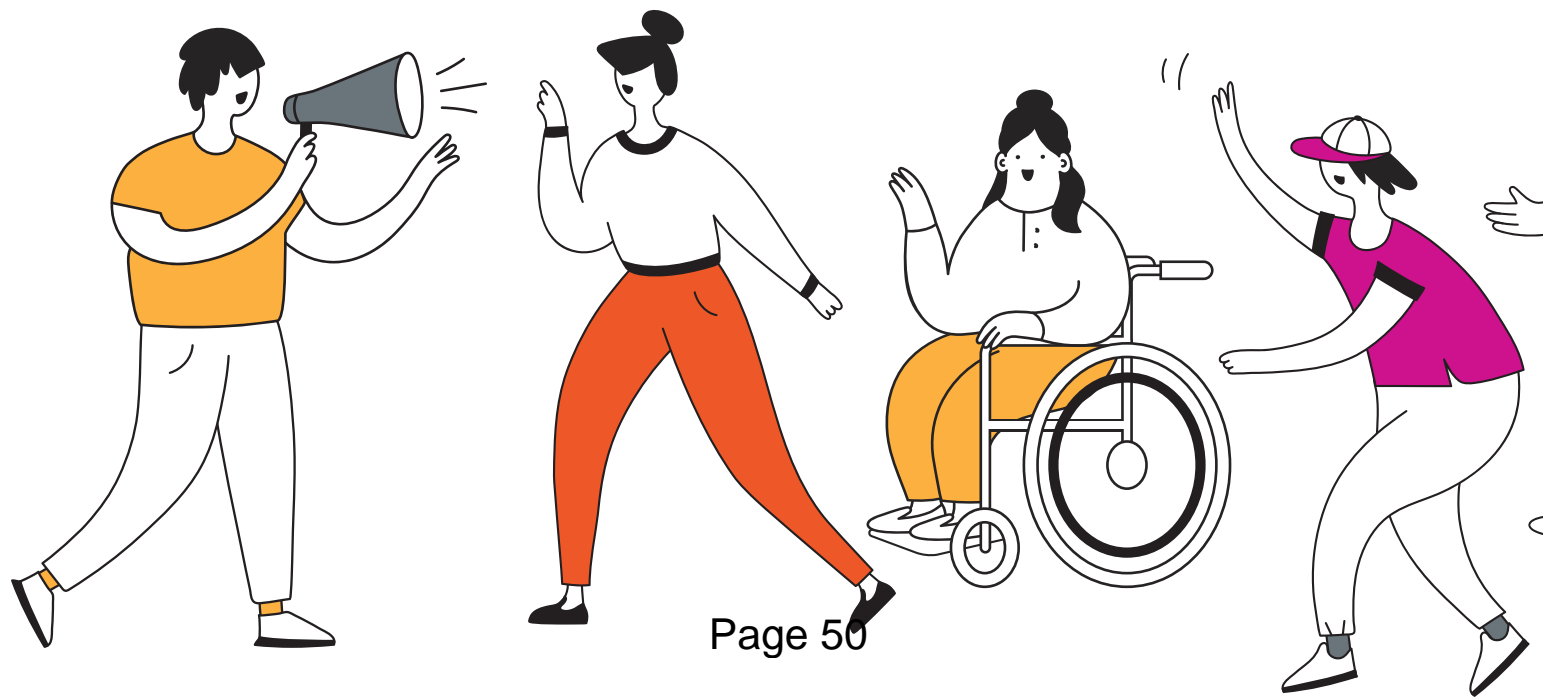
South Somerset GP Helpers scheme

Having discovered a lack of support for lonely or isolated people, our Social Prescribing Coordinator, Matt, worked closely with the local Health Coaches to create a GP Helpers scheme whereby volunteers support lonely or isolated patients in South Petherton to regain their confidence and connect with their communities by making friendly phone calls and home visits, accompanying them to community activities and providing transport.

The scheme has now helped several patients and is being rolled out in GP Practices in Queen Camel and Milborne Port.

Jill, one of the patients helped by the scheme explains, “talking to and regularly meeting Sarah, has really helped me, especially during lockdown when it was so quiet. It’s been nice to get to know someone new in the village, and I’ve enjoyed our trips out to nearby towns where we have coffee together. It’s been a real help at a difficult time.”

Sarah, the GP Helper said; ‘It’s great to meet someone new to do things with. It’s been good for me too!’



Spark Somerset supported the Somerset Vaccination Programme



We helped to recruit over 1,200 volunteers for the county vaccination sites and recruited volunteers for local GP surgeries.

Within 2 weeks of lockdown we stood up a digital platform, Corona Helpers, where local groups could recruit and manage their volunteers at the main county sites, GP-led sites and community pharmacies and fed into regional and national conversations around volunteering.

"I want to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers who have answered the call and are playing a key part in Somerset's vaccination programme.

It has been a real team effort with councils and partners across Somerset pulling out all the stops to support the NHS with this mammoth task.

So much has been achieved but we have a long way to go and the role of volunteers will be crucial as the programme continues over the coming weeks and months. Together we will beat this virus and the spirit shown gives us real hope for the future."

Councillor Clare Paul, Somerset County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health

Meghan's story

"Since graduating from university in the middle of the pandemic and not being able to work my normal job in hospitality, I found I had plenty of free time which I wanted to put to good use.

Volunteering at the vaccination centre is so rewarding. Welcoming people to the racecourse and then seeing them leave, so happy and relieved to have had their vaccination, gives me a real sense of achievement.

Volunteering has definitely improved my wellbeing and helped me keep a positive mindset during lockdown, it's given me something good to focus on and made me realise that I really am making a difference to so many people's lives!"



Jane's story

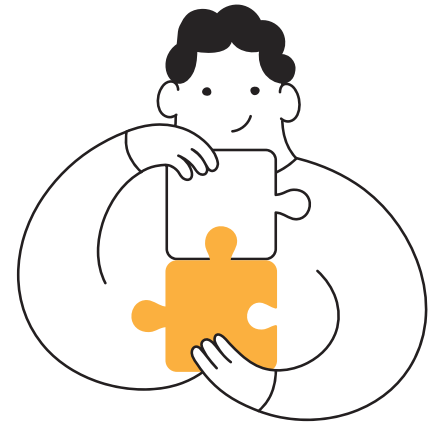
When we put a call out for volunteers to support the county vaccination Centres earlier this year, over 1,200 people signed up. One of whom is Jane, who has been volunteering as a Marshal at the Taunton Racecourse Vaccination Centre since January 2021.

"As soon as I saw the request for volunteers, I put in my application. I'm a very social person. I love the company of others and love organising. I felt the need to do something, to contribute in some way to help get things moving in the right direction.

The nurses and vaccinators tell us that they couldn't do it without us which has made me feel useful and certainly helped my mental wellbeing."



Better together



We continue to play a key representative role in Somerset. Since we extended our services countywide in April 2020, our reach has increased significantly. Covid-19 has really highlighted the value of the voluntary and community sector, enabling us to build even stronger relationships with the NHS and local authorities, and ensuring that the voice of the VCSE really is being heard.

With limited resources available for the sector, an inevitable increase in demand, and many VCSE organisations struggling to adapt and survive, going forward, we see the support of collaboration and partnership building being a key priority for our team.

As a Countywide charity that avoids engaging in direct service delivery in communities, we are in a unique position as we can work at scale, sharing our expertise, making connections, advocating on behalf of the sector, and building partnerships to make an even bigger impact.

Somerset Youth Work Alliance

Somerset Youth Work Alliance, coordinated by Spark Somerset, is now developing to bring together youth work providers from across the county – big and small, town and village based, those with paid workers and those run by volunteers. The aim is to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people across the whole county by agreeing to work collaboratively, listening to young people, sharing knowledge, skills and strengths with each other, and combining to positively influence the sector and systems in which we work.

“Spark’s infrastructure role in the County is crucial for us. Without this, the public sector would simply be dealing with hundreds of third sector organisations with differing views, competing agendas and many varied priorities. I cannot begin to imagine how true third sector/public sector collaboration could ever work in Somerset without Spark.”

Phil Dolan, CEO of Age UK Somerset

“Many thanks Penny and Alice. You guys at Spark are ideal to facilitate this... neutral and knowledgeable.”

Craig Lloyd, Director / Youth & Community Worker, Youth Unlimited CIC

Open Mental Health

Spark Somerset have a key role as Chair of the Alliance. Through this work, we have played a part in strengthening relationships between the VCSE and Health. A key premise of this alliance is also the development of ‘generous leadership’, where we work together collaboratively to develop the sector in Somerset and support communities, not just to grow our own organisations.

Although undoubtedly challenging, given the range of services engaged in this alliance (ranging from very small local organisations to a very large national charity) we are keen to learn from this experience, with the possibility that the model could be replicated elsewhere.

“Spark’s role has been key within the VCSE Mental Health Alliance. As a non-delivery partner this has put them in an invaluable position as independent Chair. Just to mention three of the areas where they have really helped: their in-depth knowledge and understanding of partners, their skills in resolving conflict situations, strength of character and respect within the VCSE to hold this partnership to account. Well done, Spark!”

Paula Blight, CEO of SWEDA

“I have worked with Spark on many different projects over the last year and have seen the huge benefit that they provide to communities across Somerset. Their approach has always been inclusive, looking at how to work with others to deliver the outcomes required.

I have been particularly impressed with the way that Katherine and the team worked so hard to develop the consortia which is at the forefront of delivering the Open Mental Health programme. She and the team worked hard in very challenging circumstances to develop the right approach to how the differing and, previously sometimes competing organisations could come together under one banner. This has resulted in the fantastic results we have already seen, highlighted by NHS England as truly transformational and leading best practice nationally.”

Karen Prosser, Director of Commercial Development, Strategy and Partnerships, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust



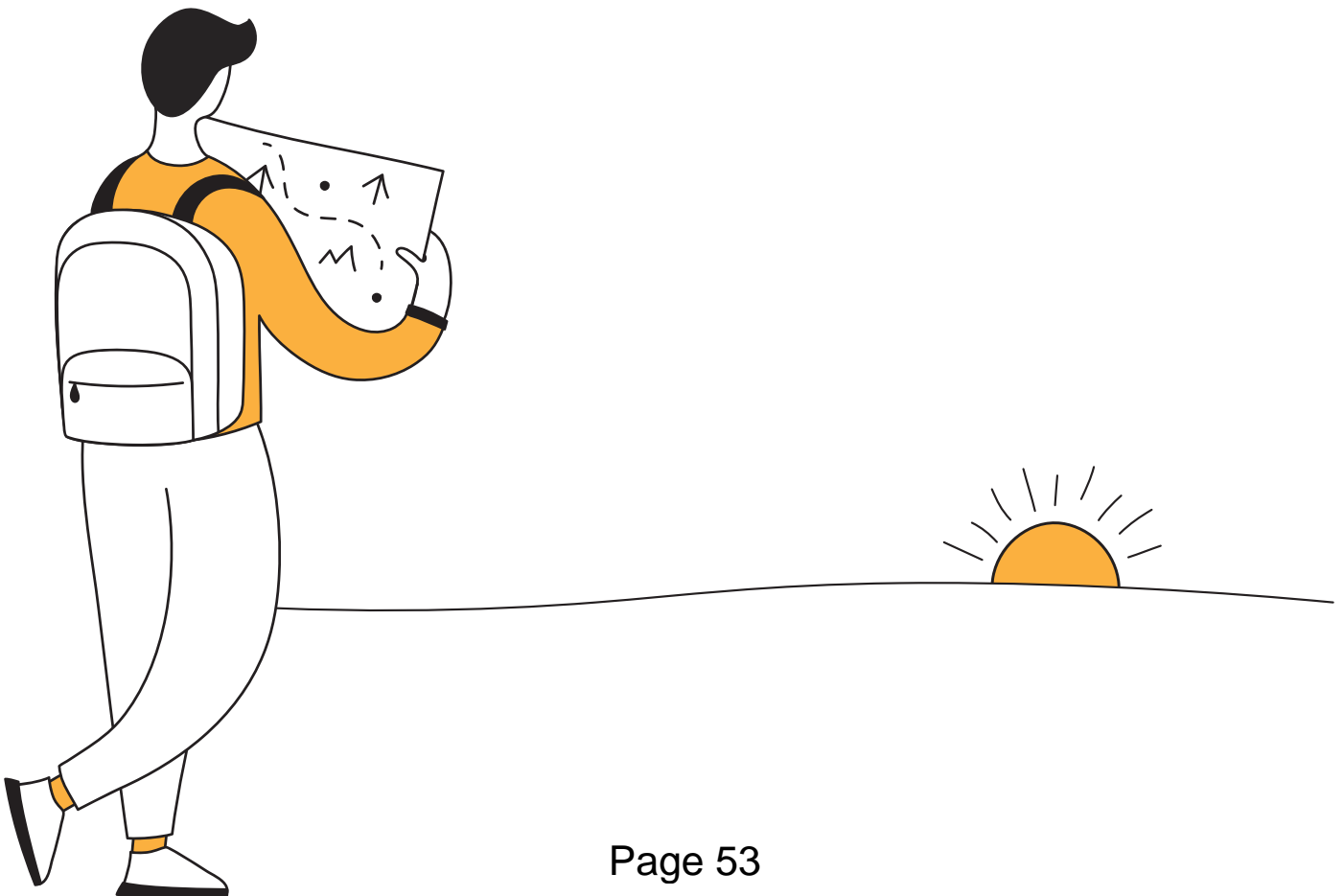
Looking ahead

Although the future is uncertain for many charities and community groups, our team remains passionate about supporting local VCSE organisations to be confident, resilient and to have the tools they need to thrive now and into the future.

Never before have there been such demands on our sector – distinctive and diverse, local VCSE groups support individuals in need who don't always require a formal 'intervention', are there for those who fall between the cracks and also work with people who are on the road to recovery. The VCSE sector is often a crucial point of stability for our local communities. However, as the environment around us shifts in the wake of Covid-19, this stability is needed more than ever. Therefore, it is vital for the VCSE sector to be properly supported.

In addition to the challenges we face as we emerge from Covid, we know that lots of charities and community groups have concerns about many other external factors too – the environment, digital divide, Local Government Reform, Brexit, development of the Integrated Care System – and have a sense of trepidation regarding how their organisation will fair in this uncertain future.

Covid-19 has shone a light on the importance of the VCSE sector – it is certainly not an overstatement to suggest that we wouldn't have got through the last year without it. Therefore, it is vital for the VCSE sector to be able to engage effectively and strategically with partners across Somerset to address the challenges that we all face.



Thank You!

Our heartfelt thanks go to the many groups across the county and to the wonderful staff and volunteers we work with on a daily basis. We are extremely proud of our relationships and look forward to continuing our work to build stronger, more resilient communities so that Somerset residents have the opportunities they need to be happy and healthy.

Thank you to the funders and partners who continue to support our vital work. It is very much appreciated.

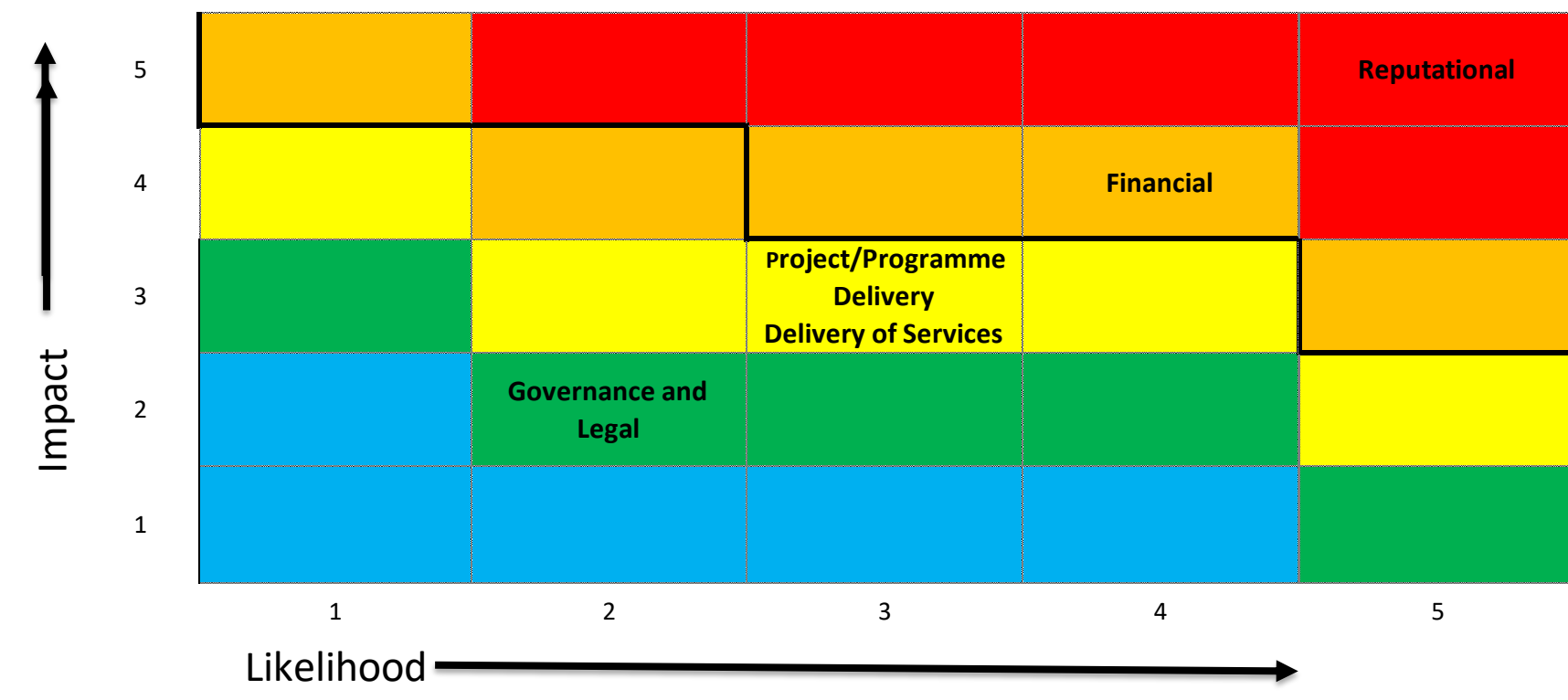


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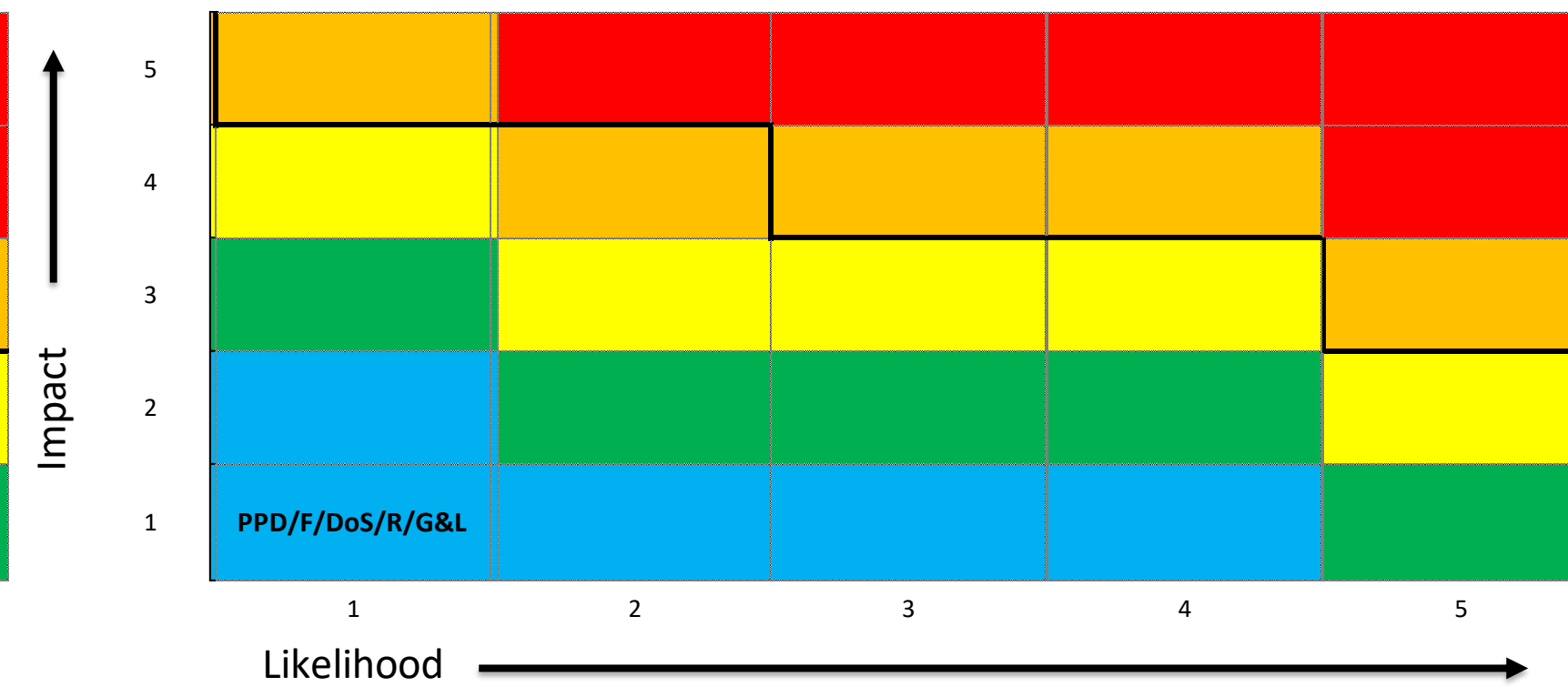


APPENDIX 4

INHERENT RISK RATING (Before application of Report Recommendations)



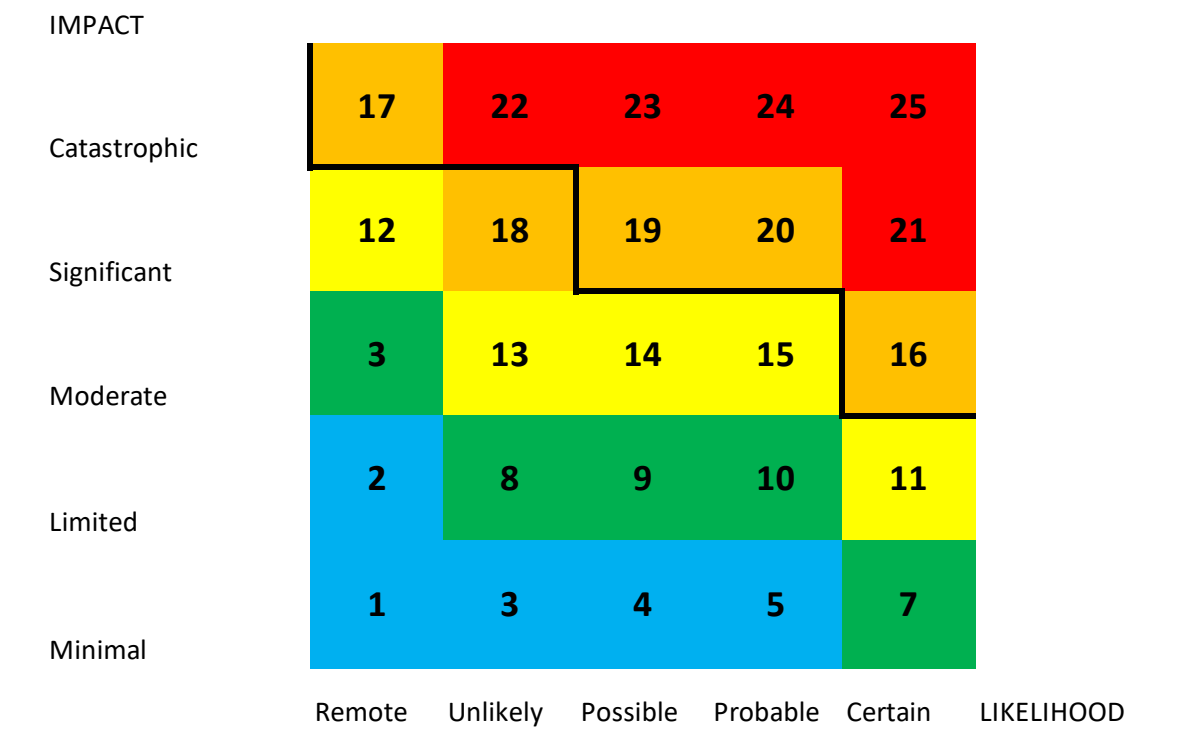
RESIDUAL RISK RATING (After application of Report Recommendations)



Risk Ref	Risk Category	Inherent Risk Rating	Residual Risk Rating
1	Project / programme delivery	9	1
2	Financial	16	1
3	Delivery of Services	9	1
4	Reputation	25	1
5	Governance & Legal	4	1
6	Staffing & Capacity	0	0
7	Health & Safety	0	0

Risk Description	Mediation / Controls
High risk of not being able to deliver Council Plan ambitions as effectively without a strong and resilient VCS	0
High risk of additional cost to the council if Information and Advice service provided by CASS is not funded in 2023/24	0
Significant disruption to services if Information and Advice services provided by CASS have to be taken on by SSSDC. Some	0
Very strong likelihood of negative media if SSSDC do not fund CASS or Spark in 2023/24 leading to closure of CASS and Possible short-term reputational damage	0
	0
	0

Unhide cells to add new rows
 Note - If any of the cells are showing #VALUE please ensure that a line break is added after each risk title (column B) on the Risk Register tab so that the information is pulled through correctly





Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

Organisation prepared for	SSDC		
Version	V1.0	Date Completed	15/12/2021

Description of what is being impact assessed:
 Risks associated with a decision not to award funding to Spark Somerset and Citizens Advice South Somerset for the year 2022/23.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset’s Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

Evidence used is that provided by Spark and CASS in terms of the numbers of users (individual residents for CASS and groups for Spark) who are from, or provide services to, people from Protected Characteristics. I have also used the 2021 South Somerset District Equality Profile for contextual and comparative data from which to calculate estimates.

CASS Data
 The following user data covers the period - 1st January 2021 to 25th November 2021. This data relates specifically to the users of the core service which SSDC fund. Because of the changes from GDPR and the requirement for individual and specific consent for each protected characteristic recorded, CASS only collect Protected Characteristics data where it is relevant to the advice sought. In addition, declaration of PC status is purely voluntary so the data below is that from clients who were happy to provide the information.

Sex

Female: - 3,238 (54%)

Male: - 2,378 (40%)

Disability

- Disabled: - 303 (5%)
- Long Term Health Condition – 1,469 (25%)
 - Mental Health - 440
 - Physical Impairment (non-sensory) - 395
 - Other Disability (type not given) - 498
 - Multiple Impairments - 371
 - Learning Difficulty - 29
 - Visual Impairment - 13
 - Cognitive Impairment - 13
 - Deaf/Hearing Impairment - 13

Race Ethnicity

TOTAL 404 - 404 clients represents 5% of the total number of CASS clients. This is wholly consistent with the percentage of non-white British people who make up the population of South Somerset which is currently 4.9%

Asian or Asian British - 44

Black or Black British -41

Mixed Heritage - 26

Any Other - 26

Other Arab - 5

White Gypsy or Irish Traveller - 10

White Irish - 10

White Northern Irish - 2

White Other - 219

White Scottish - 10

White Welsh - 11

Age

19 and under - 55

29 and under - 26

39 and under - 1153

49 and under - 914

59 and under - 1108

69 and under - 753

79 and under - 472

89 and under - 176

99 and under – 32

Spark Data

Spark do not currently formally monitor Equalities data, however details of users of Spark services (the VCSE in Somerset) are recorded and kept from which it has been possible to identify groups and organisations in South Somerset that work specifically with the Protected Characteristics who have been supported. Examples of these are provided in the Analysis of impact on protected groups.

It is also worth noting that many users of the services provided by individual VCSE organisations in receipt of Spark services are likely to come from a variety of the Protected Characteristics, but this level of granular detail is not possible for Spark to capture.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

CASS and Spark Somerset

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closure of CASS in 2022 resulting in the loss of free and independent advice services to people across all ages but with a significant impact on both younger (minimum of 2,134 under 39's) and older (minimum of 1,443 60 plus) residents. Users of Spark services include community groups and organisations that work with people from this PC e.g. Langport and Huish Episcopi Youth Centre; Somerset Youth Partnership; Ashill Seniors Lunch Club 	☒	☐	☐
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closure of CASS in 2022 resulting in the loss of free and independent advice services to a significant number of residents (1,772) with disabilities and long-term limiting illnesses. 	☒	☐	☐

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users of Spark services include community groups and organisations that work with people from this PC e.g. Deafinate CiC; Parkinson's Support- Crewkerne 			
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data not collected by CASS. However, in a Home Office-funded study, the Gender Identity Research and Education Society estimated between 0.6% and 1% of the UK adult population experience some degree of gender variance. Such figures, insofar as they can be applied to South Somerset, would suggest that somewhere between 810 and 1,350 adults in the District in this category. As the number of CASS clients is 4.5% of the total South Somerset population, this would equate to approx. 54 clients with this PC. Therefore, the closure of CASS in 2022 will result in the loss of free and independent advice services to this group of people. No identified users of Spark services that work with people from this PC 	☒	☐	☐
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data not collected by CASS. 2011 census data shows that in South Somerset 70,598 (42%) of people were married or in a registered, same sex civil partnership. Couples and couples with dependent children make up 700 of CASS clients, therefore it can be assumed that a significant proportion of these will be married or in a civil partnership. Therefore, the closure of CASS in 2022 will result in the loss of free and independent advice services to this group of people. No identified users of Spark services that work with people from this PC 	☒	☐	☐

Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data not collected by CASS. However it can be assumed that a proportion of clients will be either pregnant or with young children. Therefore the closure of CASS in 2022 will also resulting in the loss of free and independent advice services to this group of people. Users of Spark services include community groups and organisations that work with people from this PC e.g. Doulas without Borders 	☒	☐	☐
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closure of CASS in 2022 resulting in the loss of free and independent advice services to a minimum of 404 residents. Therefore, the closure of CASS in 2022 will result in the loss of free and independent advice services to this group of people. Users of Spark services include community groups and organisations that work with people from this PC e.g. Black Education Somerset 	☒	☐	☐
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data not collected by CASS. According to the 2011 census 61% of South Somerset residents state they have a faith/belief. As the number of CASS clients is 4.5% of the total South Somerset population, this would equate to approx. 4,621 CASS clients having this PC. Therefore, the closure of CASS in 2022 will result in the loss of free and independent advice services to this group of people. Users of Spark services include community groups and organisations that work with people from this PC e.g. South Chard Church 	☒	☐	☐
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closure of CASS in 2022 resulting in the loss of free and independent advice services to both male and female residents (minimum 5,616 people). 	☒	☐	☐

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users of Spark services include community groups and organisations that work with people from this PC e.g. Yeovil Men's Shed; Wincanton Men's Shed 			
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data not collected by CASS. However based on 2017 ONS experimental estimates of sexual identity at a local authority level 0.9% (1,200) identify as gay or lesbian and 1.1% (1,500) identify as bisexual. To this end it can be assumed that approximately 121 CASS clients may identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Therefore, the closure of CASS in 2023 will result in the loss of free and independent advice services to this group of people. Users of Spark services include community groups and organisations that work with people from this PC e.g. 2BU 	☒	☐	☐
Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We know that 45% of CASS clients come from rural South Somerset. Furthermore, by virtue of the predominant issues that CASS deals with (Housing, Benefits and Debt issues), 2,505 clients (period April to September 2021), will be affected by the closure of CASS in 2023 resulting in the loss of free and independent advice services to a significant number of people with these additional characteristics. No data is collected for Armed Forces/veterans. Users of Spark services include community groups and organisations that work with people from these additional characteristics e.g. Carers – Bruton Carer's Group, Chard Carer's Support Group Gypsy and Traveller Community – Friends of the Horse Drawn Rurality – Ark at Egwood, Rail to Trail Low income families – St Peter's Community Centre, Yeovil; Milborne Port Foodshare Armed forces – Balsam Centre project 	☒	☐	☐

Negative outcomes action plan				
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.				
Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
The negative impacts identified above will mitigated if elected members support the officer recommendation to fund CASS and Spark Somerset for the two years 2022 to 2024.	06/01/2022	DX Committee	Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a decision is made not to fund year two (2023/24), resulting in the closure of CASS, the only sustainable mitigation will require SSDC to consider possible options to provide an alternative service, possibly in-house. 1. Undertake a costed options appraisal for alternative delivery solutions and report to SLT and DX Committee.	30/09/2022	SLT and DX Committee	SLT and DX Committee Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a decision is made not to fund year two (2023/24), resulting in the removal of core support services for VCSE groups in South Somerset, the only sustainable mitigation will require SSDC to consider possible options to provide an alternative service, possibly in house. 1. Undertake a costed options appraisal for alternative delivery solutions and report to SLT and DX Committee.	30/09/2022	SLT and DX Committee	SLT and DX Committee Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.				
Completed by:	Dave Crisfield – Specialist Communities			
Date	07/12/2021			
Signed off by:	Peter Paddon – Acting Director Place and Recovery			
Date	07/12/2021			
Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:	Dave Crisfield 07/12/2021			
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	Dave Crisfield			
Review date:	6th January 2022			

Project Closure Report – Chard Leisure Centre

Executive Portfolio Holders: Councillor Peter Seib, Finance and Legal Services
Councillor Jason Baker, Chard Regeneration Lead
Strategic Director: Jan Gamon, Director – Place and Recovery
Service Manager: Natalie Fortt, Regeneration Programme Manager
Lead Officer: Natalie Fortt, Regeneration Programme Manager
Contact Details: Natalie.fortt@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462956

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide members with a completion report for the Chard Leisure Centre Project and to seek agreement to implement End of Stage Assessments to capital projects with a value exceeding £1,000,000 or those over £250,000 that have a risk impact score of moderate or above.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 6th January 2022.

Public Interest

3. The Chard Leisure Centre build is now complete, with the exception of minor snagging issues. As part of the Project Closure, a Learning Through Experience report is required. The purpose of the report is to share knowledge gained throughout the project that can be applied when planning or implementing other similar projects.

Recommendations

4. That District Executive recommend that Full Council agree to:-
 - a. Implement End of Stage Assessments for all capital projects over £1,000,000
 - b. Implement End of Stage Assessments for all capital projects over £250,000 that also have a risk impact score of moderate or above in one or more risk categories

Background

5. In 2017 the Chard Regeneration Board requested that officers explore options for a community focussed scheme to improve the health, leisure, cultural and tourism opportunities, combined with a range of general public amenities to create additional footfall and support the town's existing retail provision. Officers commissioned an architectural practice, Norfolk Property Services (NPS) to undertake feasibility, design and costings to help identify the need and type of facilities and amenities that could be accommodated. In September 2017, NPS produced their initial concept designs that



South Somerset District Council

included; leisure facilities, a base for public services, location for a new library and museum building, health centre, learning hub, workspace and other potential facilities. Their designs included car parking and other public spaces that would lend themselves to a variety of uses.

6. In May 2018 the scheme concept proposals and the subsequent variations to the scheme were put to Full Council which were considered and approved. The key objectives of the proposed Chard Regeneration Programme were:
 - To provide a compelling reason to visit and use Chard Town Centre
 - To bring Key Sites back into economic and community use
 - To stimulate physical regeneration and improve the vitality of the town centre
 - To increase footfall within the town and support existing businesses
 - To improve the leisure and health offer in Chard
 - To reinvigorate and bolster the role of Chard as a Market Town and economic centre by supporting business growth and strengthening links with the hinterland and wider economy
 - To address market failure and stimulate wider commercially led development in the town, including allocating housing development sites
7. Following detailed design work, SSDC applied in May 2019 for Planning Consent and Listed Building Consent to build a new Leisure Centre, Library & Community Hub and public realm improvements at the Boden Mill (ACI site) in Chard. The proposal required the removal of buildings associated with the factory site but the retention of the Mill, Building 11, the listed arch and some adjoining buildings to the south of the arch. The planning application was heard by both SSDC's Area West Committee and then Regulation Committee on 3 September 2019 where it received approval. Work started onsite in November 2019 and the completed Centre opened on 8th November 2021.
8. SSDC also successfully applied for Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone programme to improve Chard's town centre alongside the Boden Mill works.

Post Completion Summary

Project Timescale and Milestones

9. The project was completed on time and opened ahead of schedule. The target for opening had originally been stated in the Council Plan as taking place in Quarter 4 but it was opened in Quarter 3 on 8th November 2021.
10. This is particularly impressive considering the challenging circumstances the contractors had to work through with both Brexit and Covid 19 Restrictions coming in to force during the build.

Project Budget

11. The initial costings for the Leisure Centre were based on Sport England per metre costings for Leisure Centres. However, this did not take in to account the difficulties of building on a brownfield site with ground contamination issues and the inclusion of historic and listed buildings. The design of the Leisure Centre also developed in response to public consultation, becoming a full sized 5 lane swimming pool. The initial costings were



therefore unrealistic and the scope of the overall programme has been reduced in order to deliver the Leisure Centre within the budget available.

Project Outcomes

12. The Leisure Centre, alongside the current Heritage Action Zone work, meets the objectives stated in the Programme Initiation Document (PID):
- To provide a compelling reason to visit and use Chard Town Centre
 - To bring Key Sites back into economic and community use
 - To stimulate physical regeneration and improve the vitality of the town centre
 - To increase footfall within the town and support existing businesses
 - To improve the leisure and health offer in Chard
 - To reinvigorate and bolster the role of Chard as a Market Town and economic centre by supporting business growth and strengthening links with the hinterland and wider economy
 - To address market failure and stimulate wider commercially led development in the town, including allocating housing development sites
13. The feedback on the Leisure Centre has also been extremely positive.
14. However, the programme had originally included the redevelopment of the Boden Mill and Lace Mill, so these objectives have not been met. Officers continue to market these buildings as potential development sites but they have not been delivered alongside the Leisure Centre as stated in the original PID.

Project Benefits

15. The Leisure Centre has only recently opened so it is too early to be able to produce statistics on many of the anticipated benefits such as increased footfall in the town centre. However, early feedback suggests users are finding the Centre to be very accessible. This was an additional benefit not articulated in the original PID. The pool has an innovative 'dosing system' that makes the pool less chlorinated (although does make the water taste a little salty) which assists users with allergies and asthma. Both the main and learner pools are accessible via a hoist and new steps are being fitted for users with mobility issues or sight loss.

Key Learning Points

16. It is clear that more robust costings are required during the feasibility stage of large capital projects. The former ACI site presented a number of challenges for development, hence why it required public sector intervention, and this should have been more accurately reflected in the initial budget. Therefore, the council needs to challenge costings at the feasibility stage and undertake independent market research.
17. Additionally, the PID for the Chard Regeneration Programme stated that the costings were estimated and subject to change as the project progressed. This was not reflected in the report to Full Council as the budget was agreed as stated at that time. Whilst this is necessary to enable the preparation of the Medium Term Financial Plan, it does create



South Somerset District Council

the situation where a project is progressing on an estimated budget created in 2017, not on the actual costs required to deliver the project a number of years later.

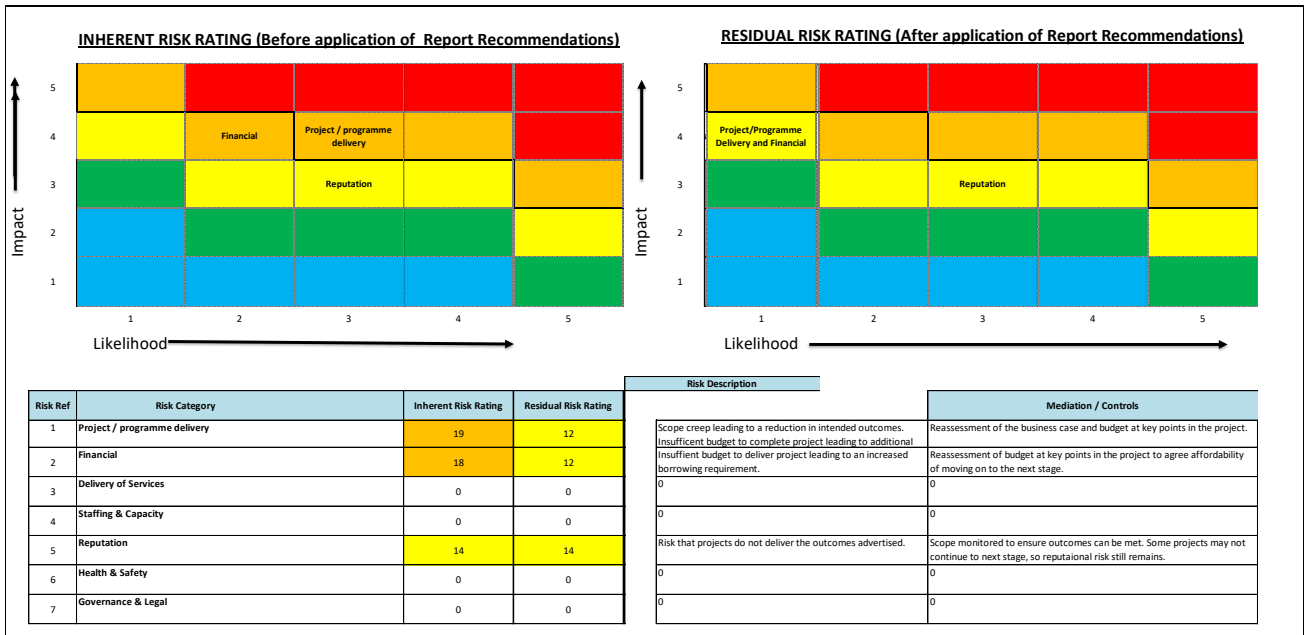
18. To mitigate this risk in future projects, it is recommended that the council implement a 'gateway' decision making process in the form of End of Stage Assessments. The business case should be reassessed at the end of each formal stage of the project and a decision should then be taken whether to proceed to the next stage. This approach is likely to result in projects not being progressed beyond the first stage, as further investigation may prove them to be unviable but it will help to ensure that those projects that do progress, deliver the outcomes required and remain within the agreed scope.
19. The End of Stage Assessment should cover whether the next stage of a project is affordable, realistic and achievable. The assessment should also review the scope and intended outcomes/benefits. Large construction projects take place over a number of years and the need that initially necessitated the project, could have increased or decreased during that time. If any amendment to budget, scope or anticipated outcomes is required, the report should be escalated to District Executive and Full Council for a decision on whether to approve the change or close down the project.
20. The number of End of Stage Assessments should be proportionate to the value of the project and the level of risk associated with undertaking the project. Therefore, the proposed stage plan should be included as part of the capital bid process.
21. Recent tenders for regeneration projects have been received that have ranged from 17% to 42% above the pre tender estimates. There are a number of reasons that the estimated costs may change, in fact, the current issues facing the construction industry is a good example of external factors affecting the viability of projects. The industry is currently experiencing an increase in construction projects, which is pushing up demand for construction resources and thereby increasing prices; global prices of materials such as iron and copper are increasing, with iron ore prices 97% higher than last year and imported timber products rising by 74%; supply chain disruptions are also affecting the availability and therefore price of materials.
22. The Office of National Statistics states that construction costs have been rising each month since December 2019 and the latest figures suggest that the average material costs are at least 23% higher than last year. Whilst a level of contingency is factored in to all projects, further work is required to understand how we ensure we have adequate contingency in our capital programme during such difficult market conditions and this work is to follow.

Financial Implications

23. None directly arising from this report. However, the introduction of 'gateway' decision-making will reduce the financial risk associated with large capital projects.

Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

24. None arising from this report.



Council Plan Implications

25. None directly arising from this report.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

26. None arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

27. None arising from this report.

Privacy Impact Assessment

28. No personal data will be collected.

Background Papers

29. None.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Peter Seib, Finance and Legal Services
Strategic Director:	Kirsty Larkins, Service Delivery
Service Manager:	Leigh Rampton, Communities Lead Specialist
Lead Officers:	Catherine Thompson, Specialist, Benefits and Housing Tamsin Gold, Benefits Specialists, Benefits and Housing
Contact Details:	Benefits.specialists@southsomerset.gov.uk

Purpose of the Report

1. To request that the District Executive recommend that the banded scheme introduced in April 2021 for to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year remain unchanged to Full Council for approval.
2. Council Tax Support is financial support which is awarded as a reduction of the Council Tax Charge (where eligible). Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support Scheme in accordance with the requirements of schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1991 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.

Forward Plan

3. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 6th January 2022.

Public Interest

4. Council Tax Support (CTS) was introduced from 1 April 2013 when it replaced the Central Government funded Council tax Benefit regime. From its inception, the funding available to council from government has reduced year on year.
5. As with the majority of authorities within England, the District Council needs to make changes to the CTS scheme for working age applicants (the scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by Central Government) in order to reduce the significant administration burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit.

Recommendations

6. That the District Executive recommend Full Council agree :-
 - a. The Banded Council Tax Support Scheme introduced from 1st April 2021 remain unchanged;
 - b. The income bands are maintained at their current thresholds;



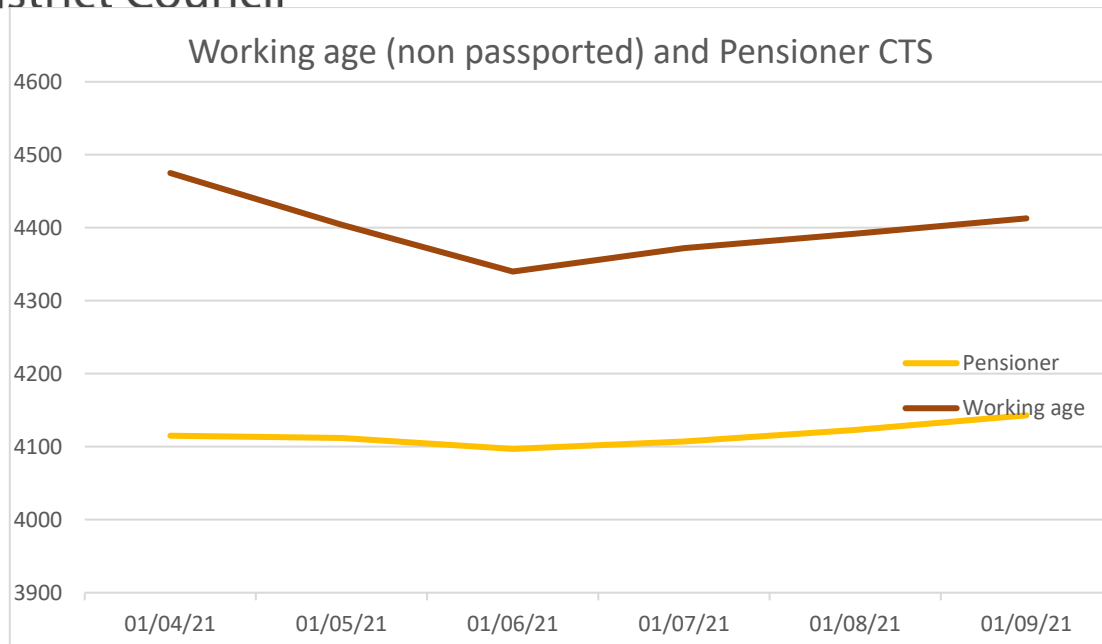
- c. The hardship scheme budget be maintained at £30,000 for the 2022/23 financial year.

Background

7. The SSDC new Banded Council Tax Support Scheme (CTRS) was introduced on 1 April 2021 and has now been running for six months. Councils are required to review and set their CTRS for each financial year by 31 January in the preceding financial year. As the scheme has been running for such a short period of time during the ongoing impact of Covid it is difficult to evaluate the impact of it on our residents and the Collection Fund to any great extent. Applications to the CTRS hardship scheme are monitored, along with the Council Tax collection rate.
8. We carried out an extensive consultation process last year and the scheme measures were carefully and fully considered by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. We do not have any evidence at this stage to suggest that any of those scheme measures require amendment. It is the view of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group that the current measures be retained.
9. The SSDC Council Tax Support Scheme states that certain elements of the income bands assessment may be uprated each financial year but does not specify the level of that uprating. The Scrutiny Task and Finish Group have considered the uprating and recommend that given the withdrawal of the UC uplift (£20 per month), the income bands remain unchanged for 2022/23

Current Year

10. We have received no legal challenges to the SSDC CTSS, nor have we had any formal complaints about the scheme design. The implementation process went smoothly and all CTSS recipients received a Council Tax bill showing their CTS award in March 2021.
11. We also identified households who would see a decrease in their award of more than £5.00 a week and wrote to them advising them of their options to apply for a Discretionary Hardship Payment and to contact advice services if they are suffering financial hardship.
12. The initial increase in CTS spend was expected and then saw a subsequent dip due to the rolling upratings of Universal Credit. Previously, with legacy benefits, all the changes would have taken place on 1st April but due to Universal Credit assessment periods this is no longer the case.



13. The £20 a week Universal Credit uplift ended on 6th October 2021 so households will see their income fall by approximately £87 per month which will mean they will be entitled to more support however, due to the rolling assessment periods we will not see the full effect of this until mid-November.
14. We also have set up a dedicated “Advice and Welfare across South Somerset” page on our website with information on Housing, Benefits, Employment, Debt etc and information on how to access assistance.
15. SSDC will be involved in the Winter Hardship Payments Scheme recently announced by the Government and we are in the process of drawing up plans to promote and roll out the scheme alongside County Council and the other Districts and partner organisations.
16. Mapping out caseload of working age who are not passported (i.e. in receipt of legacy benefits) and pensioner claims who are subject to a separate national scheme, there is a similar trend although it would be expected to see more variation in working age cases due to the less stable nature of their income.
17. The recent budget announcement of the changes in the Universal Credit taper will also affect households receiving this benefit and earning more than the work allowance. This means they will get to keep an extra 8p in the pound of their earnings. For a person earning minimum wage on 16 hours a week this will mean their income will go up by approximately £25 a month. A similar earner working full time will see an increase in their monthly income of approximately £90 a month.
18. These changes will see some people move down a band but this will not affect all Universal Credit recipients as the uplift did and not all will change band.

Hardship Scheme



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19. A Hardship Scheme was set up as a safety net for households who could demonstrate they could not afford to pay their Council Tax contribution following the introduction of the SSDC Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The annual budget for 2021/22 was set at £30,000. As of the date of this report SSDC has processed 41 applications to the hardship scheme of which 26 were successful. The amount awarded (annually) is currently £18,995.53. It is worth noting that we do have a backlog of applications for both Discretionary Housing and Hardship payments so the figure for the number of applications is likely to increase however, as awards are made for the whole year, the total paid out figure will increase at a lower rate as we move through the financial year.
20. There is no distinct group that are applying for additional support through the hardship scheme that would suggest a need to alter the current Council Tax Support Scheme. Given the current level of demand it is recommended that the Hardship Scheme budget is maintained at £30,000 for 2022/23.

Council Tax Collection Rate

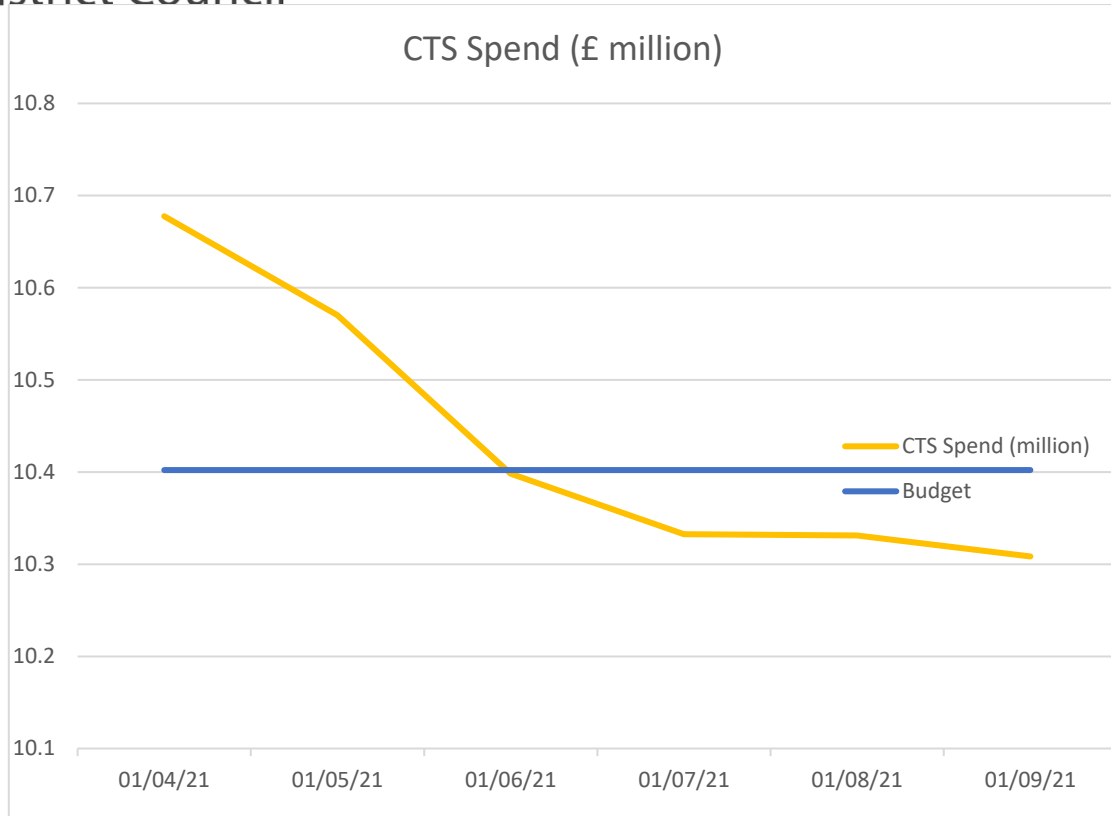
21. Council Tax Collection Rates dipped at year end 19/20 due to the pandemic so we cannot reliably report on the impact of the new scheme on collection rates, as a soft approach to recovery was taken during the 2020/21 year due to the pandemic. For many households their annual bill was the first notification they have received showing their arrears.
22. No summons have been issued due to the ongoing pandemic.

Growth in the Number of Recipients

23. It is very difficult to assess growth in demand due to the pandemic and the change in emergency measures that have been rolled out over the past two years however, as these measures come to an end, we would expect to see an increase in the caseload. This is reflected in this year's monitoring (see graph above) however, it is still too early on in the recovery period to make any informed projections as we move into a period of uncertainty with the economy and ongoing short term temporary hardship measures.

Financial Implications

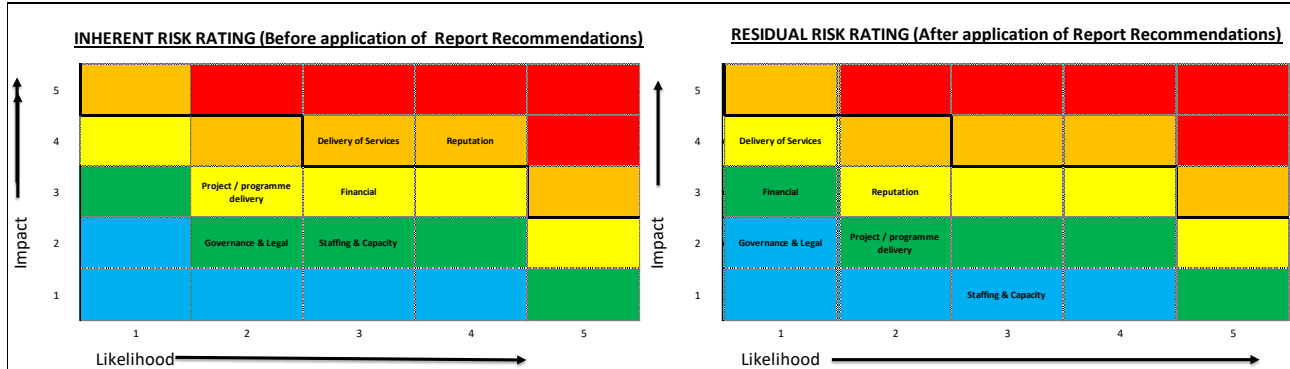
24. The scheme was set with an overall budget of £10.402 million for 2021/22. The current profile shows £10.308 million allocated for the year however, this is likely to increase with the removal of the Universal Credit uplift and we will also see a smaller dip with the recently announced changes in Universal Credit taper around December / January time.



Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

25. Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012

Risk Matrix



Risk Ref	Risk Category	Inherent Risk Rating	Residual Risk Rating	Risk Description	Mediation / Controls
1	Project / programme delivery	13	8	Potential second shut down of system due to additional testing. Challenge of administering a change to processes in line with annual billing.	Maintain current system and annual billing progresses in line with timescales and resource
2	Financial	14	6	Risks of additional costs of operations, and impacts on collection rates.	Maintain the current system.....asses the financial impacts, has modelling...
3	Delivery of Services	19	12	Loss of efficiency in delivery of council tax and housing benefits due to increased admin effort & data requirements	Cannot absorb increased workload
4	Staffing & Capacity	9	4	Reverting to the old scheme will require additional resources from both Revenues and Benefits teams	Cannot absorb increased workload
5	Reputation	20	13	Risk that customers experience delay in receiving Council Tax support, & most vulnerable have to pay more. Inconsistency of support.	Push as a positive change, supporting the most vulnerable...
6	Health & Safety	0	0	0	0
7	Governance & Legal	8	2	Disruption from change may mean SSDC do not meet statutory and internal obligations (KPI's, legislative timescales)	New scheme reduces impact allowing targets to be met without additional resource

Council Plan Implications

- 26. Priority Project 1 - Lead the recovery and revitalisation of our economy and communities to be stronger, more resilient and more vibrant than before Covid-19
- 27. Priority Project 4 - Address child poverty, social isolation and low levels of social mobility across the district

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

- 28. None associated with this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

- 29. An equalities impact was carried out as part of the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Privacy Impact Assessment

- 30. None associated with this report.

Background Papers

- 31. Report to Full Council – January 2021 item 8
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District Executive Forward Plan

Executive Portfolio Holder: Val Keitch, Leader, Strategy and Housing
Strategic Director: Nicola Hix, Strategy and Support Services
Lead Officer: Angela Cox, Democratic Services Specialist
Contact Details: angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

Purpose of the Report

1. This report informs Members of the current Executive Forward Plan, provides information on Portfolio Holder decisions and on consultation documents received by the Council that have been logged on the consultation database.

Public Interest

2. The District Executive Forward Plan lists the reports due to be discussed and decisions due to be made by the Committee within the next few months. The Consultation Database is a list of topics which the Council's view is currently being consulted upon by various outside organisations.

Recommendations

3. That District Executive recommend that the Chief Executive agree to:
 - a) approve the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A
 - b) note the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Executive Forward Plan

4. The latest Forward Plan is attached at Appendix A. The timings given for reports to come forward are indicative only, and occasionally may be re scheduled and new items added as new circumstances arise.

Consultation Database

5. The Council has agreed a protocol for processing consultation documents received by the Council. This requires consultation documents received to be logged and the current consultation documents are attached at Appendix B.

Background Papers

6. None.

SSDC Executive Forward Plan – Appendix A

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
January 2022	SSDC Taxi Policy	Portfolio Holder - Area North	Director Service Delivery	Vicki Dawson, Lead Specialist (Environmental Health)	South Somerset District Council
February 2022	Somerset Waste Partnership Annual Report and Draft Business Plan	Portfolio Holder - Environment	Director Service Delivery	Mickey Green, Managing Director, Somerset Waste Partnership	District Executive
February 2022	SSDC Annual Action Plan 2022/23	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Jessica Power, Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning)	District Executive
February 2022					South Somerset District Council
February 2022	2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budgets and Medium Term Financial Plan	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Karen Watling, Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer)	District Executive
February 2022					South Somerset District Council
February 2022	Capital & Revenue Budget monitoring reports for Quarter 3	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Karen Watling, Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer)	District Executive

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
February 2022	Future Chard Strategy	Portfolio Holder - Area West	Director Place and Recovery	Anna Matthews, Chard High Street HAZ Project Manager	District Executive
February 2022					South Somerset District Council
February 2022	Options to refurbish Yeovil Crematorium	Portfolio Holder - Area South including Yeovil Refresh	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property. Land & Development Manager	District Executive
February 2022	NNDR Retail discount - amendment to existing 20/21 relief	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Alison Hann, Specialist - Revenues	District Executive
February 2022	New mandatory rate relief for Public Lavatories	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Alison Hann, Specialist - Revenues	District Executive
February 2022	Investment Assets Six Monthly update report	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property. Land & Development Manager	District Executive
February 2022	Review of SSDC Commercial Strategy	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property. Land & Development Manager	District Executive
February 2022	Quarterly Corporate Performance Report	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Cath Temple, Specialist (Performance)	District Executive

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
February 2022	Additional discretionary powers to reduce Council Tax liability under Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (amended)	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Alison Hann, Specialist - Revenues	District Executive
February 2022	New Empty Homes Policy document for Council Tax	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Alison Hann, Specialist - Revenues	District Executive
February 2022	Yeovil Refresh Finance	Portfolio Holder - Area South including Yeovil Refresh	Director Place and Recovery	Natalie Fortt, Regeneration Programme Manager	District Executive
February 2022					South Somerset District Council
February 2022	Wincanton Regeneration Programme Finance	Portfolio Holder - Area East	Director Place and Recovery	Natalie Fortt, Regeneration Programme Manager	District Executive
February 2022					South Somerset District Council
February 2022	Briefing on Local Government Reorganisation (Confidential)	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Chief Executive	Jane Portman, Chief Executive	District Executive

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
February 2022	Conclusion of Yeovilton and Limington Community Governance Review	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Angela Cox, Specialist (Democratic Services)	South Somerset District Council
February 2022	Council Tax Setting 2022 - 23	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Karen Watling, Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer)	South Somerset District Council
February 2022	Statutory Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers 2022 23	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Chief Executive	Kirsty Larkins, Director (Service Delivery)	South Somerset District Council
March 2022	Planning Re-imagined Update	Portfolio Holder - Protecting Core Services	Director Service Delivery	Kirsty Larkins, Director (Service Delivery)	District Executive
March 2022	Investment Assets Quarterly Dashboard	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager	District Executive
March 2022	Covid Recovery & Renewal Strategy Progress Quarter 3 Update	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Place and Recovery	Peter Paddon, Lead Specialist (Economy)	District Executive
March 2022 March 2022	Chard Shop Front Design Guide (Supplementary Planning Document)	Portfolio Holder - Area West	Director Place and Recovery	Anna Matthews, Chard High Street HAZ Project Manager	District Executive South Somerset District Council

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
March 2022	Updated NNDR Discretionary Relief policy	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Alison Hann, Specialist - Revenues	District Executive
March 2022	Briefing on Local Government Reorganisation (Confidential)	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Chief Executive	Jane Portman, Chief Executive	District Executive
April 2022	Annual review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Paula Goddard, Specialist (Legal Services)	District Executive
April 2022	Briefing on Local Government Reorganisation (Confidential)	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Chief Executive	Jane Portman, Chief Executive	District Executive
TBC	Update on the delivery of the Economic Development Strategy and funding delivery	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager	District Executive
TBC	Review of the Local Plan	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director (Support Services & Strategy)	Jo Wilkins, Specialist (Strategic Planning)	District Executive

APPENDIX B - Current Consultations – January 2022

Purpose of Document	Portfolio	Director	Response to be agreed by	Contact	Deadline for response
<p>Changes to the capital framework: Minimum Revenue Provision</p> <p>This consultation seeks views on proposed changes to regulations to better enforce the duty of local authorities to make prudent Minimum Revenue Provision each year. Local authorities can freely borrow and invest under legislation and guidance known as the Prudential Framework. Notwithstanding these freedoms, authorities must make sure borrowing is affordable. Where capital expenditure is financed by borrowing, authorities have a statutory duty to set aside revenue funds to repay the principle of the debt; this is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The government has identified that some authorities are not sufficiently complying with this duty and is proposing changes to regulations to make sure that practices are prudent and consistent across the sector.</p> <p>Changes to the capital framework: Minimum Revenue Provision - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>	Finance and Legal Services	Nicola Hix, Strategy and Support Services	Officers in consultation with Portfolio Holder	Karen Watling & Paul Matravers	08 February 2022
<p>Provisional local government finance settlement 2022 to 2023: consultation.</p> <p>This consultation seeks views on proposals for the local government finance settlement for 2022 to 2023.</p> <p>Provisional local government finance settlement 2022 to 2023: consultation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>	Finance and Legal Services	Nicola Hix, Strategy and Support Services	Officers in consultation with Portfolio Holder	Karen Watling & Paul Matravers	13 January 2022



Date of Next Meeting

Members are asked to note that the next meeting of the District Executive will take place on **Thursday, 10th February 2022** as a virtual consultation meeting via Zoom meeting software commencing at 9.30 a.m.

The meeting is being held one week later than usual to allow for completion of the annual budget reports.



Exclusion of Press and Public

The District Executive is asked to agree that the following item (agenda item 12) 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).”

It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption from the Access to Information Rules outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Briefing on Local Government Reorganisation (Confidential)

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Val Keitch, Strategy and Housing
Chief Executive:	Jane Portman
Strategic Director:	Jan Gamon, Place and Recovery
Lead Officer:	Jan Gamon, Director – Place and Recovery
Contact Details:	Jan.gamon@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462095

The Chief Executive and Director for Place and Recovery will provide Members with a verbal update on any matters relating to the future of Local Government in Somerset.