

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a virtual meeting of **Area North (Informal)** held by video-conference using Zoom meeting software on **Wednesday 22 June 2022**.

(2.00 pm - 2.45 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Adam Dance (Chairman)

Neil Bloomfield	Clare Paul
Malcolm Cavill	Crispin Raikes
Louise Clarke	Dean Ruddle
Mike Hewitson (from 2.30pm)	Mike Stanton
Tim Kerley	Gerard Tucker



Also Present:

John Bailey - SCC Division Member

Officers:

Tim Cook	Locality Team Manager
Adrian Moore	Locality Officer
Angela Cox	Specialist (Democratic Services)
Jo Boucher	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

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

1. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2022 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

2. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Tiffany Osborne.

3. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Louise Clarke declared a personal interest in agenda item 9: Making the Most of Martock (M3) – Update as she attended their meetings.

4. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 4)

Members noted the next meeting of Area North Committee was scheduled for Wednesday 27 July 2022 at 2.00pm.

5. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 5)

A member of the public addressed the Committee and raised concerns and frustrations about the delay, lack of communication and inaccessibility of officers regarding a planning application for their business. She gave some context to their situation, and referred to the impact the delays were having on the business. She acknowledged that communication channels had recently reopened with an officer and she asked for a guarantee that this would continue. It was also asked if the planning department could be more accessible, and possibly a more visible way to escalate issues such as those they had experienced particularly regarding absent communication.

The Chairman thanked the member of the public for their comments and questions, and acknowledged the struggles they had experienced. In response, he advised that the comments would be forwarded to the planning department for officers to provide a written response.

Ward member, Councillor Neil Bloomfield, briefly commented and made reference to the phosphates situation and the potential impact of different agricultural practices.

6. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman reminded everyone present that in order to enable members to continue holding remote, virtual meetings, Full Council agreed in December to amend Part 3 of the Council's Constitution to allow its remote meetings to function as consultative meetings and delegate decisions to the Chief Executive.

7. Reports From Members (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Gerard Tucker was happy to advise members that the new cricket nets and bowling machine were now installed and being used at Long Sutton Cricket Club. He thanked Area North Committee for supporting the project with a community grant.

8. Community Grant - Upgrade to High Ham Parish Council's Play Area (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 8)

The Locality Officer presented the report which asked members to consider the awarding of a grant towards the upgrade of the play area at High Ham playing field. He explained that since the report had been published, there had been a revision to the amount of funding requested due to a change of specification for an item of equipment being purchased, which had reduced the installation costs. The updated figures were detailed to members and in summary the parish council were now requesting £9,462 instead of £11,000. He advised that a member of the parish council was present to answer any question from members regarding the project.

Ward member, Councillor Gerard Tucker, noted that although the play area was quite remote within the parish, it was located near to the school and there was often much activity at the playing field many weekday afternoons. He highlighted there had been much fundraising. He fully endorsed the project and proposed the recommendation.

There being no further discussion, it was agreed to recommend to the Chief Executive that a grant of £9,462 be approved, as per the officer recommendation.

The representative of the parish council thanked members for their support.

RESOLVED: That Area North Committee recommend to the Chief Executive that a grant of £9,462 be awarded to High Ham Parish Council towards the upgrade of the play area at High Ham playing field. The grant to be allocated from the Area North capital programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (appendix A).

Reason: To consider a grant funding request for upgrading the play area at High Ham playing field.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

9. Making the Most of Martock (M3) - Update (Agenda Item 9)

The Locality Manager introduced the report which gave a brief overview of what the partnership was set up to do, an update on the current situation with M3 (Making the Most of Martock) and provided members with an opportunity to consider the future relationship of SSDC with the local partnership. He reminded members that the report had initially been discussed at the March meeting of Area North Committee (Informal) where members had deferred the report in order to obtain comments of the representative member to the group. He highlighted that the group did not ask for any funding or officer support from SSDC.

Two members of the public addressed members and some of their comments included:

- A letter from the group, which included their comments, had been circulated to all Area North members. They had no new comments to raise at this meeting.
- Reference to all the good work that the group had done, and does, in the community. It cost nothing for SSDC to be a core partner of the partnership so please could SSDC continue in the role.

County Division Member, Councillor John Bailey, acknowledged the good work done by the volunteers in the community. From making enquiries in his County Councillor role, he understood that Somerset County Council had not formally withdrawn from the partnership. He saw no reason to not support the partnership.

Ward member, Councillor Louise Clarke, commented she could see no reason to stop SSDC representation to M3. She noted it was a fantastic group with many representatives from other groups within the community.

Ward member, Councillor Neil Bloomfield, commented that no one was saying that the group should not exist. He felt there were some constitutional failings with the group as for example it did not meet in public and there had been no Annual General Meeting. Attendance at meetings had also declining. He noted the group was fairly unique in that it used SSDC branding and he felt the matter of SSDC support was about consistency and equality. He felt it was a question of whether SSDC needs to attach itself to the organisation.

During discussion, some of the comments raised by members included:

- M3 has existed for a number of years and delivered many projects. Now may be a time to not only reflect on what has been done but also the future, and perhaps consider how could be more publicly accessible.
- Any organisation such as this with volunteers should be supported.

In response to other comments made the Locality Officer clarified that:

- From an officer perspective there was no recommendation to withdraw from the group, it was about how we interpret SSDC's role with the partnership.
- Cannot see anything in the activities happening that is inappropriate or aren't supported locally.
- It is a local partnership and SSDC had a representative on the group as we had been asked to have one. No reason why current situation could not continue. It would be difficult to withdraw from something for which we don't actually give any resources to - no funding or officer support is asked for.
- A Community Plan was separate from a Neighbourhood Plan - the latter had a statutory function.
- It was up to members to decide if they wished to continue appointing a representative to M3.

At the request of the Chairman, the representative for the group responded to queries about how their meetings were held. She explained they had previously held meetings in public when community venues had been available free of charge. However, that arrangement had ceased when the venues were no longer available free. Agendas and minutes were available on the website. In response, the Chairman suggested an approach to the Parish Council to ask if they would consider funding a venue for the meetings of M3.

At the end of discussion, it was proposed to continue the current arrangement and for Area North Committee to continue nominating a representative to Making the Most of Martock (M3).

RESOLVED: That Area North Committee recommend that the Chief Executive agrees to continue to nominate a representative from the Area North Committee to the Making the Most of Martock Community Partnership (M3CP).

Reason: To continue to assist the Making the Most of Martock Community Partnership (M3CP) by appointing a District Councillor representative.

(Voting: 7 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions)

10. Area North Committee - Appointment of Members to Outside Organisations and Groups for 2022/2023 (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 10)

The Chairman introduced the item which asked the Committee to review its appointments to outside organisations within Area North.

Some brief updates were provided by the existing appointed members including:

- Somerset Levels and Moors Local Action Group - the last grant had been awarded and there might be some review work to ensure expectations of the

funding have been met. If there was a need to engage, the existing appointed member was happy to continue.

- Langport Abattoir Liaison Group - with the move to a unitary authority both of the existing members would cease to be councillors next year. For continuity, it was suggested Councillor Mike Stanton, as he is also a County Councillor, become one of the representatives and attend meetings with the remaining SSDC member, Councillor Tiffany Osborne.
- Martock Community Planning Partnership (M3CP) - consideration of continuing an appointment to the group had been agreed at the previous item on the agenda. The existing representative was happy to continue.
- Huish Episcopi Leisure Centre Board - the Centre was now run by a private provider. Both appointed members had since been asked, and subsequently advised by Legal, to resign from the Board, which they had done recently. There was much discussion ongoing about how future reporting will take place and to which committee. There was no longer a need for SSDC to make any appointment to the Board.

During a brief discussion a member noted an enormous amount of funding had been provided to Huish Leisure Centre over the years, and he hoped there would be no loss of public access to the facility. In response, the exiting representatives noted there had been much discussion with SSDC officers and the legal team, in order to ensure reporting would continue and that user agreements are honoured.

It was proposed, and unanimously agreed, to make the following appointments for the 2022/23 municipal year:

- Somerset Levels and Moors Local Action Group Executive Board – Councillor Gerard Tucker
- Langport Abattoir Liaison Group – Councillors Tiffany Osborne and Mike Stanton
- Martock Community Planning Partnership (M3CP) – Councillor Louise Clarke
- Huish Episcopi Leisure Centre Board – Appointment no longer required.

RESOLVED: That Area North Committee recommend to the Chief Executive that the appointment of members to the outside organisations and groups for 2022/2023, be as follows:-

- Somerset Levels and Moors Local Action Group Executive Board – Councillor Gerard Tucker
- Langport Abattoir Liaison Group – Councillors Tiffany Osborne and Mike Stanton
- Martock Community Planning Partnership (M3CP) – Councillor Louise Clarke
- Huish Episcopi Leisure Centre Board – No appointment made

Reason To review and re-appoint Councillors to outside organisations and working groups within Area North for 2022/23.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

11. Scheme of Delegation - Development Control - Nomination of Substitutes for Chairman and Vice Chairman for 2022/23 (Area North) (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 11)

The Chairman introduced the report which asked the Committee to review the appointment of two members to act as substitutes for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in the exercising of the Scheme of Delegation for planning and related applications.

There was no debate. It was proposed that Cllr Crispin Raikes continue to be the first substitute and Cllr Dean Ruddle as second substitute, which was unanimously agreed by members.

RESOLVED: That Area North Committee recommend to the Chief Executive the appointment of Councillors Crispin Raikes and Dean Ruddle to act as substitutes for the Chairman and Vice Chairman to make decisions in the Chairman's and Vice Chairman's absence on whether an application should be considered by the Area Committee as requested by the Ward Member(s) in line with Development Control Revised Scheme of Delegation.

Reason: To review and re-appoint Councillors to act as substitutes for the Chairman and Vice Chairman in the exercising of the Scheme of Delegation for planning and related applications for 2022/23.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

12. Area North Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12)

There was no discussion and members were content to note the Forward Plan.

13. Planning Appeals (for information) (Agenda Item 13)

There was no discussion, and Members were content to note the report that detailed the planning appeals which had been lodged, dismissed or allowed.

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Chairman