

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West (Informal)** held by video-conference using Zoom meeting software on **Wednesday 20 July 2022**.

(5.30 - 6.15 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Jason Baker (Chairman)

Mike Best	Jenny Kenton
Ray Buckler	Paul Maxwell
Dave Bulmer	Tricia O'Brien
Martin Carnell	Sue Osborne
Brian Hamilton	Oliver Patrick
Ben Hodgson	Martin Wale



Officers:

Jo Boucher	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Debbie Haines	Locality Team Leader
Jo Morris	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Kirsty Larkins	Director (Service Delivery)

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

19. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th June 2022 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

20. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Val Keitch, Robin Pailthorpe and Garry Shortland.

21. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

Councillors Dave Bulmer, Martin Carnell, Jenny Kenton and Jason Baker declared interests in Agenda Item 7 – Grant to Chard Town Council towards The Guildhall Air Conditioning Project, as members of Chard Town Council. They indicated that they would not take part in the vote on the item.

22. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 4)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Area West Committee would be held on Wednesday 17th August 2022 at 5.30pm.

23. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 5)

There were no questions from members of the public present at the meeting.

24. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman made no announcements.

25. Grant to Chard Town Council towards The Guildhall Air Conditioning Project (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 7)

The Locality Team Leader introduced the report which asked members to consider awarding a grant to Chard Town Council towards The Guildhall air conditioning project.

A member queried the community grant assessment score of 5 out of 7 for financial need. In response, he was informed that the score had been reached using the information provided by the applicant on the application form. The member advised that he had looked at Chard Town Council's accounts for 2000/21 and also the balance sheets and noted that there was an underspend and also large deposits in various savings accounts as well as a Guildhall 'sinking fund'. He did not see how the grant could be justified bearing in mind the limited amount of grant funding available given the financial position of the Council.

The Committee was addressed by a representative from Chard Town Council. He advised that the Council had overspent against its budget last year by £128,000. The Council was allowed to earmark reserves to enable it to save up for various projects. He said that with regard to this project, the Council had secured some additional funding. The Guildhall was a Grade II listed building and therefore funding was required to be available should any works need to be undertaken in an emergency and reference was also made to increasing energy costs. The project was not just about making The Guildhall a more comfortable venue to use but was also part of the Resilience Strategy to be used as and when it was required for a safe place in case of emergency.

During the discussion on the item, some members felt that there did need to be a contingency amount for the building. The Guildhall was a prominent listed building in Chard and South Somerset as a whole and was well used by people in and around Chard and it was sensible to have air conditioning in the building.

It was noted that the Town Council had allocated monies for various projects that would happen throughout the year and it took time for the projects to develop but in time the available funds would be spent.

At the conclusion of the debate, it was proposed and seconded to approve the recommendation as outlined in the report. On being put to the vote, there were 6 votes in favour, 1 against and 6 abstentions.

RESOLVED: That Area West Committee recommend to the Chief Executive that a grant of £5,000 be awarded to Chard Town Council towards The Guildhall Air Conditioning Project, to be allocated from the Area West capital programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (Appendix A)

Reason: To consider a grant funding request towards Chard Towns Guildhall Air Conditioning Project.

(Voting: 6 in favour, 1 against, 6 abstentions)

26. Grant to Broadway Parish Council towards Playing Field Redevelopment (Executive Decision) (Agenda Item 8)

The Locality Team Leader introduced the report which asked members to consider awarding a grant towards Broadway Playing Field Redevelopment.

During the discussion on the item, members supported the application, commenting that there was an increasing population in Broadway and the playing field was also close to the school and in desperate need of attention. Members felt that the project would be a huge asset to the village and were pleased to see that other sources of funding had been secured.

In response to a member question, the representative from Broadway Parish Council advised that the school had its own playing field which they used during school hours. The state of the village playing field was close to being unusable, but discussions had been held with the school regarding opportunities for the field to be used in the future with accessibility for all pupils including those with disabilities. Members noted the escalating rise of costs associated with the project since the application was submitted but with the help of the grant these costs would be absorbed.

The Locality Team Leader confirmed that Section 106 funding had been secured.

At the conclusion of the debate, members unanimously approved the recommendation of the report.

RESOLVED: That Area West Committee recommend to the Chief Executive that a grant of £4,252 be awarded to Broadway Parish Council towards Broadway Playing Field Redevelopment, to be allocated from the Area West capital programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (Appendix A)

Reason: To consider a grant funding request towards Broadway Playing Field Redevelopment.

(Voting: unanimous)

27. Area West Forward Plan (Agenda Item 9)

In response to a member comment regarding Crewkerne Mill and his disappointment over the Historic Buildings at Risk report not coming forward, the Director – Service

Delivery confirmed that Crewkerne Mill was one of the four buildings across the district that were being urgently prioritised to ensure that they did not deteriorate any further. The Director – Service Delivery agreed to arrange for officers to liaise with the local members with a view to providing an update on the building.

With regard to a member comment concerning the Court Room in Chard, the Chairman advised that officers had been working with the owners for some time and the issues were likely to be resolved in the near future.

Several other members also commented about the need to see an Historic Buildings at Risk report coming forward and in particular mentioned the Manor Farm buildings in Haselbury Plucknett.

The Chairman reminded members of the capacity issues with providing this report and that the Local Government Review was taking up a lot more officer time which was a priority at the current time.

Members noted that the Ilminster Section 19 Flood report had not yet been received from Somerset County Council.

The Chairman advised that the report on the Chard Eastern Development Area Relief Road Options had been delayed in order to give Officers extra time to work with the consultants to ensure that all the options were brought forward for consideration.

At the conclusion of the item, members were content to note the Forward Plan as outlined in the agenda.

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

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Chairman