

## **Area Development (North) – Review of 2015-16**

*Assistant Directors:* Helen Rutter / Kim Close, Communities  
*Service Manager:* Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)  
*Lead Officer:* As above  
*Contact Details:* charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462565

### **Purpose of the Report**

To report on work undertaken by the Area Development (North) Service during 2015-16 and to look ahead to 2016-17.

Councillors are asked to contact the Area Development Manager (North) or other named contacts in advance of the meeting with requests for further information.

### **Public Interest**

Area Development teams support the council's four Area Committees (North, South, East and West) to secure investment in local social, economic and environmental priorities for Yeovil, the market towns and rural areas of South Somerset.

This is our end of year report for 2015-16 which also looks ahead to 2016-17.

### **Recommendation**

(1) Note and comment on the report and presentation

#### **1. About Area North Development – and what was achieved in 2015-16**

The work of the Area Development Service broadly is designed to support the community leadership role of the Area Committees and local ward members covering:-

- Community development which supports locally led innovation and investment;
- Local access to services (face to face and help to use services on-line)
- Community engagement and local partnerships – including our work with town and parish councils.

Neighbourhood Development Officers work to make a difference to local social, economic or environmental well-being. We use the principles of 'Asset Based Community Development' to achieve this. This means making the most of local opportunities rather than a focus on 'gaps' and problems.

The team works with other SSDC services to help deliver the Council Plan and other relevant strategies and can assist with (or find other sources of help for) community led project planning, consultation, securing resources, delivery and evaluation. This can include frequent contact lasting some years or be a very 'light touch' depending on the needs of the group and significance of the project to SSDC Council Plan.

- During 2015-16 Area North supported over **40 community based projects / programmes**, (illustrated on the map in Appendix B). This includes work led by a community group or partnership, or directly by SSDC.
  - Area North awarded grants of **£25,891** to **16** of these projects, worth a total overall investment of **£197,482**. This is an average grant of 13% of project costs and means that for every £1 of grant from SSDC a further £6.60 will be raised by the community from local fundraising or by other external investment. A list of community grants awarded during the year is included in Appendix A. Grants can help with feasibility work, as well as new equipment and improvements to buildings.
  - In addition to the above – the new village hall at Tintinhull was awarded £40,000 towards a scheme worth £1,128,520 – which is a grant of 3.5% of project costs. This grant is subject to a successful bid to the Big Lottery.
  - Area North supports four Local Information Centres in Somerton, Langport, Martock and South Petherton through an annual service level agreement worth £500 (£2000 in total). During 2015-16 a total of 7000 residents and visitors were helped during **3000 hours of volunteering**.
  - A map showing the range of projects supported by the area team during the year is attached at Appendix B. It indicates where SSDC has also made a financial contribution during the year or in previous years. The vast majority of projects are community led, with some support for guiding plans, helping with consultation and research, and making links with other services.
  - In addition to supporting the above projects the team handled **260 enquiries** for information, project support, guidance, printing or hire of equipment made by ward members, volunteers from local charities and trusts, town and parish councils, residents, local businesses, internal SSDC services and other public sector services.
- We considered the impact of around 20 planning applications in Area North, and made consultation responses to the Development Management service or undertook simple research to assist with the case officer's assessment.
- There is one SSDC community office service point in Area North based in the Langport Information Centre. During 2015-16, **1244 customers accessed services face to face**, including 692 for help with housing, benefits, waste and council tax. 9A more detailed report on the community office service will be presented later this year.)

The presentation of this report will highlight work which supported the achievement of the Committee's and local ward members' priorities.

## 2. Looking ahead – 2016-17 budgets

**Community Grants.** The Council's community grants programme is managed by the Area Development service. The award of grants up to £1000 is delegated to the Area Development Manager in consultation with the ward member. Grants over £1000 are awarded by the Area Committee. There is **£10,680 to support community led projects** through community grants in Area North during 2016-17.

**Capital Programme.** The Area Committee capital budget is used improve or create physical assets for local benefit with a value of at least £10,000 for a scheme led by SSDC or as a community grant of at least £250. There is currently **£160,000 for future allocation** to local priority schemes in the Area North Capital Programme for the next 2-3 years. The current Area North capital programme is attached at Appendix C.

**Area Reserves** This is a one-off fund held as a special reserve by the Area Committee. There is **£16,600 to allocate for future years**. In addition there is £10,000 allocated to support the progress (in exceptional circumstances) of schemes for affordable housing as part of the Area Committee's priorities. This includes provision to support the creation of a new Community Land Trust in the Seavingtons parish.

Allocating the budgets available to the Area Committee requires a good understanding of local needs and priorities, and we encourage ward members to be fully involved working closely with a Neighbourhood Development Officer.

A revised **Area Development Plan (ADP)** for 2016-17 will be presented to the committee in the near future, and ward members are encouraged to highlight any particular issues or opportunities in the wards. The ADP is largely a work plan for the area team, and should also reflect delivery of the Council Plan and other key strategies.

**Attachments: -**

- Appendix A – Area North Community Grants 2015-16
- Appendix B – Area North Development 2015-16 – map of projects supported
- Appendix C – Area North Capital Programme

## **Council Plan Implications**

The service considers the implications for the Council Plan when negotiating support for local projects, handling enquiries and assessing grants.

## **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

None directly from this report. There are a number of local initiatives designed to promote carbon reduction for example promoting sustainable tourism. In particular where we are asked to support buildings projects, applicants are expected to assess the business case for energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Opportunities for sustainable transport and promoting local self-containment are encouraged.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None directly from this report. Projects and initiatives will be designed or assessed for support using the principles of equality analysis, and many will make a direct contribution to the Council's Single Equality Scheme. For example projects for community facilities will be expected to demonstrate accessibility and other considerations to promote equalities and diversity objectives.

**Background Papers:** *None*

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