

ILMINSTER DIVISION DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT JULY 2018

SCC FULL COUNCIL

The overriding priority for SCC is ensuring its financial sustainability and stability as it faces significant financial challenges. The work is being organised under five Key Lines of Enquiry, supported by existing staff, and the Senior Leadership Team is meeting on a weekly basis to keep this at the top of their agenda. There is a significant gap in SCC's finances, which has to be tackled with urgency. Projected overspends, which after month two stood at £12m., has to be significantly reduced to a more acceptable level.

The 10-Point Plan, which includes a recruitment freeze on all roles, has been updated, with few exceptions such as frontline social workers.

Immediate actions include putting on hold some ICT projects, reducing the volume of printing of HR documents to all staff, including those working in schools.

Efficiency and savings suggestions from staff have been actively sought and welcomed.

Info. can be found at <http://change.somerset.gov.uk/home/what/members/infosheets/>

SCC AUDIT COMMITTEE

Cllr. Clare Aparacio Paul has been appointed as the new Chair of this committee.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

A meeting with local residents relating to adult social care concerns has so far met with no response from officers. I am continuing to pursue this.

A call has gone out for more volunteer drivers to help people get to medical appointments, day care centres, schools etc. Mileage expenses will be reimbursed at up to 50p per mile. Drivers need to be over 18, have a four-door car, a current driving licence and commit to as little as one hour per week.

Call 01278 664180 email youcando@cswwgroup.co.uk or visit www.somersetvolunteer.co.uk

SCC – SCRUTINY FOR ADULTS & HEALTH

A Learning Disability Service update was received, and a number of questions raised in relation to concerns over the contract with 'Discovery', and the extent to which staff are considered to be stakeholders (or not) and the fact that the promised report from Adult Social Services was not made available in good time.

SCC PLANNING CONTROL SERVICE

The quality of the service has declined over the last 6 years and is struggling to meet expectations, resulting in an increase in complaints, appeals, and an upheld Ombudsman complaint. This has been as a result of a reduction in resources and the difficulty in recruiting staff to deal with the current backlog of applications relating to SCC, minerals and waste. Applications are taking 18.7 weeks to determine, exceeding the govt. requirement of 13 weeks. Plans to improve the service over the next 18 months are progressing.

SOMERSET WASTE PARTNERSHIP

Where local residents may be experiencing problems with foxes/badgers, particularly in relation to food waste bins, the suggestion has been that food waste be bagged and kept in the freezer between collections.

With the continuing hot weather, SWP have agreed that all waste collections will start at 6am to ease the pressure on crews and vehicles. This change will stay in place until cooler weather returns. Residents are asked to ensure that all waste containers are out on time.

It may be useful to bookmark the SWP website www.somersetwaste.gov.uk

COUNTY FARMS

Alex Meletiou, who has been overseeing the disposal of county farms, has now retired. As yet there has been no announcement in relation to any proposed replacement.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (DSFRS)

An update was received this month on Red One Ltd., the commercial arm of the DSFRS, where significant work is required to be done in order to secure a more positive future.

CHILD SAFETY

The Child Criminal & Sexual Exploitation session for parents held in Chard was well attended and well received. As well as demonstrating what sexual exploitation is, there was some useful information on how to spot the signs, along with information on 'County Lines', the practice of gangs grooming children and using them to move drugs around. Although not yet significant in this area there is a need to be vigilant. Those attending expressed concern about the reduction in the police service in the area, and its impact on such activity.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Over the summer period work is being carried out to begin shaping the Children & Young People's plan for the next 3-year period. Questions are being asked around the robustness of the budget. SCC are working with the LGA to try to find a compromise in relation to the current overspend and the fact that the base budget may need to increase significantly.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The cost of an annual season ticket has been increased by £100 to £775.

CREWKERNE/ILMINSTER SCHOOLS

Despite several requests on behalf of those local schools, there has yet to be any further action, which is causing concern amongst those who may be affected. The head teacher of Swanmead School has publicly stated his desire for retaining the current 3-tier system.

HIGHWAYS

There are no additional planned roadworks within the division not previously notified.

WINSHAMS SIS SCHEME

This scheme to consider pedestrian safety improvements has been assessed, score-carded, reviewed and recommendations have been presented to the SIS panel for approval to progress to the design stage. The next step will be to commission the scheme to an engineer resource, after which the scheme will again be assessed before progression. SCC will be in touch in due course to advise of programme key milestones.

ASHILL

In relation to resident concerns raised over the missing handrail on the approach to the church, I have received the following response from the new Rights of Way Officer, George Montague. "When I looked at this path, some months ago now, no handrail was evident on site. Having just taken over the area, I do not know how long the handrail had been missing prior to my visit. I said that a handrail was not needed as it is a rural footpath with not too much of an incline. There are many much steeper paths out there that do not have hand rails. Should the parish require a handrail they are welcome to install one."

TRANSPORT – NIPPY BUS

SSVCA's monitoring of the service has enabled SCC to develop a timetabled service not requiring pre-booking. They have identified that most journeys being made on the current Slinky replacement service take place between 0900 and 1400.

This information also shows where users live allowing for routes in the area to be designed, covering those villages where current users live and providing journeys within the times they currently travel. The intention is to introduce a timetable bus service from Mon. 3 Sept. to be known as the Ilminster Shuttle following three routes:

S1 Ashill – Broadway – Horton – Ilminster

S2 Shepton Beauchamp – Barrington - Puckington – Stocklinch – Whitelack'ton – Ilminster

S3 Ilton – Ilminster

All three services, provided by the SCC fleet using a low floor accessible minibus will operate Mon. – Fri. and will be registered as a local bus service, allowing English National Concessionary Bus Passes to be accepted. As the first journeys commence on or just after 9am SCC will allow residents to use these passes before the statutory 0930 start time as the service is infrequent, and fares will match those currently being charged.

SCC are looking to replace the previous N6 service operated by Nippybus (with N10 connections to Taunton) by connecting to the 30 service to Taunton; linking the Shepton Beauchamp route on Mon./Wed./Fri. and the Ashill route on Tues./Thurs., and providing a Mon. – Fri. link for Ilton residents.

The timetable will provide all villages served with at least one return journey each week day to access local services in Ilminster.

Once operational it may be necessary to amend the service and it is important to realise that resources are limited to one bus which can only be in one place at one time, allowing for breaks for the driver.

These changes will target SCC's resources better to the patterns of demand and have no effect on the Chard & Ilminster Slinky Bus which will continue operating as now. It is likely that most of the current N6 journeys will be accommodated, but this cannot be guaranteed.

SSDC LEADERSHIP

At this month's full council meeting Cllr. Val Ketich was appointed the new leader, to take effect from September.

SSDC TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

The meeting held at Henhayes (Crewkerne) this month, at which local parishes were invited to attend and raise any questions, was poorly attended. The selection process for the proposed new job roles within SSDC has now been completed and service re-design is under way, with the intention of introducing new ways of working in Jan. 2019.

An update on the Connecting Devon and Somerset broadband position was received. For more info. – matt.barrow@devon.gov.uk or visit www.conectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk

LIBRARY SERVICE

An update on the recent consultation has been received. Members of the public have expressed concern about the consultation process, and the impact that any proposed changes will have on the most vulnerable members of the community. Response to the various methods used to communicate with the general public and other interested parties is felt to have been highly successful. The results are still being analysed. Final recommendations are scheduled to be presented at the Scrutiny meeting on 9th Oct. Regular meetings between officers and the Friends of Ilminster Library continue as the implications and feasibility of the various options is explored further.

CRESTA POOL

Cresta Pool in Chard is owned by SCC and operated by 1610. Past its expected lifespan of 20 years a recent condition survey indicated that repair and improvement costs are well over £1m. In response to the report received by SCC's Leisure Strategy, agreement was reached to progress with the intended closure as Community Leisure provision is not a statutory duty for SCC.

A considerable amount of concern has been expressed by a number of local user groups over the proposed closure, largely in relation to the lack of consultation and notice given. I am meeting with the cabinet members and local councillors involved next week. SCC have stated their intention to finalise the decision by mid-August to close the pool on the 3rd Sept. This gives 1610 time to organise their exit from the facility, work with staff to redeploy where possible.

It has been suggested that arrangements are made to use alternative pools at Crewkerne and Axminster, but apparently there is no capacity at either.

I am awaiting a response from SCC in relation to questions I have raised concerning the additional cost of transport and the impact on the school curriculum timetable.

SCC has mentioned that the regeneration plans for Chard, led by SSSC, include a new pool/leisure facility. It is however unclear as to when these plans will come to fruition.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/7	Ilminster Bowling Club charity quiz
2/7	Neroche School governance meeting
2/7	Child Criminal & Sexual Exploitation Session
2/7	Ashill Parish Council meeting
3/7	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service HR committee
3/7	SCC – Scrutiny for Adults & Health Committee
4/7	Warehouse Theatre performance
6/7	Honeypot Charity/South Somerset MIND fund raising event
9/7	Donyatt PC meeting
9/7	Dowlish Wake PC meeting (5 mins. – in the car park!)
10/7	SCC – Policies & Place Scrutiny Committee
10/7	Horton – resident meeting
10/7	Taunton & Somerset Samaritans AGM
11/7	Broadway PC meeting
11/7	Winsham PC meeting (not quorate)
12/7	SCC Health & Wellbeing Board meeting
12/7	Greenfylde School reading support
12/7	Fairtrade meeting
13/7	DSFRS forum – Exeter
13/7	Neroche school head teacher appraisal
13/7	Neroche School Assembly
14/7	Friends of Ilminster Library meeting
14/7	Fire Warden training
15/7	Isle Valley Benefice
16/7	Ilminster Literary Festival meeting
16/7	Horton PC meeting
16/7	Neroche School Governor meeting
17/7	SSDC – Adult Social Services meeting
17/7	SSDC – Regulation committee
17/7	Ilminster Town Council
17/7	Winsham PC meeting
18/7	SSDC Area West Strategy priorities workshop
18/7	Area West
19/7	Neroche School teacher interviews
19/7	Neroche School Sports Day
19/7	Swanmead School Celebration of Achievement evening
20/7	SSDC - appeals training, Somerton
20/7	Ilminster Football Club Charity Quiz
21/7	Chard Museum Heritage Day
22/7	Dowlish Pavilion Open Day
23/7	Friends of Ilminster Library meeting with SCC officers
23/7	Police & Crime Commissioner meeting - Ilminster
24/7	Dowlish Wake church cookbook meeting
29/7	Ilminster Bowling Club – Charity Quiz for Carnival Club
30/7	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service board meeting
30/7	DSFRS Chief Fire Officer appraisal