

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT AUGUST 2019

SCC FINANCES

The 2018/19 Statement of Accounts has been given an 'unqualified' opinion (the top grade). Before the auditors are able to conclude their overall opinion, they will look in more depth at the robustness of budgets for Adult and Children Social funding, where there is increasing demand.

SCC COUNCILLOR IMPROVING LIVES GRANT FUND

After discussion with local community groups I have now been given approval to utilise my £2k to purchase trees for the 11 villages in the division, and also Ilminster town, to enhance the health and well-being of the environment within these communities.

I am in communication with Chris Cooper, SSDC's Environment Services Manager, and it is intended that residents and representatives of local groups will want to be involved in assessing suitable species, in addition to the siting and planting of the trees.

MENTAL HEALTH

As part of a national drive to improve emotional support in schools, SCC has been granted £1m. over the next three years to deliver Emotional and Mental Health Support for Young People utilising trailblazer mental health support teams across the County.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (DSFRS)

Discussions relating to proposed changes to the service continue to generate a high level of interest. The link is

<https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/News/Newsdesk/PressReleaseArticle.cfm?ReleaseID=2250&siteCategoryId=3&T1ID=26&T2ID=36>

FREE BUSINESS TRAINING

Social enterprises, charities and cooperatives can sign up for free bespoke training, between Sept. 2019 and Jan. 2020, plus a grant of £1,200. This is supported by match funding of £250k. from SCC which will enable drawn down of England European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

FLOODING

SCC have bid for funding schemes to help the county to adapt to climate change by reducing flood risk through natural flood management. The resulting 'co-adapt' project will bring £253m. from the European Regional Development Fund over the next 3½ years, which is unaffected by Brexit. The Somerset Flood Action Plan, drawn up in the wake of 2013/14 winter floods, included a commitment to develop land management actions to reduce flood risk.

ILMINSTER DRAIN CLEARANCE

Shudrick Lane, Ditton Street, North Street, East Street and Silver Street are all being cleaned on an annual round, but with SRA funding they are currently being cleaned every six months. The last time they were cleaned was between May and July 2019.

It has been agreed that in future ITC will be informed each time drain clearance is carried out.

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-blocked-drain-on-the-road/>

WINTER GRITTING

The Highways gritting policy review has been completed. The first deliveries of salt for the forthcoming winter have started arriving at depots. This winter SCC are investing an additional £22k. into the service, in response to feedback on reassessing the criteria used to determine which roads will be gritted. Precautionary gritting will now take place on 900 miles of road each time ice or snow is predicted. A map of the routes is at

<https://somersetnewsroom.files.wordpress.com/2019/07/winter-service2019>

ILMINSTER FLOODING UPDATE

In the short-term SCC have secured an increase in the frequency of highway drainage maintenance in the area linked to the level of flood risk. Minor highway improvements and maintenance activities have been undertaken or are planned. SCC have been working with property owners affected by flooding to identify and implement measures that will make their homes and businesses more resistant and resilient to flooding.

Longer-term actions include conducting detailed modelling and a study to quantify the risks and identify options for more significant schemes. The study would provide the evidence to support applications for funding from various sources for more significant flood alleviation schemes. SCC have already had discussions with the Environment Agency about how a new model for surface water can benefit their modelling of the river. SCC's recent budget pressures, and the need to find savings, has meant that the study was not funded within the expected timescale, but funding for the study in this financial year has been secured, and SCC will shortly be tendering the work with a view to completion by March 2020.

ILMINSTER TRANSPORT

SCC officers met with Buses of Somerset recently, who have confirmed they would be unable to source suitable vehicles within their existing fleet to be able to provide a service through the villages between Ilminster and Taunton. Obtaining a new vehicle, along with associated costs, would amount to around £100k per year.

As any additional service may abstract passengers from the 30 service, SCC first need to ensure that Buses of Somerset had no objection to approaching other operators. They have now confirmed that they would have no objection to local parishes funding an additional service, using a different operator.

SCC is unable to contribute any funding towards a replacement bus service. However, if parishes along the route were to agree to fund a new service, SCC would be happy to hold the contract with a bus operator and provide any further advice required.

I continue to meet regularly with a local resident to consider options to try to move this forward.

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND (HE) - A358 UPGRADE

Documentation relating to the preferred route of the A358 upgrade is at https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/taunton-to-southfields-dualling-scheme/user_uploads/a358_taunton-southfields_brochure_final_digital_19.06.19.pdf

Locally, a number of comments have been received:

There is a lack of conviction that "a lane connecting east-bound traffic arriving on the A358 from the north will enable such traffic to filter directly onto the A303" or will resolve congestion on the Southfields roundabout, especially for Broadway/Ashill residents; the dualling of the A358 will mean a greater volume of traffic attempting to cross the exit of the A358 from the Chard direction onto the roundabout.

Additional traffic heading west on the A303 will use the A358 to access the M5, rather than the A303 through the Blackdowns. This traffic will go around the roundabout, preventing traffic on the A358 from Chard entering the roundabout and westbound vehicles on the A303 will be obstructed. It is likely that more vehicles on the A303 coming from the west, and those coming from Ilminster, will use the dualled A358, making it more difficult for traffic on A358 from Chard direction, and those on the A303 from the west, to enter the roundabout.

It is felt that a formal professional technical analysis is required to influence the design of the current A358 proposal, the impact of it, the capacity of local roads to take the increase in traffic, impact on highway safety, and what the alternatives are. This may provide evidence that the highway network serving Broadway/Ashill lacks the capacity to take additional traffic generated by further development, which will have a negative impact on the lives of residents.

Broadway are to discuss this further their next meeting on 3 Sept.

HIGHWAYS

For Traffic Management enquiries use the following email TrafficManagement@somerset.gov.uk
For South Somerset county roads issues email countyroads-southsom@somerset.gov.uk

PLANNED ROADWORKS

ILMINSTER – concern has been raised in relation to the planned closure of Station Road, West St., High St. and Butts for 3 days on 11th Sept, and the high level of disruption this may cause.

SSDC PLANNING

Members of Ashill PC attended SSDC's Regulation Committee this month to express concern over discrepancies between the recorded transcript of the meeting in July, and the written minutes. This continues to be pursued and has my full support.

I have been alerted to a number of ongoing planning/highways linked concerns by a number of parishes locally – including Donyatt (visibility splays), Allowenshay (new water mains), Dowlish Wake (footpaths & waste management), and am in contact with the relevant officers.

SSDC LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

Members of Broadway PC have been working on how the Parish Council should respond to SSDC's consultation on the preferred options for a revised local plan, 2016-36.

It is felt that this represents an unwelcome U-turn in SSDC's planning policy, which could have significant and damaging implications for rural communities.

A meeting is to be arranged in Sept. to enable misgivings about the revised plan to be put directly to officers responsible for drafting the plan and to take account of responses to the consultation.

SSDC LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

This consultation of the preferred options closes at 5pm on 18th Sept.

<https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/planning-policy/local-plan-review-2016-2036/>

SCHOOL PLACES FORECAST

The new Education Infrastructure Growth Plan, which outlines the approach to school place planning and expected demand, is now available at:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/school-placeplanning-infrastructure-growth-plan/>

CREWKERNE ILMINSTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/crewkerne-and-ilminster-strategic-school-review/>

The consultation on the Futures for Somerset (FfS) report is now complete. There have been several suggestions about future arrangements, including detailed comments on the report, which will be considered by SCC, the Dept. for Education (Regional Schools Commissioner) and affected Schools over the coming months. A further position statement on future arrangements is expected to be available by mid-Autumn. The aim of the review is to secure sustainable education for all children in the area, including maintaining rural schools to support communities, as well as having schools with sufficient resources to support pupils' needs. This has to be achieved within the constraints that apply to all options, notably the affordability of any changes as both schools and the County Council have limited resources, which may mean any changes are phased over a number of years. I have been informed that work will need to be undertaken on the modelling of the options, but no decision will be taken until there has been more in-depth consultation with both schools and the Department for Education (Regional Schools Commissioner). Pupils, parents, staff and governors will be fully consulted on any decisions. If you have any queries or wish to share your views you can continue to do so by contacting Dave Farrow Head of Partnerships DFarrow@somerset.gov.uk

SSDC ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Councillor John Clark, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Commercial Strategy will be holding an open briefing session for elected members on Thurs. 26th Sept. at 6pm at SSDC's offices.

"The six themes of the new Economic Development Strategy include: helping businesses and entrepreneurs, raising skill levels, and making a real difference for residents with superfast broadband, rural productivity and tourism. These initiatives cannot be delivered by SSDC alone, but they are playing a leading role with neighbouring Councils and the Local Economic Partnership.

CHAFFCOMBE VILLAGE HALL COMMUNITY GRANT

At this month's Area West meeting a grant of £5,455 was awarded for improvement works to the hall, to enhance existing facilities.

SSDC COMMUNITY GRANTS

SSDC provide support by funding third party voluntary sector support services, through their community grants programme. Funding is available for:

- Community, voluntary and charitable organisations
- Not-for-profit groups with a signed set of group rules
- Parish or Town Councils
- Other organisations - churches/schools etc., if wider community benefits are shown

SSDC will consider funding between £100 and £12,500 (up to 50% of the application costs)

- Cost of hiring a room/pitch or equipment to help start new activities
- Booking a coach or activity leader to help increase use of local facilities
- Helping to subsidise the cost of transport to get your project moving
- Training for volunteers to make a difference in the community
- Obtaining expert help for designs or other advice and guidance

Larger projects supported by community grants have included:

- Setting up local services such as social enterprises to operate a shop, pub or cafe
- Refurbishing or expanding local community halls and meeting places
- Enabling a new community transport service to start up
- Creating or improving local recreation facilities for all ages
- Starting or developing arts, conservation, education and environment projects

SSDC also aim to fund projects which target particular groups within the community:

- people at risk of, or suffering from, poor health
- people with mental health problems
- children and young people up to age 18
- older people
- people on low incomes
- people facing exclusion in urban and rural areas
- people seeking to improve and develop work or educational skills

It is desirable that applicants have the support of their parish council (which may include a financial contribution). It is also expected that other sources of funding to be considered.

Projects need to be well-planned and managed, as grants are only offered after careful assessment. Applications for more than £1,000 are decided by the Area Committee.

To speak to someone about the grants or obtain an application pack, email communities@southsomerset.gov.uk.

GOOCH CHARITABLE TRUST

The Trustees will be meeting on Fri. 20th Sept. to discuss future grant recipients. Local Ilminster groups wishing to apply for support should go to www.goochtrust.org for more details.

SCC ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

I met this month with the new head of Adult Social Services for South Somerset, Maura Noone, to receive an update on the current situation related to several ongoing issues with local residents.

SSDC STAFF CHANGES

The Monitoring Officer, Angela Watson, and the Section 151 Officer, Paul Fitzgerald, will be leaving shortly. Planning Officer Andrew Gunn is also on the move, and will be taking up the post of Clerk to Chard Town Council.

ILMINSTER LIBRARY

The Friends of Ilminster Library (FoLL) have agreed to fund several items of equipment at the library, and continue to encourage local residents to become involved, in addition to holding regular coffee mornings. The next one will be on Sat. 29th Sept. 10am – 12 noon.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/8	SSDC Scrutiny Task & Finish - Benefits
1/8	Meeting re: Crewkerne/Ilminster Schools
2/8	DSFRA – Appraisals & Disciplinary Committee
3/8	Dowlish Duck Race
3/8	Rotary Youth Leadership fund raiser
4/8	Broadway Hill Methodist Church Café Church
4/8	Whitelackington Open Gardens
5/8	National Citizen Service fund raiser – Taunton
6/8	Ilminster TC - Highways
7/8	Somerset County Show meeting
7/8	Winsham PC
8/8	SCC – meeting re: refugees
8/8	Broadway Hill Methodist Church Chattabox
8/8	Westlands – meeting re: closure of hospice beds
9/8	Neroche school meeting
10/8	Horton Flower Show
11/8	Donyatt VH breakfast
11/8	Horton Flower Show service
11/8	Ilminster Literary Festival trustee meeting
19/8	Friends of Ilminster Library
19/8	Ilminster Literary Festival management group
19/8	Chaffcombe PC
20/8	SSDC - meeting with Leader
20/8	SSDC Regulation Committee
21/8	Chard Museum marketing training
21/8	DSFRS forum
21/8	SSDC Area West
21/8	Ilminster Party on the Park
28/8	Meeting re; Ilminster transport
28/8	Adult Social Services meeting
28/8	SSDC - meeting with Monitoring Officer
28/8	Licensing meeting re: resident concerns
28/8	SSDC Area North meeting
31/8	Friends of Ilminster Library coffee morning
31/8	Chillington Festival