

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT JUNE 2019

SCC

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

In addition to continuing to be a board member, I have also been appointed by SCC to support the Gypsy and Traveller Community and helping to improve relationships with them. In July I will be meeting with the Leader of Mendip DC at Glastonbury to fact find the situation there.

At this month's meeting the criteria for the four key priorities, for the new Health & Wellbeing Strategy, 'Improving Lives', and how these will be measured over the next 10 years.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (DSFRS)

Cllr. Sara Randall-Johnson was re-appointed as Chair for the coming year.

I remain Vice Chair of Human resources and on the Chief Fire Officer's Appraisal Panel.

The 'Safer Together' project went out to consultation on 19th June, with the intention of ensuring that fire appliances and stations are matched more accurately to changing risk and need.

Currently 20% of the service's fire engines are not available, largely due to the difficulty with recruitment. A recruitment campaign is also due to begin this month, along with changes to existing contracts to allow more flexibility.

Discussions have now begun concerning proposed changes to the service, which has generated a good deal of interest. The link is below

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

Following the house fire in Ashill this month, I have met with fire officers to discuss operational procedures in relation to poor water pressure in many of our local villages, and the options available to mitigate the impact of this.

I am meeting with local fire service members in late July.

EARLY YEARS PROVISION

It has been revealed that the yield of children from new housing developments in Somerset is higher than previously thought.

Since September 2017, all eligible three and four year olds have been entitled to an additional 15 hours of funded childcare per week, increasing the number of funded early years places required, which is not reflected in the current level of developer contributions.

DfE guidance indicates that LAs should request contributions from developers to cover the full cost of providing additional early years places for children from new housing developments, and that all new primary schools funded by developers should have nursery provision.

SCC will seek to ensure that there are appropriate third party contributions to support the LA's responsibility to ensure sufficient childcare places for eligible children and to support working parents.

Planning Officers have been advised of the review's outcomes and that a revision to the pupil product ratio requires an increase in the contributions sought from developers under Section 106. Where Community Infrastructure Levy is chargeable, SCC will apply to the charging authority for funding on the same basis.

Section 106 agreements are a mechanism by which a development proposal can become acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable, by focusing on site specific mitigation of the impact of development.

HIGHWAYS

Please note that the Highways email address is not monitored and for Traffic Management enquiries you should use the following email address TrafficManagement@somerset.gov.uk or for South Somerset county roads issues, countyroads-southsom@somerset.gov.uk

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND (HE) - CHANGES TO A358

Highways England have announced the preferred route of the upgraded A358. The consultation document is at https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/taunton-to-southfields-dualling-scheme/user_uploads/a358_taubnton-southfields_brochure_final_digital_19.06.19.pdf

Comments so far include “It is lacking in detail but what appears to be obvious is that there is going to be a huge increase in traffic through Suggs Lane, Broadway, as the road past the Church will not be accessible from the A358, so traffic will need to enter Broadway from other routes which will probably include Suggs Lane. Suggs Lane is not able to take 2-way traffic in places, let alone HGV's etc. The detail of this proposal needs to be looked at in far more depth than appears to be available.”

There will be no new junction on the M5 – the A358 will connect though Jct. 25 via the new link that is being constructed as part of SCC's J25 improvement scheme.

The route will provide a by-pass to the village of Henlade passing through the gap in houses on Stoke Road.

A new junction at Thornfalcon will provide access to the local routes including the A378.

To the East of Thornfalcon the route will broadly follow the existing alignment of the A358 and will be widened to a dual carriageway.

Most of the existing A358 side roads will be closed and a new junction will be formed to provide access, but the exact location will be determined through the design process.

There are likely to be some minor changes to Southfields roundabout, again, these will be determined through the design process.

The route avoids impacts to ancient woodland and public open space

Scheme benefits include:

Reduction in traffic on the road through Henlade from 33,500 vehicles per day to 4,000 vehicles per day by 2038

Improvement in air quality on the road through Henlade which may allow the removal of the Air Quality Management Area

Journeys along the route likely to be between 6 and 7 minutes quicker in the peak hours which equates to circa 30% improvement

Connection directly to Nexus25 will support growth

There is not a programme of activities to accompany the announcement, construction is due to commence in the RIS2 period (2020 to 2025).

This is NOT a consultation, it is a decision that has been made. There will be a statutory consultation further through the process. The community forums will be continued and HE are looking to set a date for the next one in the next couple of weeks.

As part of this announcement HE are making available –

- Scheme assessment report
- Consultation report
- Preferred Route Announcement booklet
- Copies of these will be held by SCC for viewing, they will also be available online (www.highwaysengland.co.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields), and in Taunton Library.

HE have written to landowners and others who may have been affected by other route options from the consultation. They are also sending out 10,000 postcards to people local to the scheme.

CHAFFCOMBE SPEEDING

Since meeting with the Highways officer and local representatives, it is felt that a 30mph limit would not be appropriate for the village. Other options, including signage, are being considered.

PUDDLEBRIDGE SPEEDING

Public notification of the proposed introduction of a 40mph Speed Limit on the Old A303, Puddlebridge, from 60 metres east of its junction with Horton Church Lane to a point 100 metres south west of its junction with Sugg's Lane, has now been published.

PLANNED ROADWORKS

Winsham - Whatley Lane Drainage improvement works. Temp. road closure. 2 - 27 Sept.

Broadway - A358 Broadway St. Drainage improvement works. Temp. road closure. 9 - 13 Dec.

GIGACLEAR WORKS – Temporary Prohibition of Vehicles

Nash Lane, Chillington - from jct. with Hebers Lane for 1015m. going north. 13th July - 15 days.

Sheephouse Farm Lane, Chillington - from jct. Lambert Lane to jct. with Fisherway Lane, for 593m. 1st Sept. for 7 days.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Following the loss of a number of large bus/coach operators from the 'big bus' school transport market, there has been a lack of competition and the School Transport team has seen significant increases to daily contract prices when retendering school transport contracts. Intervention by SCC into the school transport market, by operating its own fleet, will inject competition back into the market, stabilise it and bring down costs.

In-line with the Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, these recommendations would enable vehicles fitted with modern Euro VI engines to be used, with the potential to reduce carbon emissions over time.

Although there are electric and hybrid vehicles in the public bus and minibus market, due to limitations in range and charging infrastructure the availability of electrical vehicles for 55+ seater single deck vehicles is limited. SCC are monitoring developments in this technology, seeking opportunities to trial greener coach technology where possible. Manufacturers are often willing to provide demonstrator vehicles on a short-term, free trial basis and SCC would be keen to support the trial of this greener technology.

ILMINSTER TRANSPORT

This month, along with a local resident, I attended a meeting with transport officers to discuss the current situation in relation to the lack of transport from Ilminster and surrounding villages. Initially, a follow up meeting with First Group is planned to consider options that might be acceptable, including the possibility of a local financial contribution to obtain the desired level of service.

PACT

At this month's meeting updates were provided by representatives of those organisations present, including schools, the police, town council, church, fire service etc. Concern has been raised about the prevalence of cannabis use, dog fouling and the perception of speeding.

SOMERSET WASTE PARTNERSHIP (SWP)

An update was received at the SSDC full council meeting this month. The partnership is ranked as a carbon reduction 'high flyer' and is 4th in the country. A new contract will see several changes to operations, including new initiatives using technology, and increased items that may be re-cycled. Apparently there have been some problems with contact over issues that may arise, such as missed collections. Contact details are 01823 625700 or enquiries@somersetwaste.gov.uk

SSDC

I met with Cllr. Keitch, SSDC's Leader to receive an update on matters relevant to local residents. Transformation plans are on track, and SSDC has been shortlisted for two national awards for their work in this area. Areas that remain of concern include the current level of dissatisfaction with planning. Funds have been put aside to address this as a matter of urgency; recruitment of qualified planning officers is posing a challenge across the country. Introducing the Connect 360 IT system has experienced some glitches, which has impacted negatively on the level of service provided by the Customer Focus Team; the system is expected to be fully up and running in July. I have now been appointed as the SSDC representative to the SW Provincial Employers Panel.

AREA WEST

Prior to this month's meeting, a member workshop was held to consider the key priorities for SSDC, including such issues as tourism, business engagement, community transport, and community safety. A report outlining the key priority areas is expected shortly.

Appointments to local bodies include:

Ile Youth Centre Management Committee – Cllr. Brian Hamilton

Iminster Forum – Cllr. Val Keitch

Meeting House Arts Centre, Iminster - Cllr. Val Keitch

Stop Line Way – Cllr. Jenny Kenton and Cllr. Sue Osborne

SSDC ENFORCEMENT

An enforcement officer is now in place but there remains a backlog of work to be done.

SSDC PLANNING

Concern has been raised re: the cessation of the weekly planning updates that have until now been received by councillors. Consideration is to be given to reinstating this.

Problems experienced by councillors, planning applicants and agents in obtaining direct contact with planning officers has been raised, and options for improving the situation are being considered.

Land West Of School Lane Ashill - 17/04328/OUT

At Area West this month, the decision was taken to refuse the application, contrary to the officer's recommendation. The application will now be referred to SSDC's Regulation Committee for determination.

CREWKERNE/ILMINSTER SCHOOLS REVIEW

I attended a meeting with SCC officers, head teachers and Chairs of governors this month to receive information on the range of options proposed in the report by Futures of Somerset, who carried out the review.

The aim is to make sure that Crewkerne and Iminster schools are financially viable and have the capacity to provide the range of curriculum opportunities to equip children with the skills and qualifications that they will need for the future.

The alternative structures put forward consider a number of factors including the educational impacts of each model at each key stage, the impact on pupils with Special Educational Needs, early years provision (pre-school and nursery), staffing implications, transport costs and communities along with the costs of making any change.

The report does not make proposals or recommendations for change but sets out what is possible. SCC officers have since been meeting with Governors of all the schools in the area, and other interested parties, to seek their feedback on the report, which will then inform decisions about how to proceed. A copy of the report is available at:

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

The report has been shared with professional associations and trade unions and will be discussed at the next meeting of the Joint Negotiating and Consultation Meeting on 16 July.

SCC have set up a short survey to gauge people's views. This is available at:

<http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/IminsterandCrewkerneSchools/answerQuestionnaire?qid=5801283>

Over the summer break SCC officers will decide whether there are option they wish to take forward further or whether there are alternative models to explore. with a view to making a final decision on how to proceed in the autumn term, subject to statutory consultation processes.

SCC APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The following may be of interest to local residents.

Somerset Schools Forum - Cllr Mark Keating

Devon and Somerset Trading Standards Panel - Cllr David Hall

South West Heritage Trust – Cllr. David Hall

FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Authority CEOs and Leaders continue to meet regularly, although recent elections and a change in personnel has caused progress to slow down. Options are still being considered in relation to the possibility of Somerset becoming a unitary authority.

ILMINSTER LITERARY FESTIVAL & ILMINSTER MIDSUMMER EXPERIENCE

This month saw both of these highly successful events, now fully established as part of the Ilminster social calendar, take place. As always, more volunteers are always welcome.

THE MINSTER

The new priest, Jo Stobart, has now been appointed and is expected to be in place by September. The organ requires £46k of work as part of its regular overhaul. A number of fund raising activities are being planned,

POST OFFICE

Ilminster PO rear sorting office to be vacated within the next few months.

HORTON PC

Following the resignation of the current post holder, Horton PC are actively seeking a new clerk.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/6	Chard Museum
1/6 to 6/6	Ilminster Lit. Fest. – various events attended
1/6	Prevent training on radicalisation
2/6	Horton Playing Field Project fund raising breakfast
3/6	Chaffcombe – highways meeting
3/6	SSDC – Licensing training
3/6	SSDC – Licensing sub-committee
3/6	Special Education Needs training – Shepton Mallett
4/6	Children’s poetry final Greenfyld School
4/6	Ilminster TC meeting
6/6	SSDC – Regulation training
7/6	DSFRS annual meeting
7/6	Highways meeting re: Ilminster shuttle bus
7/6	Ilminster Market House - National Book Trust pyjamarama
7/6	Whitelackington art exhibition
8/6 – 9/6	Ilminster Midsummer Experience – various activities
7/6	MP meeting
8/6	Horton councillor meeting
8/6	Ilminster Lit. Fest. writing competition awards
9/6	Donyatt VH breakfast
9/6	United Pentecost Service - BHMC
9/6	Broadway community lunch
11/6	Partners And Communities Together meeting Ilminster
12/6	Winsham PC
17/6	SSDC – Licensing sub-committee (x2)
17/6	SSDC – Press and Social Media training
18/6	Charity fund raising dinner for Donyatt Church
19/6	DSFRS Forum
19/6	SSDC Area West workshop
19/6	SSDC Area West committee meeting
20/6	SCC – Highways meeting re: Ilminster transport
20/6	Charity fund raising event
20/6	SSDC – meeting with Leader
20/6	SSDC full council
22/6	Horton Party on the Park
23/6	Ashill Songs of Praise & Flower Festival
24/6	Neroche School governors’ meeting
25/6	Taunton Food Bank
27/6	Warehouse Theatre performance
28/6	Ashill meeting re: Wessex Water
28/6	DSFRA meeting
28/6	SCC – Commissioning & Social value workshop
29/6	Friends of Ilminster Library coffee morning
29/6	Winsham Family Fun Day
29/6	Donyatt Fete
29/6	Horton church fete
30/6	Horton – St. Peter’s Patronal service
30/6	Crewkerne Deanery - Chillington open air service