

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT DECEMBER 2019

With both SCC and SSDC operating reduced levels of service over the holiday period, response times for some late queries raised have been delayed.

FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Leaders of all four districts and SCC continue to meet regularly but there has been little progress, where levels of engagement are mixed. A number of options have been put forward for consideration, requiring more in-depth detail as to their viability and impact.

SCC – IMPROVING LIVES FUND

Although I have yet to receive official confirmation approval is expected for all four applications for funds of £500 per project.

- Ilminster Town Team – to supply equipment to set up the venture
- Horton Playing Field Project – for play equipment
- Ashill PC – for tree planting
- Green Ilminster – for tree planting

AVON & SOMERSET POLICE – Independent Advisory Group

At the end of Dec. I was made aware of concerns in relation to a possible intruder in the Broadway area. I must reiterate how important it is to report any such incidents, however minor, so that the police may build up a profile of activity, increasing the opportunity for perpetrators to be caught.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The HMICFRS inspection report has now been received. Whilst the service's ability to understand fire risk has been identified as 'good', it also highlights a significant number of key areas that require improvement. Of particular concern is the high incidence of bullying of staff. In relation to proposed changes to the Service Operating Delivery Model, the consultation process has not produced a definite direction. It is expected that there will be some progress early in 2020.

PARKING/TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Across the division this continues to be an increasing problem. Often this is linked to school drop off/pick up times and local residents need to be aware not only of the dangers this poses, but that registration numbers and photographs are being taken and reported to the police.

SSDC - SECTION 151 OFFICER/MONITORING OFFICER

A new Section 151 Officer, Joanne Nacey, has been appointed, and will be joining in March. For the intervening period the interim officer will be Nicola Hix.

The post of Monitoring Officer has not yet been filled. In the meantime Richard Ward (Eastleigh Borough Council) will be working 2 days per week as interim until the appointment is made.

SSDC REGULATION COMMITTEE

In recent months a number of concerns have been raised in relation to some decisions made, in addition to the experience and composition of those serving on the committee, of which I am now a member. I can confirm that, contrary to previous advice issued by SSDC officers, specific Regulation training is NOT a pre-requisite for those substituting for other elected members.

ALLOWESHAY WATER SUPPLY

This situation remains unresolved, amid fears in relation to possible legal costs on both sides.

SSDC - OPIUM POWER - TAUNTON BATTERY ENERGY

This is due to go live in the new year.

SSDC ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

In keeping with the intention of increased focus on this area of activity, 3 new posts have been agreed covering the following areas of operation:

- Built environment – green travel, transport, electric
- Living environment – trees, woodlands, biodiversity etc.
- Communications officer – public information site

In recognition of the climate emergency, the strategy includes an enhanced tree planting programme to offset carbon emissions. The Great Parish Tree Giveaway has been launched, with '50 tree' packs available for up to 60 parish councils.

To claim a pack contact ssdcenvironment@southsomerset.gov.uk by Mon. 3rd Feb. stating your Parish name, contact details and confirming you have landowner permission for the plantings. 60 parish names will be drawn from a hat and the trees will be available for collection between Mon. 10th – Fri. 14th Feb. from Lufton depot Yeovil. Trees should be planted by mid-March at the latest. Each parish/town is asked to nominate an environment champion to co-ordinate this activity.

SSDC PLANNING

Meeting obligations remains a challenge, with some simple applications being outsourced to clear the backlog. The situation is expected to improve in the near future. Where some inconsistency has been identified, it is expected that the appointment of Kirsty Larkins to head up the specialist case team will have a positive impact.

PLANNING UPDATES

Local parishes will be aware that SSDC no longer issue copies of planning decision notices and are advised to use SSDC's online services to sign up to receive notification of decisions. Anyone needing help in doing is asked to contact Debbie.bambury@southsomerset.gov.uk

WINSHAM SIS SCHEME

I met with officers this month, who are keen to initiate early discussions to ensure any scheme proposed will address the issues identified before the design stage is reached. A number of factors are considered:

> The lack of residential parking for the village, especially along Church Street, although this acts as natural speed calming. Any solution would need to minimise lost spaces.

> Winsham is in a conservation area, with a number of listed properties along this stretch of road.

Possible solutions:

Speed bumps

Not considered appropriate. Although it will slow vehicles down, this includes emergency vehicles and buses. Vehicles can cause vibration in nearby homes and noise pollution. Potential loss of parking along Church Street. Illuminated signage is required which also contributes to sign clutter.

Illuminated School Light

A flashing 20mph advisory speed limit at school opening and closing times, to increase visibility of school signs. Drivers are still permitted by law to drive above 20 mph.

Build Outs or Priority Chicanes

Unlikely to reduce speed. If priority is not needed, cars will not have to slow. There will also be a loss of resident parking.

School Lines

Will reduce parking at all times resulting in a significant impact on available resident parking.

Extension of 30mph

Current 30mph zone is correctly placed. Extending it may lessen its impact. The southern end of the village would need to extend into Dorset, and they are not in favour.

Review/Improve Current Measures

Current signage may not highlight hazards effectively and would benefit from improvement, especially on entry into the village, from both the north and south. Consider potential rumble strips, improved village gateways and revised signage.

A358 UPGRADE

Following consultation, the preferred route has now been agreed in principle, giving a broad outline for where the route will run; detailed design work is awaiting the appointment of a design and build contractor by Highways England. Details, such as the number of crossings, will form part of a public consultation period before the design is agreed and submitted. SCC want to ensure that an appropriate level of connectivity is achieved between communities either side of the road and will be working with HE on this. However, the final decision on what is proposed will be up to HE as the scheme promoter.

The main economic benefit of the scheme is reduced journey times (up to 30%) to enable business to be more productive, increase the number of jobs and improve productivity.

I understand that HE is keen to continue a dialogue with communities as the detailed designs are developed. This link to their website highlights local links and community severance as a key issue that they would like to continue to discuss with communities as the scheme develops.

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a358-taunton-to-southfields/>

SCC is keen to see the whole A303/A358 upgraded to dual carriageway and as part of their original case estimated that journey times would be likely to reduce by about ½ hour between the M3 and the M5 in neutral months, outside peak travelling times.

TAUNTON PARK AND RIDE

In response to a query from a member of the public in relation to charges made at the Taunton Park & Ride for concessionary travellers I have received the following response:

Compared to other authorities, Somerset was late in introducing Park & Ride services (2005).

SCC allowed concessionary travel on the service when the Concessionary Fare Scheme was half fare, but found the removal of this provision difficult to achieve when it became free in 2006. SCC took the view that the cost of accepting free travel passes would be onerous on the concessionary fare budget, so decided to exempt this service from the scheme.

SCC have considered changing their policy on this but continue to take the view that the overall budget for local bus services is better spent on providing support to Conventional Bus Services, rather than subsidising fares for those who have access to a car.

GYPSY/TRAVELLERS

A number of meetings have been cancelled or postponed this month. Key issues identified, in addition to the lack of transit site provision, include waste collection and educational provision.

UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS

The Home Office has issued a new consultation on strengthening police powers to tackle this issue.

NALC would appreciate local input to their response.

Send all responses to Jessica.Lancod-frost@nalc.gov.uk by Wed. 19 Feb. 2020.

RIGHTS OF WAY

There has been a flurry of applications for bridleways in the division, causing significant concern to a number of landowners.

SIDs

Several local parishes have expressed interest in obtaining funding support towards the installation of devices in their communities. Subject to criteria being met, this may be available via SSDC's Community Grant scheme.

[/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/communities/grants-and-other-support-for-the-voluntary-and-community-sector/](#)

SALC TRAINING

This may be of particular interest.

Thurs. 13th Feb. - Responding to Planning Applications

The focus will be on the key areas councils should focus on in their role as a consultee in the planning process. Topics will include:

- An overview of the planning system
- The role of the parish/town council
- How councils should respond to applications
- Material planning considerations
- How councils can best get their voices heard

Cost: £30pp for members, £100pp for non-members.

Councils booking 3 spaces will receive an additional space for free.

Time: 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Venue: Edgar Hall, Somerton

FLOODING

Local residents may be interested in the 'Drain Water Watch' initiative set up by Horton Residents, which takes on responsibility for observing activity along drains/ditches to ensure that they remain debris free.

REVENUES & BENEFITS

Some of the backlog has now been cleared (through outsourcing) and waiting times reduced.

CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY

The CAP helpline (0800 328 0006) will reopen on 20th Jan., with new clients being seen from Mon. 3rd Feb. Referral agencies can once again start referring clients with unmanageable debt.

GEMINI CARNIVAL CLUB

Their next fund-raising breakfast will be at Donyatt VH on Sun. 12th Jan. 2020.

FRIENDS OF ILMINSTER LIBRARY

Following this month's AGM, the importance of keeping this group active was emphasised to ensure the future of the library. They are currently looking for a Secretary. Anyone interested should contact the Chairman, David Glossop at foil1.treasurer@gmail.com

There are still a small number of tickets available at £12, for the fund-raising event at the Swan Theatre, Yeovil, 16th Mar. - a performance of "NIGHT MUST FALL", a thriller.

Contact Brenda Lake at brenda.lake@hotmail.com

A coach has been organised to go from The Market House, Ilminster departing at 6.30. £5.00 payable in advance by cash.

2020

As we enter a new decade may this provide the opportunity for us all, as individuals and communities, to continue to work together in harmony to achieve the best results we can to achieve a prosperous, healthy future and to support those who may not have the ability to do so.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/12	Horton Playing Field Project Breakfast
1/12	Donyatt candlelight service
1/12	Horton Advent service
2/12	Gypsy/Traveller site visits – Tintinhull & Ilton
5/12	Fiveways school governor meeting
6/12	Horton Christmas tree lights
6/12	Ashill Christmas tree lights & carol concert
6/12	Whitelackington VH fund raising quiz
7/12	Horton Church Xmas Bazaar
7/12	Minster Christmas Tree Festival
7/12	Ashill Church Xmas Fayre
8/12	Gemini Carnival fund raising breakfast
8/12	Horton Nativity service
8/12	BHMC Carol Service
8/12	Ashill School PTA Christmas Fayre
8/12	Chard Museum Christmas tree festival
8/12	Ashill Christingle service
8/12	Winsham Christmas tree lights
9/12	SCC – re; Winsham SIS
11/12	Fiveways School Safeguarding Audit
12/12	Donyatt carol service
12/12	Warehouse Theatre performance
13/12	SCC – Gypsy/Traveller meeting
13/12	SCC – Gypsy/Traveller education meeting
14/12	Friends of Ilminster Library meeting
14/12	Whitelackington VH table top sale
14/12	Broadway church fund raising quiz
15/12	Horton Christingle service
15/12	Masonic carol service – Combe St. Nicholas
15/12	Broadway carol service
16/12	Wadham School practice interviews
16/12	Horton PC
16/12	FoIL AGM
17/12	SSDC – meeting with CEO
17/12	SSDC – Regulation Committee
17/12	Neroche School Community performance
18/12	DSFRA – Pension Disputes Panel
18/12	DSFRA – member forum
18/12	Horton carol service
19/12	Winsham coffee morning
19/12	SSDC Leader meeting
19/12	SSDC full council
20/12	Donyatt Christingle service
21/12	Whitelackington VH xmas meal
22/12	Horton crib service
22/12	Ashill carol service