

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT OCTOBER 2019

SSDC – Homeless & Rough Sleeper Strategy

There were 478 homeless application decisions taken in Somerset during 2018/19. Of these, 218 were owed a homelessness duty. The most common reason being the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy, and the main priority need was having dependent children. 58% of eligible applicants were aged 25 – 44; with 25% of applicants aged 16-24 year old. 1495 prevention and relief cases were received during 2018/19, with 133 assisted to remain in their accommodation and 516 assisted into alternative accommodation. SSDC is the only Somerset authority with no-one currently housed in B&B accommodation.

SSDC ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY (ES)

At this month's meeting the proposed initial plans for the ES approved, acknowledging that it is still in its early stages.

The objective of the ES is to help achieve the aim of caring for and enhancing the natural environment and to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change by promoting the development and adoption of a sustainable environment, economy and communities in South Somerset and to achieve a reduction in SSDC's carbon emissions.

Support for cycling to work initiatives are part of this.

Four priority outcomes have been identified:

- reduce reliance on fossil fuels
- reduce emissions
- minimise waste and increase recycling
- offset carbon emissions

SSDC are currently the only local authority actively engaging with Somerset Rivers Authority.

Battery Energy Storage Site (BESS)

As part of its increasing its green investments and commit to its new ES, SSDC's Battery Energy Storage site (BESS) is to expand to its maximum capacity by developing another 5MW with SSDC Opium Power Ltd to produce and store more clean and renewable energy, to provide support to the National Grid.

The site near Taunton, developed earlier this year, is one of the largest battery storage facilities in the country. This project is intended to provide a significant financial return over the next few decades and is seen as an important step towards securing Somerset's contribution to help achieve the UK's Carbon Neutral target.

AVON & SOMERSET POLICE - INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP

Operation Remedy was launched 6 months ago to tackle Drugs, Knife Crime and Burglary. Results have been positive, with officers making four arrests per day. There has been a sustained reduction in the number of burglary offences (661 fewer than last year)

Drugs-related arrests are up by 7%, with officers seizing £1.3m. worth of drugs

There has been a 45% inc. in the number of knife possession offences as a result of intelligence-led stop and searches, multiple knife sweeps and active train station presence. Other recent activity has focused on reducing incidents of hate crime, and also heightening awareness of modern slavery in the area.

The recruitment of more officers is actively underway. New Outreach Workers have completed their initial training and are keen to get involved in any community events taking place, with the purpose of driving up recruitment activity within local communities, who are not well represented at the moment. In addition to this, Outreach Workers offer 'Discovery Workshops', where residents can find out more about what it means to work for the police.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Discussion in relation to the future shape of the fire service continues, with significant input from local communities, and those officially representing firefighters.

One of the options being considered is the use of roving appliances, as used by other emergency services, in order to maximise resources, and assist in handling ongoing challenges in relation to the recruitment of on-call firefighters.

BROADBAND UPDATE

In September the Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) board voted to end its contracts with Gigaclear; they were unable to agree an acceptable recovery plan with Gigaclear following significant delays in its roll-out of full-fibre broadband.

Gigaclear is now evaluating its commercial plans for the region, focussing on completing works in progress. Those in areas previously covered by Gigaclear's contracts are advised to contact them for information at <https://www.gigaclear.com/devon-and-somerset>

At central government level there remains commitment to ensuring that residents will benefit from world-class broadband infrastructure. CDS have been working on a new procurement process to commence a tender process to contract new serviced providers. CDS continue to identify companies that are building broadband commercially in the area to gain a more accurate view of the areas that will continue to need public subsidy.

CDS aims to launch the 'Invitation To Tender' process before the end of Dec., with the intention of receiving tenders by late Spring, and to have a preferred bidder in place by Sept., expecting to award contracts by Nov. 2020, once due diligence is complete.

The rural gigabit voucher scheme remains open to all residents. The scheme focuses on aggregated community solutions where there are a number of premises in communities with low broadband speeds. Group projects are when two or more residents and/or SMEs combine vouchers towards the shared cost of installation. The first step is to find a supplier in your area, available from this website page: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/rural/>

The Better Broadband scheme, which may help some residents to secure a basic broadband service remains open until 31 December 2019.

COMMUNITIES PREPARED PROGRAMME

This hub offers in-person training, advice and support for community emergency volunteer groups. Flexible training modules on incident management, flooding, snow and utilities failure are also available as free downloads, along with sample flood and emergency action plans and resources to support volunteer groups, and fundraising. There is also an online members' forum and a map of community resilience activity nationwide, will enable sharing of knowledge and best practice. Visit communitiesprepared.org.uk for more information.

DONYATT TRAFFIC

The section of road around Pound Corner on the approach to the village from the north, and accidents in this area, continues to cause concern, despite traffic calming measures currently being installed.

CHAFFCOMBE ROAD CLOSURE

Considerable concern has been raised in relation to the planned closure by Wessex Water on 4th Nov, for 4 weeks, as this is the main route in and out of Chaffcombe.

Local residents have suggested introducing a one-way system for the village as the other 2 roads are not appropriate for sustained 2-way traffic.

The closure also affects 2 local businesses which use the road.

To date I have not received a response from either Wessex Water or Highways.

RIGHTS OF WAY – LONG DROVE BRIDLE APPLICATION

I met with the officer this month in relation to ongoing case work. The report has now been prepared and a final decision is expected to be taken at SCC's Regulation Committee, possibly in Dec.

SSDC - FIVE YEAR LAND SUPPLY

The Five-year Housing Land Supply Report has now been updated and published on the SSDC web site - <http://membersportal/planning/five-year-housing-land-supply-report/>

The report shows that there is currently a **4.5 year** supply. This is an improvement on the 4 year supply of 2018, but does mean that the adopted Local Plan policies relating to housing supply are considered to be out-of-date for the purpose of making planning decisions, leaving the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

PLANNING

This is an area which continues to give rise to a number of complaints. A new planning portal has been set up in order to make it simpler for members of the public to access information, track applications, and also to report planning breaches or enforcement issues. Concern has been raised over the proximity of any proposed new developments to the A358 trunk road. Highways England (HE) have been sending out sound proofing application forms to those who will live close to the road, which will become noisy if their predictions are accurate. It is felt that in considering future applications planning officers need to take this into account and consult with HE for noise and pollution guidance before approval is granted.

Across the country, a number of village halls are experiencing light and noise issues, as a result of new housing developments being built close to them. Several complaints have been subject to legal action, where the village halls in question have then been liable for substantial bills for sound proofing and other noise abatement solutions.

SSDC AUDIT COMMITTEE

Former District Councillor, Derek Yeomans, has been appointed as Independent Member of this committee for an initial period of one year.

SSDC TRANSFORMATION

Completing the transformation programme continues to pose a number of challenges, with several areas still not operating as expected. Plans are in place to remedy this.

FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local authorities met this month, and concern has been raised about the number of pockets of deprivation across the county which have been identified. It is anticipated that a report, giving options for consideration will be forthcoming within the next few weeks.

SSDC CHRISTMAS WORKING

The front office at Brympton Way will be closed to the public from 3pm on 24th Dec., until 2nd Jan., although staff who choose to work during this period will be able to do so, either office based, or remotely from home.

ALLOWENSHAY WATER SUPPLY

I met with local residents this month with a view to facilitating a meeting with SSDC officers to try to resolve the situation. Discussions are ongoing.

GYPSY/TRAVELLERS

I continue to be in regular contact with officers and others to increase contact with this group, with a view to supporting improvement in their lifestyle, with particular emphasis on health and education.

MUCHELNEY HOUSE

I have been contacted by Yarlington in connection with SCC's decision to remove some of Somerset's Extra Care services.

SCC Adult Social Care have indicated that Muchelney House will be the next Yarlington scheme to be decommissioned from Extra Care.

Residents of Muchelney have an average age of 85 and is a popular scheme with a significant waiting list and the proposed changes would have a significant impact on them:

- Removal of 24/7 scheme management currently provided by Yarlington & Somerset Care
- No evening, night-time or weekend scheme presence
- Move to Yarlington's 'Assisted Living' service with weekly customer welfare contacts and weekly health & safety checks
- Properties allocated via Homefinder Somerset to anyone over the age of 55 regardless of care/support need

I have a meeting planned with SCC and Yarlington officers at the end of Nov.

SSDC COMMUNITY GRANTS

Ashill have been received a grant of £1,000 towards their community defibrillator.

MENTAL HEALTH

A free 2-day Mental Health First Aid Course is being held on Weds 29th Nov. and 6th Dec. to help attendees to spot the signs of Mental Health and to provide assistance on a First Aid Basis. Further info. is available from Sophie Chivers - SChivers@Somerset.gov.uk

FRIENDS OF ILMINSTER LIBRARY

The purchase of several items of equipment has been well received. The next coffee morning will be on Saturday 23rd Nov. 10am-12noon.

DILLINGTON HOUSE

Winter Wonderland this year will run be on 30th Nov. and 1st Dec., with Christmas stalls and a skate rink.

HORTON PLAYING FIELD PROJECT

The next fund-raising breakfast will be on Sun. 1st Dec.

GEMINI CARNIVAL CLUB

Their next fund-raising breakfast will be at Donaytt VH on Sun. 10th Nov.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/10	SSDC – meeting with CEO
1/10	SSDC – Scrutiny Committee
2/10	Ilminster Carnival Quiz
3/10	Avon & Somerset Police – IAG
3/10	Rights of Way meeting - Ashill
3/10	Ilminster Entertainment Society AGM
5/10	Broadway Harvest Supper
6/10	Fund raising b'fast - Horton Playing Field Project
6/10	BHMC – Harvest Service
8/10	Knowle St. Giles parish meeting
10/10	Fairtrade
11/10	Ashill School open day
11/10	Ilminster Cricket Club fund raising event
13/10	Donyatt VH b'fast for Gemini Carnival Club
13/10	Chillington & Cudwoth Harvest Lunch
13/10	Ashill Harvest Service
13/10	Donyatt Harvest Service
14/10	Ilminster Lit. Fest.
14/10	Youth meeting
14/10	SCC – meeting re: Gypsy/Travellers
14/10	Dawes Twine Works visit - Yeovil
14/10	Allowenshay Water Supply meeting
15/10	SSDC – Regulation Committee
16/10	DSFRS member forum
16/10	Allowenshay water supply meeting
17/10	Greenfyld School harvest service
17/10	SSDC – Leader meeting
17/10	SSDC – full council
19/10	Whitelackington VH tabletop sales
26/10	TakeArt performance – St. Mary's Church Isle Abbots
27/10	Dowlish Wake community service
28/10	SCC – Rights of Way meeting
28/10	SCC – Gypsy/Traveller meeting
28/10	SCC – Improving Lives Fund meeting
29/10	SSDC – Regulation Committee
30/10	Somerset County Show meeting
31/10	Ilminster Education Foundation
31/10	Horton Playing Field Project Hallowe'en event