

## ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR APRIL REPORT 2018

### **SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES ADULTS & HEALTH COMMITTEE**

The planned Learning Disabilities task and finish report was deferred until the May meeting. An update on the situation with regard to community hospitals has shown that it has been a difficult winter, with enormous pressure across the Somerset partnership. There is however commitment to re-opening community hospital beds as soon as possible.

There are currently 40k nursing vacancies across the UK and recruitment is especially difficult in Somerset, because of the rural location, compounded by the absence of a university. The pipeline of European nurses has dropped by 98% since Brexit and the focus is now on 'growing our own' nursing staff, encouraging local people to come into healthcare. Five international recruitment campaigns are currently under way, with a lead-in time of 12 months.

Musgrove currently has 100 nursing vacancies. There are plans to start a nursing degree programme locally, and a desire to decrease dependency on agency staff.

### **SCC - ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES**

This month I met with Mel Lock in connection with several ongoing issues within Ilminster division, and am awaiting feedback from her on the action to be taken. Within South Somerset there have recently been some changes to the Adult Social Services team.

Julia Ingram is now Locality Manager and Martyn Warley is the Strategic Manager for South Somerset. I have arranged for regular meetings with both to be set up.

### **SCC – HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD**

A long-term view is being taken (2019-2029), in order to retain the ability to be responsive to both national and local circumstances. The aim is to ensure alignment with the corporate strategic priority to improve lives overall, taking into account that health services actually form a small part of the overall picture. Public consultation on the strategy is being launched in June.

### **SCC - MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS**

Cllr. Christine Lawrence, Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board has been appointed as SCC Mental Health Champion for Adults, and Cllr. Leigh Redman, Chair of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children & Families Committee as SCC Mental Health Champion for children and young people.

### **SW AMBULANCE TRUST UPDATE**

Difficulties in meeting response times was highlighted due to the rural nature of our communities. The availability of community responders is acknowledged as having a key part to play. It is felt that the service is as efficient as it can be given the limited resources available. 9.4 mins. is the average call out time, which is below national standards.

### **NHS 111 SERVICE**

Vocare's service rating remains 'requires improvement'. The contract is now on 12 months notice. Jan. 2018 performance against national standard of 95% is 75.33%. There are continued concerns, especially in relation to answering 111 within 60 seconds, where the target is 90%, just 50% achieved.

### **HIGHWAY ENGLAND'S GROWTH & HOUSING FUND (GHF)**

The submission to Highway England's Growth & Housing Fund (GHF) for funding towards SCC's M5 J25 improvement Scheme has been successful, with £4m awarded. The decision and the funding agreement is due to be signed off by SCC and HE shortly.

A package of funds from a variety of sources is required to deliver the scheme.

An allocation of £12.9m from the Local Growth Fund has been made by the Heart of the SW LEP, subject to a final business case which will be completed once SCC has carried out the procurement of a contractor to deliver the scheme.

### **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY FLOOD WARNING SERVICE UPDATE**

The EA has made changes and updates to improve the fluvial and groundwater flood warning service in various locations across Wessex, including Somerset. The EA have asked that interested parties, including Flood Wardens and Town & Parish Clerks, sign up to the flood warning service in communities that you work with.

For further information contact [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk)

### **ILMINSTER FLOODING UPDATE**

Now that we are now in the new financial year SCC have confirmed that they are proposing to take forward a detailed flood study for Ilminster. This will look to quantify the problems and risks and lead to the identification of potential schemes. Other partner organisations include the Environment Agency, Highways, SSDC and Wessex Water.

SCC are also working with Highways on plans to investigate their drainage assets to see what other opportunities might exist to help manage the surface water. This information will help with the modelling for the study.

As a result of feedback from the drop-in meeting and the findings of the published flood investigation, the road drains in this area have been added to the annual frequency of programmed cleansing. With additional funding provided to Highways by the Somerset Rivers Authority this will be increased to a 6-monthly cleanse.

Work is now required to scope the study and supporting information before procuring a consultant to undertake the work.

### **DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

During this month's Audit meeting, auditors highlighted the risks that continued financial pressures pose in terms of operational costs, pension scheme liabilities and employee remuneration, whilst reiterating that this position is not unusual. Concern was also expressed in relation to the operation of the commercial arm of the service, Red One Ltd.

The Quarter 3 Performance Report shows that just 22% of all incidents attended are fires. (4164); 8809 - road traffic collisions/medical emergencies/flooding/animal rescue; 5729 – false alarms. Fire related deaths remain very low – just 3 in the year to date, but injuries related to fires where people live have increased. Targeted Home Safety Visits continue (16594), along with preventative activities to improve public safety (6573).

Absence relating to mental health issues is on the increase, with supportive measures introduced. An update was received from Chief Fire officer Lee Howell on progress with the SW Emergency Services collaboration. Traditionally focus has been on historical data relating to incidents. There is now a shift towards data sharing and analytics that will predict hot spots relating to the most serious problems. This will enable early intervention and support in areas such as arson, road traffic accidents and road safety, in addition to incidents of knife crime, murder, rape, missing persons etc. to reduce risk and the potential for harm, making more effective use of available resources. A key issue is the tendency towards focusing on statutory duties and the absence of a common starting point. SCC have received recognition for their positive engagement. This work will be important in shaping future home office policies and strategy for the emergency services.

### **PARTNERS & COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT)**

Concern was raised in relation to accidents involving local school children, and the need for Road Safety training. There have been some instances of social media bullying and anti-social behaviour in limited areas of the town. A new PCSO covering Ilminster, Toby Hatchard, has recently begun his training.

## **ELECTORAL COMMISSION BOUNDARY REPORT**

The consultation period has now ended, and the outcome is expected at any time.

## **BROADBAND UPDATE**

This month I attended a meeting at which both Gigaclear and Openreach provided information in relation to future Superfast broadband provision and options for rural communities in the area, in this case with specific reference to Chaffcombe. Local communities may be interested in considering grants available for village halls, taking into account their charitable status.

## **LIBRARY SERVICE**

Consultation continues until 13<sup>th</sup> June, and there are plans for a visit to the community library at Wool, Dorset. I have become a library volunteer to familiarise myself with the various tasks and challenges involved. To give your views visit [www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation).

## **ILMINSTER/CREWKERNE SCHOOL REVIEW**

At this month's meeting with SCC officers and the Chairs of governors and headteachers of those schools that will be affected, discussion focused around likely timescales once any firm proposals have been developed. Given the need for formal consultation, with staff, parents and other stakeholders, it was felt unlikely that any decision could be taken before May 2019, and that implementation by Sept. 2019 is unlikely to be achieved, IF the decision is taken to revert to a two-tier system. Concerns were raised over the impact of this interim period.

The complexity of the decision-making process was highlighted in relation to issues such as HR, pupil admissions, premises, training etc. Discussion continues over what models for the future education would be most appropriate, taking into account factors such as future housing growth. A question was raised in relation to 'joint catchment', particularly in relation to Neroche/Greenfyld.

## **WADHAM SCHOOL**

Headteacher, David Derbyshire, has announced his retirement at the end of this term. The interim Acting Headteacher for 2018/19 will be the current Deputy, Matthew Gardner.

## **WINSHAM SCHOOL OFSTED INSPECTION**

Winsham School has received a monitoring inspecting by OFSTED this month, where there was evidence of improvement having taking place.

## **SWANMEAD SCHOOL OFSTED REPORT**

I am pleased to report that the school has been graded 'good' in all areas by OFSTED.

## **SSDC - AREA WEST**

An update was received in relation to affordable housing in the area. There is no change to the current situation in Neroche ward.

Community Projects supported in the last year include installation of a defibrillator in Broadway. Area Development Plans are to continue for 2018/19, taking into account SSDC's ongoing Transformation plans and that new ways of working are to be in place by January 2019.

## **PLANNING – MANOR FARM, DONYATT**

An appeal has been lodged against the decision taken to refuse this application.

## **SSDC - CONSERVATION**

Long standing Conservation Officer, Greg Venn, has now moved on to work in Mid Devon. It is not yet known what arrangements will be in place to replace him.

## **RETROSPECTIVE PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

In response to local comments in relation to concern over a retrospective planning application, and a request for it to come to Area West, I received the following from planning:

‘Calling something to committee just because it is retrospective or because the applicant ‘has previous’ are not sufficient planning grounds. Despite the retrospective nature of the proposal and the perception of the applicant’s reputation I cannot see a planning reason to call this to committee. Our mantra as an authority hereon must be to avoid unnecessary cost and time being spent dealing with applications at committee when they needn’t be. If there are issues with a development, approved or not-approved, then we have robust enforcement procedures in place.’

## **HIGHWAYS**

Derek Davies has taken over from Chris Weeks as Assistant Highway Service Manager.

## **DONYATT SIS SCHEME UPDATE**

Due for action in Q4 of the 2018/19 financial year - detailed design has been commissioned and we are awaiting the revised programme to reflect the delay in agreeing the way forward.

## **WHITELACKINGTON ROAD - STOCKLINCH**

Issues with this stretch of road and its suitability for traffic movement is ongoing, the large number of pot holes having been highlighted in the press.

## **PLANNED ROADWORKS**

**Stocklinch** – Whitelackington Road - Carriageway resurfacing. Temp. road closure.

14/15 May – 2 days

**Chaffcombe** - Main Street - Drainage improvement works. Temp. road closure.

24-28 Sept. – 5 days

**Cudworth** - Cudworth Street & Knights Lane - Carriageway resurfacing. Temp. road closure.

1-12 Oct. – 10 days

## **Windmill Hill Lane, Ashill - Potholes**

An inspection will be carried out by Highways’ Superintendent of the site (ref 525877), and any safety defects found will be marked for repair.

**Bus Service, Ashill** – I have requested an update on the situation at the request of the PC and have received the following information from the new Public Transport Manager.

‘Please accept my apologies for the delay in updating you, and the local parishes. I have taken over from Tom and can provide you with an update on where we are concerning public transport in and around Ilminster after the collapse of NippyBus. We are currently analysing patterns of travel in the area, focusing on Slinky usage. We are looking to introduce a scheduled service which would run to a limited timetable, with the route based on journeys people are currently making. This local bus service would be limited, but would enable passengers to travel into Ilminster and link with Service 30, to enable access to Taunton. It would also remove the need to pre-book, which is what is happening at the moment with the Slinky.

We are still exploring available options and looking at changes being introduced in early summer. This work is also linked into other services which were put in place at short notice after the withdrawal of all NippyBus routes.’

I have raised the issue of Ashill residents having to travel into Ilminster to then go onto Taunton.

**Puddlebridge, Horton** – residents have voiced concerns over highways safety issues along this stretch of road. The response received from highways is considered unsatisfactory, where requests have been made to lower the speed limit due to the high number of accidents, surface

water flooding issues, icy roads and more frequent gritting in the winter months. Highways say undertook a speed census in 2005, the results showing the average speed was lower than the current speed limit.

## **CHARD MUSEUM**

The new season has got off to a good start, with 146 adults and 90 children visiting the museum in the first four weeks. The kitchen is due to be refurbished. The museum has been asked to host the Museums of Somerset meeting in October. Through the increased use of community volunteers, information is now being translated into other languages. There are plans for a photograph competition during half term week.

## **ILMINSTER LITERARY FESTIVAL (30<sup>th</sup> May – 8<sup>th</sup> June)**

After a successful programme launch this month, ticket sales have been buoyant. Programmes are available throughout the town, and tickets can be purchased by going to the festival website. [www.ilminsterliteraryfestival.org](http://www.ilminsterliteraryfestival.org) I will be hosting the annual quiz at Donyatt VH on 11<sup>th</sup> May.

## **WHAT MATTERS, WHO CARES? – KEY MESSAGES**

Last month's meeting, attended by 100 members of local communities, covering health and social care, farming, business and industry, government, schools, and churches, was to identify priorities and cast visions for could be done.

**Health and Social Care - Jane Dewick, Training Manager, DWP.** There has been a major change in the way benefits are paid, replacing 6 benefits with Universal Credit. The intention was to simplify payment processes, enabling recipients to manage their own money; a challenge for those unaccustomed to budgeting. There is less benefit fraud and the move to digitisation has reduced the need for face-to-face contact, but what about those 9% who lack IT skills or access?

**Transport:** expand services to help vulnerable people stay connected, across regional borders.

**Respite care:** establish networks to provide respite, even if only for a few hours.

**Information:** set up a one-stop shop (libraries, churches, village halls) for information about care, benefits, and opportunities to socialise, and improve digital skills. Use village agents.

**Hubs, and inter-generational mixing:** establish and promote schemes to enhance understanding and support. Link schools with elderly communities, local nursing or care homes. Use community cafes or pubs, or village halls.

**Farming - Mark Humphries.** Many farms are being sold off. Small-scale farms are less financially viable. Problem is providing opportunities and inspiring the next generation. Many are precluded from entering farming because of the capital required. Brexit brings uncertainty in relation to subsidies and labour. TB continues to be a challenge. How can the community help?

**Food:** value local food, finding opportunities to buy locally.

**Careers:** establish hubs to share information, providing opportunities for networking and training.

**Brexit:** act as advocates for farmers.

**Wellbeing:** become a community of pastoral care for local farmers. Provide social events and take practical steps to support them.

**Business and Industry - Stuart Cochrane, Manufacturing Mgr., Numatic Int'l.** Numatic 850 local employees. Local businesses and communities are mutually dependent. There are opportunities to help each other, to recognise the role each plays in mutual wellbeing. Buy locally.

**Coordination and networking:** ensure local businesses work together to provide training and development, especially for soft skills.

**Education:** promote opportunities to connect education providers with the business community; work together to develop skills.

**Recruitment and training:** publicise recruitment opportunities, organise a recruitment fair. Help employers connect with local people.

**Local Government - Val Keitch, Mayor of Ilminster** The biggest challenge for local government is falling budgets, giving a negative impact on meeting the needs of residents. Essential services

are being impaired or diminished. Volunteers take up some of the slack. Planning is another challenge. Decisions need to be taken locally; calls for central government to take this away is worrying. Affordable housing is an issue; young families have to move away to own their own property. We must retain the essential character of our communities. We need to provide services differently, working with local communities and forming partnerships. How do we work together?

**Communication:** find new ways to keep people informed, remembering those who aren't digitally connected. Issue newsletters, use pubs and schools as hubs. **Volunteering:** build associated communities to support services, such as churches and member organisations. Encourage candidates to stand for PCs, to strengthen local government. Reach out to young people.

**Employment:** work with local employers and education providers, developing apprenticeships.

**Housing:** be open-minded about planning applications. Help families stay local.

**Schools - Greg Hoare, Chair of Governors, Combe St Nicholas C of E School** Budgets depend on pupil numbers. When house prices are high, the number of young families in a community diminishes. How do small village schools cope? It's not just Maths and English that are important, life skills and helping children reach their potential is too. Poverty is on our doorstep; staff identify those in need of help. Some pupils only get a proper meal at school. Academisation is a concern. What difference can we make?

**Shaping policy:** ensure contribution to consultations about the future of education.

**Building community:** support teachers, parents/carers and social services to equip young people. Involve organisations such as Rotary, local churches, individual mentors and role models, to play a part in developing life skills.

**Expanding vision:** work with local employers and professionals to highlight opportunities.

**Commitment Charter:** establish a formal charter that communities can sign up to.

**Church Communities - Peter Saunders, Churchwarden, St Stephen's Church, Winsham** The local church is important. It is not cheap or easy to run a church. Old buildings need a huge amount of maintenance, relying on grants to fund essential work. The real church is the people, but not everyone attends regularly. We need to focus on the local community, visit schools. Initiatives like 'Open the Book' help to maintain a connection. Friends groups are gaining popularity. How do we build on our connections?

**Finding friends:** establish templates for Friends groups, drawing on good practice in order to build local community links and secure financial stability.

**The lost generation:** look into holding informal services in village halls and community centres. Maintain our commitment to Messy Church and Open the Book initiatives. Bridge the gap between those who attend regularly, and those who don't. **Open doors:** try to keep our parish churches open around the clock. Consider using spaces in other ways e.g. Post Offices/community shops.

**Facing hard questions:** if church buildings need to close, or re-vamped to make them fit for purpose, make it straightforward. Deal with money matters head-on.

**Bishop Ruth, Bishop of Taunton** – gathering together we grasp the importance of listening to the stories told in our communities. The church is part of this: we need to be present in local communities, learn from them and find ways of helping them to flourish. Church attendance is challenging, just 23,000 attend regularly. Something needs to change. We need to open our doors, broadening the use of our buildings, overcoming loneliness and isolation and fostering deeper relationships with our neighbours. To join in the conversation, attend events during 'The Telling of Our Story Week' 14-20 May. Visit [www.tellingourstory.co.uk](http://www.tellingourstory.co.uk)

## GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

The Government has tabled an amendment to its data Protection Bill to **exempt** parish meetings, parish/town councils and from the requirement to appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO).

## SOMERSET VILLAGE OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

Somerset Live have recently launched this event, with the opportunity to win a share of a £2,000 cash prize. Visit [www.somersetlive.co.uk/villageoftheyear](http://www.somersetlive.co.uk/villageoftheyear) giving five reasons why your village stands out from the rest, how the money would benefit the village and include a photo and video. Entries close midday on Thursday, June 14.

## PHOENIX PROJECT UPDATE

A little behind schedule, the main building exterior is finished. Internal work still to be done includes electrics, plumbing, plastering, installing heating, solar panels, flooring and lighting. Further work is subject to obtaining necessary inspection certificates. Kitchen fitting and main club room decoration will be done by volunteers, as well as buying and laying carpet tiles and acquiring tables, chairs and a marquee. No firm opening date is set but there will be a grand opening at the start of the football season in Sept. Support for the Tesco appeal has resulted in a grant of £4000.

## SHOUT OUT – 😊 CHAFFCOMBE – COMMUNITY ACTION

In an effort to take responsibility for their own community, local residents have taken on an 'adopt a drain' initiative to monitor possible flood issues, in addition to regularly litter picking sections of the roads through the village.

## ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

3/4	Donyatt PC
4/4	Winsham PC
8/4	Horton Playing Field Project B'fast
8/4	Donyatt VH B'fast
10/4	DSFRS Forum – Exeter
10/4	Iminster Lit. fest. Launch
10/4	Knowle St. Giles annual meeting
11/4	SCC – Adults & Health Scrutiny
11/4	South Somerset MIND Hardy Appeal meeting
11/4	Whitelackington VH AGM
12/4	Chard Library volunteer meeting
12/4	Wadham school meeting
13/4	Chard Library volunteering
14/4	Safeguarding – Outreach in Education Training - Exeter
16/4	Childhood Trauma training – Somerton
16/4	Openreach/Gigaclear meeting Chaffcombe
16/4	Chaffcombe Annual Parish Meeting
17/4	Partners & Communities Together
17/4	Iminster Literary Festival
17/4	Iminster Town Council
18/4	Neroche School – National Leader of Governance meeting
18/4	Chard Museum Trustee Meeting
18/4	SSDC - Area West
19/4	SCC – Health & Wellbeing Board
19/4	Greenfyld School – reading support
23/4	Donyatt VH – AGM
24/4	SSDC – Licensing Sub-Committee
24/4	Meeting re: Wadham School
25/4	SCC – Adult Social Services
26/4	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Audit – Exeter
26/4	IMEx
27/4	DSFRS Forum - Exeter