

## ILMINSTER DIVISION DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT OCTOBER 2018

### SCC - COUNTY HALL RECEPTION

Visitor's Reception will be relocated to B-Block, and opening hours will change to: 8.30am until 5pm, Mon. to Thurs., until 4.30pm on Fri.

Customer Contact Centre opening hours remain 8am to 6pm on Mon., but change to 8.30am to 5.30pm Tues. to Fri.

### SCC MEETING ROOMS

During refurbishment work public committee meetings will now mostly be held at the Taunton Library meeting room.

### FINANCES

Information from the Leader - the financial pressures that SCC continues to face, as funding from central government continues to fall and the demands and costs continues to rise, remains the key area of focus. This is a situation shared with a number of local authorities, particularly those with responsibility for vulnerable children and adults (which accounts for over 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total SCC budget). Despite lobbying, there has been no discernible shift in Government policy or funding. Unlike other public services, SCC have to deliver a balanced budget and funding received falls far short of meeting the costs of critical services provided. In-year savings of £12m., affecting over 70 budget lines, in all directorates, have been identified as necessary to bring about a level of financial sustainability.

In response to an in-depth inquiry from a member of the public the following was received:-

- SCC currently have an £11.4m revenue overspend. £21m of this is in Children's services. There is also £330m of long-term debt, costing 75,000 per day to service.
- Central Government's 'cost-shunt' of Adult Social care costs through last year's Council tax is not sustainable nationally. Locally, the real problem remains in Children's Services, accounting for nearly 25% of the total budget. 'Contacts' with vulnerable children have increased significantly, along with increases in the cost of residential placements, home to school transport and Special Educational Needs.
- Central Government needs to decide what they want from Local Government in delivering sustainable public services, then fund it accordingly. To withdraw nearly £100m in grants and expect LA's to absorb all cost increases is not sustainable.
- County Hall refurbishment is largely the replacement of the heating system and associated works, including asbestos removal. The cost of approx. of £6.7m. was necessary as the system was over 30 years old. Further planned work will allow SCC to withdraw from 5 other sites in Taunton, releasing C block for development.

### IMPACT OF BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Extra grant to adult social care, some of which can be used for Children's and Learning Disability Services. SCC's share will be around £6.5m.
- Extra funding for highways and potholes. SCC's share will be around £4m.
- Opportunity to apply for funding to transform Children's Services operating model.
- Additional funding for children's mental health through NHS funding
- Additional money for Industrial and Productivity Strategies - as part of the Heart of the South West Joint Committee, Somerset is in the next wave of support
- Money for Housing Infrastructure Funding – this should help SCC's £84 m. bid for four primaries and one secondary school, plus road infrastructure.

## **The Future of Local Government in Somerset**

The Leaders and CEOs of the six councils of Somerset have met to progress this work. It is recognised that there is an opportunity to do things differently and better, building on the existing partnership between the councils and other public service providers.

Changes in demand and pressure on resources mean that changes to working practices are necessary to enable local government to meet the needs of all Somerset communities. The Councils of Somerset have commissioned research into options for change and how they will ensure sustainable service provision.

## **ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES**

I have expressed my dismay at the lack of contact/action over individual cases since my last meeting; explained as a result of prioritising action relating to SCC's financial position. Whilst South Somerset is still performing below expectations in many areas, there has been some improvement, particularly in relation to the large number of assessments that are past their review dates, and also the number of complaints received.

## **HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE**

**Social Care for Older People:** Somerset's Home First initiative has resulted in over 2,000 patients avoiding 7,500 bed nights in hospital, giving significant cost savings for the NHS and improved the quality of life for those involved. To date the overall delayed discharges across the County have reduced by 75% from 3,500 bed nights to 800.

All eligible residents are urged to protect themselves and get a flu jab as it can reduce the risk of serious illness. Check with your GP or local pharmacist for details.

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

During this transformation period, there is increased focus on collaboration with police and ambulance services, but new projects must mitigate against identified risks and concentrate on delivering statutory obligations. Recent work on prevention and protection has meant a reduction in the demand for traditional fire and rescue services.

There are currently 200 vacancies for 'on call' firefighters. In order to facilitate recruitment more flexible contracts are now being put in place.

## **POLICE**

This month I met with Chief Inspector Sharon Baker to discuss my role as a member of the Independent Advisor Group. She would welcome input from local residents and businesses in relation to any concerns there may be.

Speakers are available to talk to local groups on topics such as cyber-crime prevention.

There is the opportunity for a willing, computer literate person to volunteer their services at Yeovil on Mondays (4+ hours) to collate weekend crime data on the night-time economy.

If interested, contact CI Baker direct at [Sharon.Baker2@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:Sharon.Baker2@avonandsomerset.police.uk)

Items discussed during the meeting included the move of custody cells to Bridgwater, and the use of body worn cameras, which has had a significant impact on reducing officer assaults, in addition to facilitating earlier 'guilty pleas' from offenders. It is estimated that this has brought about savings of over £220k.

The impact of the new shift patterns for local beat officers in the area has been raised.

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

In response to a 'call in' by the Chair of Policies, Children and Families Scrutiny on the Cabinet approved proposals for the alteration and/or reduction of early help services provided to children and their families (Getset), the recommendation to implement CAF 14-a was upheld. This will result in a significant number of staff redundancies and remaining staff may experience increased caseloads which will require robust management oversight.

## **YOUNG CARERS REVIEW**

SCC has withdrawn the planned savings proposals of £200k in relation to Young Carers and are now exploring how these services could be delivered differently to ensure good outcomes as well as achieving good value for money.

Currently no savings targets are attributed to this piece of work, but options will be evaluated to find cost effective solutions, and where possible reduce costs.

Engagement events with young carers take place this week, followed by additional opportunities for interested parties to have their say before the end of the year.

## **ILMINSTER/CREWKERNE SCHOOLS**

At this month's meeting of Somerset Schools Forum, agreement was reached to fund, from reserves, the necessary exploratory work to be carried out by Futures for Somerset. Once the final report is received a meeting with those affected will take place, enabling the consultation process to be planned.

## **WINSHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Secretary of State for Education has directed the conversion to Academy Status of six schools across the county, including Winsham, which will become a sponsored academy. Its asset transfer to the Redstart Learning Partnership Trust will take place in Feb. 2019.

## **WINTER ROAD GRITTING**

This year SCC will be gritting 720 miles (around 17%) of the total road network. This is a reduction from 21% as resources are not available to treat all roads.

Considerable concern has been raised by a number of parishes and local schools, in relation to the planned reduction in the precautionary gritting network of roads, and its impact on the community, particularly in relation to links in the Ilminster/Chard area.

It is felt that any cost savings will be outweighed by the potential increase in extra work by the emergency services attending accidents on untreated roads.

The criteria used meets national guidelines to enable the precautionary gritting network to be defined, to ensure a consistent approach across the county and achieve a responsible balance between cost and level of service. The criteria now used to define the routes are:

- Connectivity between major communities
- Links to the strategic highway network
- Connectivity across authority boundaries where appropriate
- Links to transport interchanges
- Access to emergency facilities (Fire and Rescue, Police, Ambulance, Hospitals)
- Links to critical infrastructure
- Principal public transport routes, access to rail and bus stations, and other depots
- Other locally important facilities

Residents are encouraged to check which roads are now included and which are not by visiting [www.travelsomerset.co.uk/gritting](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/gritting). Zoom in to search by location or road name.

Roads removed from the precautionary network will continue to be treated as part of the secondary network in the event of prolonged periods of ice and snow.

Snow ploughs will continue to be deployed to clear the network. Emergency plans and arrangements to use farmers and snowplough operators are not affected by the changes.

### ROADSIDE GRIT/SALT

SCC will continue to provide grit bins in appropriate locations. However, the bins need to be purchased, maintained, filled and replenished by the town/parish council. Those wishing to position salt in other roadside locations should contact the local Area Highways Office. Only rock salt should be used on roads to effectively prevent ice without damaging the road surface. Approved rock salt can be provided to parishes in 1 tonne dumpy bags or 25kg bags through the highways maintenance contract with Skanska, at the following price:

1 tonne rock salt in single use dumpy bag	£197.54 (incl. delivery)
25kg rock salt bag	£4.74 (collection only)

Products must be ordered and paid for in advance through the local Area Highways Office and may take up to three weeks to be delivered or available for collection.

Rock salt can also be purchased elsewhere but only approved de-icing material complying with British Standard 3247 should be used on the highway.

SCC are also exploring opportunities for parish volunteers to be trained and equipped to act as Community Snow Wardens. Those interested in joining a pilot scheme, can contact the local Area Highways Office - [roadsandtransport@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:roadsandtransport@somerset.gov.uk) or call 0300 123 2224.

### POT HOLES

Pothole repairs continue to meet the ongoing demand but during the coming winter months members of the public are asked to help SCC Highways stay on top of carriageway repairs by reporting defects through <http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk>

### PUDDLEBRIDGE

Recent accidents on the approach road to Horton village, from the A358, has caused local residents to request a reduction in the speed limit along this road. At present Highways has agreed a reduction to 40mph, but state that the criteria for the requested reduction to 30 mph has not been met.

### HIGHWAYS - Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders

Winsham	Fore St	Drainage imp. works. Temp. road closure	07 Jan	11 Jan	5 days
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Several local communities have expressed concern over inaccuracies in the dates given for road closures, and poor alternative road signage. It is felt that it is the lack of coordination and clarity provided by contractors (Wessex Water and Gigaclear) which is at fault.

### ROAD CASUALTIES

Data for the first six months of 2018 shows a reduction in overall casualty numbers by 17%, but an increase in fatalities of 8%.

- Car user casualties were 20% lower, falling by 102 casualties, from 506 to 404.
- Total motorcycle casualties fell from 58 to 57.
- Overall Cycle casualty numbers fell from 49 to 47.
- Total Pedestrian casualty numbers fell from 75 to 66.

- Assessment on casualty ages shows that the 25 to 39 age group increased by 72%, rising from 18 to 31 and the 40 – 59 age group increased by 17%.
- Rural roads recorded 66% of casualties, compared to 34% on urban roads.

The data is used to prioritise and update road safety training and social media activity to educate and inform. In 2018 so far 9,723 people have experienced education on road safety issues through workshops, presentations, cycle training or vehicle checks.

### **TRAFFIC ORDER NOTIFICATION - A358, Donyatt**

For avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the road or any other road or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising.

**30 mph speed limit** – A358 Donyatt - from a point 350 metres south of its junction with Church Street to a point 240 metres north of its junction with Shave Lane.

Shave Lane, Church Street, Donyatt Hill Estate, Crow Lane, Park Lane – for the entire length

**40 mph speed limit** - A358, Donyatt from a point 350 metres south of its junction with Church Street to a point 550 metres south of its junction with Church Street

### **BUS SERVICES – ILMINSTER**

The following has been received in response to an enquiry relating to Ilminster bus services. ‘The subsidy that had been provided to Nippy Bus is now being spent on the Ilminster Shuttle Service S1/S2/S3. There are no other available subsidies and as you are aware, we are shortly going out to consultation, as we are facing a £700k reduction in our bus budget. We are amending the registration for the Ilminster Shuttle service to include Spurwells in Ilton, so we could potentially look at other options before we submit the registration change to the Traffic Commissioner.’

### **TAUNTON PARK & RIDE**

The suspension of the P&R has been saved until at least to Sept 2019 by Taunton Deane Borough Council stepping in to make a one-off payment to continue the service

### **RIEC-SUR-BELON WAY ROUNDABOUT**

Enquiries have been made about the possible adoption of the roundabout. Requests of this kind are being dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Currently SCC do not directly administer such sponsorships. The most important factor is the need to be aware that signs placed on the highway, other than those specifically identified as traffic signs, are deemed to be ‘non-prescribed’ signs; Consent is required from both the local planning authority and highways prior to placement. Andy Ley, the service manager, has agreed to offer a sponsorship opportunity for 2 years, to the organisation concerned, in return for approved planting/landscaping enhancement and adherence to the required guidelines.

### **SSDC - AREA WEST**

SSDC are working with Citizens Advice Bureau to consider ways to support both the Chard and Yeovil offices, where SCC funding has been reduced as concern has been raised over the impact on vulnerable residents.

### **PLANNING**

**ASHILL** - There has been no further information received in relation to the formal complaint lodged in response to the recent decision by the Regulation Committee.

I have been informed that the current position in relation to the provision of the required 5 year housing supply has worsened a little, and that SSDC currently has a 4 year supply. A number of those in the process of submitting planning applications have expressed concern over the continuing shortage of resources, resulting in deadlines being missed and the inability to obtain response from planning officers. I have been assured that this is being addressed with some urgency.

### **CRESTA POOL**

Since the disappointing decision by SCC not to retain the pool at this site, and their rejection of the bid put in by the Kingfisher group, which raised a total of £802, focus has now shifted towards ensuring that the proposed new pool facilities are treated as a priority.

### **LIBRARY SERVICE**

Confirmation has now been received that Ilminster Library will remain open, but with continued concern over ongoing funding issues it is hoped that the recently formed group, Friends Of Ilminster Library, will be able to assist through volunteer participation and fund raising activity to ensure its future.

### **DILLINGTON**

My meeting with manager Adam Powell confirmed the current position, where there is a £240k financial deficit. He broadly outlined future plans for the three main revenue streams (education, weddings, conferences) and the desired shift towards increasing corporate involvement, and a new online booking system installed.

Visitors are now permitted access to the grounds, along with cyclists, and dog walkers (with some exceptions). The Sunday carvery is now available for bookings weekly. In the new year lunches will be available for non-residents, in addition to bookings for afternoon teas.

### **HORTON PLAYING FIELD PROJECT**

Plans to improve facilities are progressing, with full support from local residents and the Parish Council. Now that there is clarity over the lease, fund raising bids can be considered.

### **COMMUNITY FUND RAISING BREAKFASTS**

Horton Village Hall – Sun. 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. (in aid of Horton Playing Field Project)

Donyatt Village Hall – Sun. 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. (in aid of Gemini Carnival Club)

## ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/10	SCC – Independent Reviewing Officer meeting
1/10	Ilminster Literary Festival AGM
2/10	Broadway PC
2/10	Donyatt Despatch get together
3/10	SCC – Adults & Health Scrutiny
3/10	Multi-Academy Trust meeting – Weston-Super-Mare
3/10	Ilminster Carnival Quiz
5/10	Dillington meeting
5/10	Warehouse Theatre event
6/10	MIND Trans-gender training
6/10	Broadway Harvest Supper
9/10	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service forum
9/10	Swanmead School open evening
9/10	Yarlington resident meeting Ilminster
10/10	Neroche school – Pupil Premium meeting
10/10	Yeovil Police station – meeting with Chief Inspector
10/10	Somerset County Show meeting
11/10	Adult Social Services meeting
12/10	Resident meeting Ilminster
12/10	Horton Fairtrade sale
12/10	Donyatt VH fund raiser
13/10	Dowlish Wake church cookbook launch
13/10	Friends of Ilminster Library Coffee morning
14/10	Donyatt VH b'fast
14/10	Ashill Harvest Service
14/10	Donyatt Harvest service
15/10	SWAP audit training
15/10	Ilminster Lit. Fest. meeting
15/10	Horton PC
16/10	SCC Personal Development Review
17/10	SCC full council
17/10	SCC Cabinet meeting
18/10	Winsham coffee morning
18/10	Fiveways school staff meeting
19/10	DSFRS HR Committee
20/10	Donyatt Harvest lunch
20/10	Horton quiz
21/10	Horton Playing Field B'fast
21/10	BHMC Dedication Service
22/10	DSFRS Community Safety & Corporate Planning Committee
22/10	Friends of Ilminster Library meeting
22/10	Neroche School governor meeting
28/10	Ashill Harvest Lunch
28/10	Charity Quiz – Ilminster Christmas Lights
30/10	Knowle St. Giles parish meeting