



20th December 2022

Good evening, Mayor and Councillors.

Since our last report at the November meeting of the Town Council, many of you will have seen the frequent updates from SSDC together with the Environment news distributed via the 'Get SuSSed e-magazine,' so we won't repeat them here.

As we draw 2022 to a close, the 'Big Bang' of Somerset's unification is almost upon us. In 100 days, SSDC will cease to exist, along with the other four councils. However, as you would expect, officers and councillors from across all of the five councils of Somerset are working incredibly hard to ensure that the main 'Business As Usual' (BAU) affairs of the five councils continues with as little disruption to Somerset residents as possible. There will be some aspects of the business case that will take longer to implement, but the important thing is to ensure that our residents receive the same level of service, if not more improved, than they have before. To this end, for example, SSDC staff are in the process of training Mendip DC staff up on systems and methods of service delivery that are currently unfamiliar to Mendip.

As Vice-Chair of the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Hamilton attended a meeting with the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review to discuss the ongoing transformation of the councils. The outcome of the review was positive, with those risks that were identified by the LGA already highlighted in the programme.

SSDC Full Council met on Thursday the 15th December for the final time this year. The main focus of the meeting was to consider some housekeeping issues with regards to Social Care and our Capital and Revenue Budget monitoring reports.

➤ Council Finances

- Prior to the meeting we were given a Treasury Management training session by our financial advisors Arlingclose. This included an overview of the general national economic outlook including interest rates, employment, savings and credit statistics. Overall, the picture looked bleak, however, it was noted that a lot of the data was produced before the infamous 'mini-budget' and therefore was subject to change. But the underlying trend appeared to be one of worrying debt accumulation by many across the country.
- However, Arlingclose did comment that South Somerset District Council's financial position was positive and remained healthy due to decisions made by the council and its financial officers. As such, this gives SSDC a good reputation (credit score) when it comes to borrowing money and results in low comparative repayment interest rates.



➤ Area West

- Due to personal reasons, Cllr Hamilton was unable to attend the last Area West Committee meeting held at Chard Guildhall on the 7th of December 2022.
- Cllr Keitch attended and was more than happy to support the awarding of the following grants:
 - West & Middle Chinnock Play Equipment Project, which received £9,996 from the Area West Community capital and revenue grant fund.
 - Ashill Village Hall Project, which received £5,946 towards their £37,423 cost of removing asbestos and the installation of a new roof at Ashill Village Hall.
 - Crewkerne Town Council received £4,675 towards the George Reynolds Centre project for the installation of four air conditioning units.
 - A further grant application for the Merriott Tithe Barn Project, was deferred until more information was provided.
- Cllr Keitch absented herself when the meeting turned to the agenda item 'Next Steps following the Judicial Review re Planning Application 21/02654/FUL'. This was consideration of what should happen to the Carnival Park application in light of the recent Judicial Review findings.
- The next Area West Committee is scheduled for the 18th of January 2023.

Cllr Val Keitch

Cllr Brian Hamilton



INFORMATION REFERENCES:

Links to South Somerset District Council's agendas, minutes and other useful information can be found at the following links:



YouTube recordings of SSDC meetings:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA



SSDC agendas, minutes and decisions can all be found either through the 'Modern.Gov' application or by following the link:

<https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>



Somerset Waste Partnership: <https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/>

Recycle More: <https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more/>

SSDC NEWS:



Links to South Somerset District Council's latest news stories can be found at the following link: <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/news/>