

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT REPORT MAY 2020

SCC CHAIRMAN'S AWARDS

The annual SCC Chairman's Awards have been postponed for the time being.

COUNTY/DISTRICT MEETINGS

At SSDC, due to the relaxation of government regulations in relation to decision making at virtual meetings, all committees are now making their own decisions.

To pre-register or listen in to an upcoming SCC meeting, contact the Democratic Services team on 07790577336 / 07811 313837 or 07790577232 or email democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk.

EDUCATION

Now that schools are starting to get back to normal concern has been raised about consistency, where schools in North Somerset and BANES have elected not to re-open. The results of a two-week SEND inspection carried out by Ofsted and CQC in March, and in which a number of shortcomings were identified, have caused considerable concern locally, which I am following up. The inspection focused on the effective identification, assessment and improving outcomes for children and young people who have SEND.

POLICE

Nationally public support for the police approach to enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown remains strong.

Over 5,100 reports have been received via the online reporting form, which helps to identify breach hotspots and inform patrol plans. Members of the public who wish to report any past breaches should use the online form, not call 101.

Representatives from the different faith communities in Avon and Somerset have set up a dedicated phone line, which is open to everyone, offering 1-2-1 chaplaincy for people affected by COVID-19. To speak to someone, phone 0330 229 1700 8am to 11pm, seven days a week.

Victims of child abuse and those at risk of neglect have been potentially on lockdown with their abusers. Safeguarding them has never been so important. Although school places have been made available for vulnerable children, only 10% have been attending school.

Many vulnerable children are invisible to teachers, social workers and other key workers. It is vital that that you are extra vigilant to pick up cues that may signal that they are at risk.

COUNTY LINES

Tackling county lines remains a top priority. Avon and Somerset Police co-ordinated a week of action in Yeovil in May; 17 vehicles believed to be used in county lines activity were targeted, three of which were seized for no insurance. Vehicle checks led to the arrest of two individuals and intelligence gathering also led to two arrests for possession with intent to supply. 48 addresses thought to have either previously been cuckooed or believed to be at risk were visited, and vulnerable adults spoken to.

Neighbourhood Policing Teams have been engaging with local residents to reassure, and raise awareness of the issues surrounding county lines.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Below is a link to the Government domestic abuse campaign 'You are not alone'.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18UJ7v3us7uYw3SI5qOhWur6rBi3HXskl>

EASING OF LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS

Parish councils have, where possible, been pro-active in responding to local demand for the opening up of public areas but are also mindful of insurance implications and the ability of the local community to police movements. Concern remains over those who may choose to ignore guidelines, thereby putting themselves and others at risk.

One key message is that Covid-19 is far from over and that we must remain vigilant.

NEROCHE SCHOOL BROADBAND

Neroche School has been identified by the DFE as eligible for a fibre broadband grant.

The grant covers extensive works to increase the school's internet speed and install the latest fibre connections. This will enable every child to use a device online, which is not currently possible due to limited connection speed, and will also reduce costs.

This work will also benefit the local community, giving residents and businesses access to faster, more up to date connections.

PLANNING

SSDC have updated their webpage with additional information <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/services/planning/planning-fags/>

Two consultations have recently been held relating to a new Validation Guide and a new Enforcement Protocol. A Members' workshop was held this month, with the opportunity for input and SSDC District Executive are to consider the proposals later this week.

In the public responses concern was raised about the receipt of late comments from PCs, and the difficulties of appropriate consultation using technology.

PCs have also requested a consultation in connection with the planning process generally.

A member working group has been set up and as your local councillor I am happy to receive any comments on issues you would like me to raise.

Of note, in an effort to improve the quality of applications, and to speed up planning application validation, a check list of the required documents is now to be submitted.

It is the responsibility of the applicant/agent to ensure that all interested parties, neighbours etc., are informed of their intentions.

In relation to enforcement, it is accepted that some changes will need to be made where resources have not allowed this aspect of the service to be as effective as we would like.

Also note that *'there is no obligation for the council to monitor development, including details of time and order of specific activity on decision notices'*. It is intended that the local community monitor this.

Local residents have raised several of areas of concern, with errors on some applications identified, which officers have been informed of. Apparently the Carnival Park application was registered on the basis of the Ilminster Town Council submitting the application at a reduced fee, in addressing concerns raised, in addition to local objections, this response has been received – 'whilst probably not in the spirit of the regulations in allowing TC related development for the benefit of the community to allow lower fees, we couldn't find a specific ruling that set out the parameters for such.'

Some smaller parishes have felt that there is some inconsistency with regard to permitting time extensions for planning responses to be submitted. I am informed that advice to officers is not to allow parishes extra time to comment unless it is for a day or two at most.

CYCLEWAY – DONYATT

A planned meeting had to be cancelled, preventing discussion about the Ilminster to Chard route. For the time being Sustrans will continue maintaining the path between Chard and Peasmarsh but the SCC need to be aware that leases will begin expiring in 2028 after which there is no certainty that they will be able to allow public access to continue. It is felt that it would be worthwhile for SCC officers to agree to discuss a way forward.

Additional government funding has been released to support the development of cycle paths as part of a joint SCC and District initiative.

SSDC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SSDC have started work on an Economic Development Recovery Plan that will be circulated when agreed by the Senior Leadership Team. Work is continuing on key Economic Development projects, including Somerset Catalyst, to create an innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem based around the Yeovil Innovation Centre and Enabling Growth to improve the planning system and bring forward developments.

Work continues on priority regeneration projects in Yeovil, Wincanton and Chard.

BUSINESS GRANTS

The government announced a number of measures to support businesses affected by lockdown, including business rates holidays for the 2020/21 financial year, business support grants and various business loans. SSDC is responsible for administering the business rates relief and business support grants.

SSDC has been very pro-active, and identified 983 businesses and organisations which were entitled to Business Grants but who had not applied. Along with other councillors, I have been actively involved in contacting those in this area, with a considerable degree of success. By early May SSDC had paid out 2280 grants to South Somerset businesses to a total value of £27,110,000.

There has been some confusion over business support grants, with some being reluctant to apply. The Business Support Grant scheme is NOT a loan so businesses/organisations can be reassured of this.

The link to apply for a grant is below; click on 'Government Grant Funding Schemes' tab.

www.southsomerset.gov.uk/life-events/coronavirus-support/business-support/

Those wanting to make a direct enquiry should send it to revenues@southsomerset.gov.uk.

DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS GRANTS SCHEME

The Government has issued some guidance, but is leaving the scheme to local authorities to determine how to get this money out to businesses and how much businesses should receive, up to a maximum of £25k per business.

In the guidance, businesses in shared spaces, bed and breakfasts and market traders have been identified as those which should be targeted. SSDC have devised a broader approach to applying these grants but those businesses can still apply.

The guidance has been uploaded onto the SSDC website <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/life-events/coronavirus-support/business-support/>

The Government has capped the amount SSDC can give through this scheme, to 5% of the original amount allocated for Business Grants. This means that SSDC can only pay out circa £2m., this means that a maximum of 200 businesses will be able to be supported, up to £10k per business (some will apply and receive £25k, meaning fewer businesses will be able to be supported). There will therefore be a first come, first served, approach to this scheme, as funds, as set out by Government, are limited.

LIBRARIES

Whilst libraries are still temporarily closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Ebooks have proved very popular and there is a range of other free options available to access library services. <http://www.somersetreads.co.uk>

Events and activities are happening via social media, including regular story-times, quizzes, challenges and gardening and food tips.

Use Twitter ([@SomersetLib](#))/Facebook ([@SomersetLibrariesUK](#)) and Instagram ([@SomersetLibraries](#)) in addition to local library information on Facebook.

A free trial of [Medici.TV](#) is available to library members providing a programme of music, ballet and opera accessible from home. Ancestry is also now available for home for library members; you just need to log in to your [LibrariesWest](#) account to access this. Details of regular events and activities are available via Facebook, and listed on the website www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries

Monday

(AM) Storytime for Children

(PM) Crafty Corner for Adults and Children

Tuesday

(AM) Baby Boogie

(PM) Stay Well

Wednesday

(AM) Storytime for Children

(PM) How Does Your Garden Grow?

Thursday

(AM) Cakes and Bakes

(PM) Exmoor Literary Walk

Friday

(AM) Storytime for Children

(PM) Something for the Weekend

– Book and magazines recommendations (Call Out)

Saturday

(AM) Lego Challenge

(PM) Storytime for Children

If you would like support to download free books, audiobooks or magazines – or help on how to join online or getting involved with events and activities call 0300 123 2224 or email: LibrariesMail@somerset.gov.uk

You can join Somerset Libraries online for free by going to this link <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/librarymembership> - a membership number and PIN will be generated to enable access to free e-Books, e-Audiobooks and e-Magazines.

Once libraries re-open, people who join online will need to visit their nearest library to obtain a membership card. Anyone who borrowed items before the 19th March, will NOT incur any overdue charges.

VILLAGE AGENTS

Contact details for village agents covering this area are www.somersetagents.org
Tel. 01823 331222

Alex Fenion - Email: alex@ccslovesomerset.org Tel. 07946 461548

Ashill; Broadway; Donyatt; Dowlish Wake; Horton; Ilminster; Kingstone; Whitelackington

Carolyn Roche - South Somerset Agent Team Lead

Email: carolyn@ccslovesomerset.org Tel. 07375 371542

Chaffcombe; Chillington; Cudworth; Knowle St. Giles; Cricket Malherbie

Useful Contacts Resources and Websites

SSDC Area Highways Office	countyroads-southsom@somerset.gov.uk	0300 123 2224
Report Pothole/Road Defect	roadsandtransportSD@somerset.gov.uk	
Report Dead Animal/Mud on Road	roadsandtransportSD@somerset.gov.uk	
Neil McWilliams – Highways Service Manager	countyroads-southsom@somerset.gov.uk	
Lee Norman/Derek Davies – Assist Highways Service Manager	countyroads-southsom@somerset.gov.uk	
Garry Warren/Rebecca Vaughan – Traffic Engineer. Traffic & Transport Development	countyroads-southsom@somerset.gov.uk	
Road Records & Highway Licensing	Roadrecords@Somerset.gov.uk	
Gully Emptying / Road Sweeper	chris.holley@southsomerset.gov.uk	01935 462462
Nick Allen – SSDC Ranger Scheme	nick.allen@southsomerset.gov.uk	01935 462462
Report Adult at Risk	adults@somerset.gov.uk	0300 123 2224 Emergency: 999
Report Child at Risk	childrens@somerset.gov.uk	0300 123 2224 Emergency: 999
Children's Social Care Worker out of hours Emergency Duty Team		0300 123 2327
Fostering and Adoption	www.fosteradoptsomerset.org.uk AandFRecruitmentEnquiryLine@somerset.gov.uk	0800 587 9900

www.somersetwaste.gov.uk	ssdc@southsomerset.gov.uk	01935 462462
https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/	Travel – Drive/Bus/Train/Walk/Cycle Weather	
www.somerset.gov.uk	generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk	0300 123 2224
http://roadworks.org/	Useful website for road works info	
www.facebook.com/somersetcountycouncil	SCC Facebook page	
https://roam.somerset.gov.uk/roam/map	Interactive Rights of Way Map / maintenance reporting	

Most PCs have been able to hold virtual meetings but it seems that several currently have vacancies..... why not volunteer, YOUR community needs you!



ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

As might be expected, now that we are all getting to grips with new technology and virtual meetings, things are moving along apace. The benefit of not having to be physically present is that I have now been able to participate in many more activities and meetings this month.

1/5	SCC Coronavirus briefing
3/5	Horton service
4/5	Broadway PC Zoom practice
4/5	Ashill PC Zoom practice
5/5	Broadway PC meeting
5/5	SCC Coronavirus briefing
5/5	Ilminster TC meeting
6/5	SCC Adults scrutiny
6/5	SCC Childrens scrutiny
6/5	SSDC Area South
6/5	Horton quiz
6/5	Winsham PC
7/5	SSDC District Exec.
7/5	DSFRA – Deputy CFO applications
8/5	VE Day event
10/5	Horton service
11/5	Somerset Day event
11/5	Chaffcombe PC Zoom practice
11/5	Ashill PC
13/5	SSDC Area East committee
13/5	Horton lockdown quiz
14/5	SSDC Audit Committee
15/5	SCC Coronavirus briefing
17/5	Horton service
18/5	SSDC briefing with CEO
18/5	Horton PC
18/5	Chaffcombe PC
20/5	IAG meeting
20/5	SSDC Area West
20/5	Horton lockdown quiz
21/5	SCC Health & Wellbeing Board
21/5	Business Skills workshop
21/5	Fiveways School
21/5	SSDC Leader meeting
21/5	Ascension Day service
22/5	SCC Coronavirus briefing
23/5	Samaritans core skills training
24/5	Horton service
27/5	SSDC Area North
27/5	Horton quiz
28/5	SSDC planning training
28/5	Ashill PC meeting
29/5	DSFRA Webex training
29/5	SCC Coronavirus briefing
31/5	Horton service