

ILMINSTER DIVISION DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT JUNE 2018

SCC FINANCES

Each year SCC is required to produce a Statement of Accounts, summarising its financial affairs and providing a commentary on performance and accountability. This is available at: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/information-and-statistics/financial-information/budgets-and-accounts/>
An interim finance officer, Peter Lewis, has been recruited, to replace Kevin Nacey.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (DSFRS)

At the annual meeting this month Cllr. Sara Randall Johnson was re-elected Chair of the authority, with Cllr. George Wheeler, as Vice Chair, after some discussion in relation to proportional representation for the two counties.

I have been appointed as Vice Chair of the HR Management Development Committee and also the Chief Fire Officer's Appraisal Panel.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRECEPT

SCC will use the additional 3% Council Tax precept, approved by the Government, to support the local care market, encouraging more re-ablement at home with less emphasis on care beds. All types of provision will see an increase in costs as the local market has still to deal with the additional cost of overnight care (sleep ins). This recent court judgement will cost SCC an additional £1.5m a year.

SCC ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

I understand that there has been an increase in reported instances of abuse in the over 55s; this is often linked to hospital/GP visits, where signs of abuse are noticed during visits. Despite meeting with both senior officers and the head of service in relation to several ongoing issues concerning Ilminster Division residents, the promised response has yet to materialise and I have reported this to the Cabinet member.

SCC is to be the subject of a BBC Panorama programme for its successful work in the local care sector. The programme focuses on challenges of providing elderly care across the Country. It is hoped this will raise awareness of the issues being faced on a daily basis.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE REVIEW

SCC commissioned Valuing Care Ltd. to carry out an independent 'Fair Cost of Care' review of fee levels for 2018-19, to reflect the actual cost of care. Since the last review, in 2013, a number of factors have changed – including pressures on providers, national minimum wage, CQC costs, travel and sleep ins. SCC wants the process to be as transparent as possible. Valuing Care considered - Care at Home fees including reablement; Care Home fees; a mechanism for the annual cost of care decision making in the future. All 42 CQC registered Care at Home providers were contacted, with only 12 responding. Although disappointing, a review of fees paid to Adult Care providers has taken place. The cost is currently estimated at £8.5m, in excess of the £6.6m income from the Adult Social Care precept. £1.1m is already committed for contractual inflation in other services, leaving a shortfall of £3m which is proposed to be met through the Better Care Fund. The proposal, with an average inc. of 5.35%, has been broadly welcomed, supporting providers who have been struggling to deliver SCC funded placements. There is evidence that the new fee levels are reinvigorating the supply market in residential and home care provision. SCC have scheduled a meeting to address points of clarification on future funding for sleep ins and learning disability rates. There remains a slightly lower differential between residential and nursing home.

SHELTERED HOUSING PROVISION

SCC's contract ends in Oct. and will not be renewed. SCC will no longer provide the £1.2m financial contribution to Sheltered Housing Providers. As this is not statutory responsibility, SCC are instead planning to reinvest some of the funding into developing Somerset Community Connect (a partnership with SCC, the Health Service, local communities and voluntary organisations), building the right infrastructure to enable people to be able to access support within their local community; ensuring that support is available to all, not just those living in sheltered housing schemes.

Somerset Community Connect uses trained individuals to work with within the local community to help people remain independent within their own homes for as long as possible. £200k has been set aside to recruit village agents to handle the transition period as the new service will not come into effect until Mar. 2019.

SCC have undertaken a public involvement and consultation exercise; to inform and gather views on the preferred commissioning model moving forward and its potential impacts.

At present, around 450 sheltered housing tenants, out of 3,500, benefit directly from SCC funding. 2017 figures show that Somerset's 50+ population is now 246,630.

All Sheltered Housing Providers will continue to offer tenancy related support services to their tenants, and tenants can expect to be able to access sheltered housing services from their landlords and services provided through Community Connect. Any reduction in the Housing Provider service that leaves a tenant in need, and their outcomes unmet, will be able to access Community Connect to discuss how their needs can be met in another way.

SMOKING IN PREGNANCY

Over 1,000 babies have now been born smokefree in Somerset as a result of the SCC funded Mums2Be Smokefree service working with maternity services. Midwives refer women to the service, and specialist advisors work with them individually to quit smoking.

CHILD SAFETY

SCC joined forces with SDFRS as part of Child Safety Week this month, to make homes safer. The team focused on finding eligible Somerset families who can receive a safer homes referral. News about Child Accident Prevention Trust is at <https://www.capt.org.uk/>

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

In response to questions asked at SCC full council, the following has been received 'Children's Social Care is on track for the necessary reduction in the use of locum social workers. As of April 2018, there were 53 full-time equivalent locums in post, with a permanent workforce of 237 contracted staff. This is a reduction of 30 locums since 2017 across Children's Social Care. For South Somerset -

Role	SCC contracted staff	Locums	Locum % of workforce
Qualified Social Worker (Inc. ASYE)	31.73 (F/T equivalent)	6.09	16.10%
Consultant Social Worker	2.00	2.98	59.84%
Team Manager	5.81	0.63	9.78%
Operations Manager	1.00	0.00	0.00%
Deputy Operations Manager	1.00	0.00	0.00%
All Social Work Qualified Roles	41.54	9.70	18.93%

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

A recent study by the County Councils Network shows that transport in suburban areas is £10 per pupil p.a and £93 in rural Counties, representing £12m additional cost in Somerset.

YOUTH CLUB GRANTS

34 youth clubs across the county (12 in S. Somerset) have received a total of £105k in grants from SCC's Youth and Community Service, to support a range of projects. This is matched by over £287,000 in locally raised funding and hours of volunteers' time.

MIND OF MY OWN APP. (MOMO)

One of Somerset's Children Looked After was recently crowned MOMO champion of the year for his role in supporting the use of this app. nationally by children in care, care leavers and their social workers to share good news and sort out problems. It allows children to speak up anytime and anywhere they want – using a phone, tablet or computer. Somerset is recognised as one of the top MOMO-friendly local authorities in the UK.

POST 16 EDUCATION TRAVEL

SCC, in conjunction with partner organisations, seeks to maximise opportunities to increase access and concessionary travel to those aged 14-19 in education and training.

Particular consideration is given to the needs of Post-16 learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties up to the age of 25.

After Year 11, SCC does not have a statutory duty to provide home to school/college transport free of charge for students aged 16 to 19. However, SCC will provide access to transport for these students to access education at a school sixth form, further education establishment or a LA commissioned learning provider.

There is no means testing for assistance with travel costs; the student contribution to the cost of their ticket is the same for all. Those suffering financial hardship can access additional assistance through the 16-19 Bursary (means tested) provided by Colleges and Schools with Sixth Forms and other providers. Students who have recently left 'care' may be eligible to have their contribution to travel waived.

Petrol allowances are available at 18p per mile, limited to £135.00 p.a. to allow young people living over 3 miles from their nearest bus stop to access to the local bus network.

The Love the Bus County Ticket enables holders to travel throughout Somerset and on cross border routes to/from Wiltshire, Dorset and Devon N. Somerset and Bath & NE Somerset. Unless stated otherwise, these flexible tickets enable travel at any time.

All eligible students will have to pay a contribution of £795 for 2018/19.

CREWKERNE/ILMINSTER SCHOOLS

Following my meeting at Wadham, the response to questions raised with SCC was:-

Futures for Somerset have been asked to consider how the current school estate could be configured to deliver a 2-tier system. This work will inform Mid Term Financial Plan/Capital bids for 2019/20. They have been asked to look at all options, producing a review covering: Capacity reviews of the existing estate, to assess sites and their condition

Review of site opportunities and constraints (taking account of expansion, listed buildings, conservation areas, planning constraints and other related items)

Development of an options appraisal with related strategic plans, capital cost information and risk log and programme information

A summary report with conclusions and recommendations will be considered by Officers in further consultation in the autumn term with head teachers/governors. The need to move to two tier, and the development of an 11-16 school, is a given. SCC are aiming to make any change at the start of the academic year 2020/21. The work being done by Futures for Somerset may impact on this timetable. The Diocese are fully engaged with the process and fully supportive of the need to change. Of more concern, is the situation in relation to academies, which the LA has no power to direct.

SOMERSET WASTE PARTNERSHIP

The range of items that can now be recycled has been extended and further changes are planned as the 'Recycle More' campaign is rolled out in 2020. Some items incur charges. The Chard recycling centre is closed on Tues. and Wed. (Tel. 01460 65855).

For more information contact enquiries@somersetwaste.gov.uk

For collection enquiries call 01935 462462.

FREE WATER REFILLS

A recent study shows that almost 65% of us would not buy bottled water if tap water refills were freely available. The Refill Movement is a free tap water initiative designed to reduce plastic pollution and promote healthy hydration by making refilling a water bottle easy.

County Hall and other SCC locations have recently signed up to become Refill stations.

You can download a free app at www.refill.org.uk

SSDC TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

The meeting held at Henhayes (Crewkerne) this month at which local parishes were invited to attend and raise any questions was poorly attended. The selection process for the proposed new job roles has now been completed and service re-design is under way, with the intention of introducing new ways of working in Jan. 2019. An update on the Connecting Devon and Somerset broadband position was received. For more information contact – matt.barrow@devon.gov.uk or visit the website www.conectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk

PLANNING

There have been a number of planning applications coming forward within Neroche ward, in recent weeks, which have caused some discussion. To view specific applications go to:- <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/view-a-planning-application-online/>

NEW PLANNING SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

New arrangements for contacting the Planning service at SSDC came into effect this week, to allow the team to deal with a current backlog of planning applications and give Planning Officers increased time without interruption to avoid demand failure yet maintain a good level of customer service. This situation is intended to be temporary.

Incoming direct calls to the Planning service will only be answered between 9.00am – 10.00am and 4.00pm – 5.00pm daily. During all other hours, calls will go to voicemail and be actioned when the Planning Officer becomes available.

The Duty Planner service will only operate from 9.00am until 1.00pm daily. Duty Planner calls are received by calling 01935 462462. After 1.00pm messages will be taken and passed to Planning Officers to action.

Should you need to contact a known Planning Officer dealing with a live case you are advised to email the Officer direct.

Until further notice, there will be no Planning Officer cover for walk-ins.

The guide to the Planning service at SSDC is at www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning

HIGHWAYS

No new roadworks are planned in addition to those previously notified. Additional 'live' information can be found at www.travelsomerset.co.uk.

Verge maintenance programmes have now commenced. For information on environmental maintenance, visit www.travelsomerset.co.uk/grass-cutting.

The annual carriageway surface dressing programme has begun. For more information visit www.travelsomerset.co.uk/surface-dressing.

POTHoles

Following the difficult weather conditions last winter, the Government have confirmed additional Pothole Action Fund capital contributions to Somerset of £3.662m for the 18/19 financial year. On average around 19,000 potholes are filled in Somerset every year.

TRAFFIC

SCC have developed the Traffic Choices website <https://www.trafficchoices.co.uk/somerset> to help inform people of the options available to help resolve traffic problems. Enquirers will be directed to Engineers at trafficmanagement@somerset.gov.uk

ILMINSTER HIGHWAYS

Kerb outside the Bookshop, Silver Street – damaged - has been marked for repair

Pedestrian Crossing at the Triangle/Strawberry Bank – button only works after several presses - reported to the traffic signals team to investigate

Parking Matters – a query was raised in relation to repainting the double yellow lines from Silver St into Court Barton (adjacent to the Minster), and the work to re align the no entry

The highways officer has been in direct contact with Ilminster TC.

WINSHAMS SIS SCHEME

This scheme to consider pedestrian safety improvements has been assessed, score-carded, reviewed and recommendations have been presented to the SIS panel for approval to progress to the design stage. The next step will be to commission the scheme to an engineer resource, after which the scheme will again be assessed before progression. SCC will be in touch in due course to advise of programme key milestones.

LIBRARY SERVICE

The 'Future of Libraries' consultation received over 4,000 responses. A final decision is expected later this year. SCC are keen to stress that no decisions about the future delivery of library services in any community have been taken, and that the results of the consultation will be taken into account before any decision is taken. Next steps are:-

10th July - A summary of the consultation results will be presented to SCC Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee at a public meeting at Taunton Library.

August/Sept. - Analysis of consultation results.

27 Sept. - Recommendations on the library service re-design to be published.

9 Oct. - SCC's Scrutiny Committee for Policy and Place to consider the recommendations.

17 Oct. - Cabinet will meet to take a final decision on the recommendations and future funding allocated to each library by SCC.

Nov. 2018 – Jan. 2019 - Depending on the decision, Community Library Partnership proposals may be developed and agreed, where expressions of interest have been received from individual communities.

Jan, – April 2019 - Implementation of the Library Redesign programme will start, continuing into the 2019-20 financial year.

SOMERSET RIVERS AUTHORITY

The Private Members Bill, put before the House of Commons to establish the SRA as a separate precepting authority, failed due to the intervention of a single MP on a procedural matter. The SRA Governing Body have now written to the Environment Secretary to seek his support and intervention to resolve this funding issue before the next financial year

FAIRTRADE

Ilminster Has once again been granted Fairtrade status and Greenfylde School has been awarded a national award for their work in this area.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

7/6	Wadham school meeting
7/6	Fiveways School – Staffing meeting
7/6	Ilminster Lit. Fest event
7/6	Broadway – planning application site visit
8/6	DSFRS Annual meeting
8/6	Horton PC meeting with Chair and Clerk
8/6	Ilminster Lit. Fest event
8/6	Whitelackington Art Group exhibition
17/6	Ilminster Civic Service
18/6	FFT Aspire School Governor Training - Bridgwater
19/6	SCC – Place Scrutiny Committee
19/6	Broadway Parish Council
20/6	Donyatt/Horton – planning site visit
20/6	Area West – Chard
21/6	SCC Children’s Services workshop - Somerton
22/6	Samaritans fund raising quiz – Moose Hall Taunton
23/6	Armed Forces Day – Jocelyn Park, Chard – Chard Museum
23/6	Stockfest
23/6	Fiveways School Yeovil Annual Fete
23/6	Ilminster Lions Fete
23/6	Broadway Church Tea
24/6	Horton Playing Field Project B’fast
24/6	Ashill Church Cream Tea
24/6	Ashill Songs of Praise
28/6	Dowlish Wake church meeting
28/6	SSDC transformation update for parishes – Crewkerne
29/6	CLOKS performance – Guildhall, Chard
30/6	South Somerset MIND Driving Challenge – Henstridge
30/6	Winsham Street fair
30/6	Donyatt Fete
30/6	Horton Flower Festival