

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT JANUARY MONTHLY REPORT 2019

SCC - FINANCES

SCC's CEO, in agreement with the Leader, has deferred the appointment of the Director of Corporate Resources and instead appoint an Interim Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), initially for a fixed term until the end of March 2020. The reasons being that there is an urgent need to ensure that SCC has an experienced senior manager in post, following Peter Lewis's departure at end of February. Given the financial challenge facing SCC an experienced, well-regarded professional is needed in post. It is proposed that the role focuses solely on Finance functions and the S151 Officer responsibilities. SCC has an experienced officer currently working in the Finance team, who has expressed a willingness to take on the S151 role subject to an appointment process.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

The government intends to press ahead with the proposed amendments to schemes; the relevant statutory instrument will be laid before Parliament in the Spring. Once approved, existing combination schemes will be amended to provide for:

- Police & Crime Commissioners to join fire and rescue authorities as a member with speaking and voting rights, subject to approval by the authority in question. DSFRS has already received and approved such a request from the PCCs for Avon & Somerset and Devon & Cornwall, which will take effect when the amending legislation comes into force.
- PCCs will be able to nominate a Deputy to attend in their absence.
- PCC membership will form part of political balance considerations when making appointments by the Authority to committees, outside bodies etc.

The Government intends to amend existing legislation so that PCCs would be prevented from claiming Authority membership allowances as a result of being represented on the Fire & Rescue Authority.

YOUNG CARERS

Work to develop a different way of ensuring that Young Carers' needs are assessed and supported is continuing. The Cabinet are expecting to receive a report on the proposed way forward later this spring/early summer.

Social work officers have been talking to children, families and community groups to explore the potential for greater input from community organisations; the aim being to provide more choice of support to more young carers, to help them achieve their potential, an approach which works well in other parts of the country. The statutory requirement to undertake young carers assessments would transfer to children's and adults social care.

GETSET LEVEL 2 SERVICES

The public consultation carried out in Nov. and Dec. included questionnaires and drop in sessions attracting 731 responses. Full details were reported to the Scrutiny Committee for Children and Families this month and can be found on the council's website:

There was a consistent view that early help and prevention is key to promoting the welfare of children, young people and their families rather than reacting to events that potentially require more specialist or statutory levels of support.

Until Mar. 2020 all families currently receiving Level 2 one-to-one support will continue with this, then concentrate on delivering group sessions and key parenting programmes.

Officers will also work with partners in health, police, district councils and the voluntary sector to strengthen and improve the multi-agency approach to early help.

Strengthening community capacity, through £200k annual grant funding to develop community-based and voluntary support.

The revised proposals will go to Cabinet on 11 February for decision.

PACT

There have been recent reports of anti-social behaviour in and around Winsham. In ensuring that appropriate action is taken it is important for the relevant authorities to be informed, and where possible, any activity recorded (date, time, location etc.) with photographic evidence if appropriate. Dog fouling has been of concern on the recreation area at Dowlish Wake Pavilion, such that CCTV has now been installed.

SCHOOL FUNDING

Schools are due to receive an increase in funding in 2019, but Somerset remains in the lowest 40 funded local authorities in England. SCC will continue to lobby central government in this respect.

ILMINSTER/CREWKERNE SCHOOLS

The uncertain future of the current system remains a cause for considerable concern locally. The CEO of the Bridgwater College Academy Trust recently met with the Governing Bodies of the two middle schools, inviting them to join his Trust, and to change their age ranges to 9-16. The implications of this are potentially significant and not straightforward.

The review of educational provision in the Ilminster and Crewkerne area, undertaken by Futures for Somerset (FfS) has commenced and should be completed by Easter. FfS will seek to secure a structure of education for the area that is financially sustainable with the capacity to provide the range of curriculum opportunities to equip pupils with the skills and qualifications for the future. They will deliver an 'Options Appraisal' that will look at alternative models of provision, assessing them against several indicators, including education impacts at each key stage, impact on Special Education Needs, early years provision, staffing implications, transport costs, impact on communities and the capital and revenue costs required to deliver any change.

Once the 'Options Appraisal' is completed it will be presented to Governors and Headteachers. Subsequent proposals for change will be subject to normal statutory processes including full consultation. FfS will carry out site visits to ensure that information for the review is accurate., which may result in a slight extension to the time required for the review, into the summer term.

POLICE INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP

County Lines remains of some concern, particularly in the Yeovil area, where strong action on a daily basis is being taken to tackle this. This is aimed at disrupting those who cause harm and helping to protect those who are vulnerable and victims of drug dealing in our communities. All of the success stories have one thing in common – vital information received from the public and other agencies. The Police rely heavily on such help and support to enable them to take action. Much of this may remain unseen during such operations, until a successful conclusion is reached.

PLANNING

Following the Area West decision to recommend refusal, the application for development at Pound Corner, Broadway, was considered by SSDC's Regulation Committee, and approval granted.

I have been advised that SSDC have produced the findings from the consultation held at the start of last year and have included Shudrick Valley as one of three options for housing development in Ilminster. Taking into account the successful appeal not to permit development in the valley, this has caused considerable local disquiet. The recommendation is due to be considered by the District Executive on Thurs. 7th Feb. at 9.30am, and if it is agreed there will be another public consultation prior to the submission of a new Local Plan which then go before the inspector.

LAND DRAINAGE

Landowners with watercourses on or adjacent to their land (riparian owners) have responsibilities for watercourse management. Flood risk management authorities, including SCC, have a role to play to ensure maintenance of watercourses is undertaken appropriately, giving due regard to the environment.

1.2. SCC has permissive powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991, which previously rested with District Councils.

1.3. These powers apply to Ordinary Watercourses outside areas with an Internal Drainage Board. The powers for Main River rest with the Environment Agency.

1.4. A policy has been prepared by the Flood and Water Management Team to provide a framework for the SCC's approach to land drainage enforcement, setting out a framework that aims to ensure best use of resources and funding.

1.5. The policy has been based on SCC's experience over a number of years and reference to the approach of other authorities. SCC's approach is to engage with landowners, providing information and guidance about their responsibilities to raise awareness of the principles of good watercourse management and the processes associated with carrying out works.

1.6. Where a riparian owner has not undertaken their duties and the risks and impacts warrant SCC's involvement, SCC will look to agree solutions and reasonable timescales for remedial action. If agreement cannot be reached enforcement powers will be used.

1.7. SCC can consider where and when to take action and may not prosecute every individual who commits an offence. Enforcement action must be proportionate to the risks posed and/or its impact on others or the environment.

1.8. The policy will be a live document, periodically reviewed in response to changes in legislation, best practice, lessons learned and the resources of SCC.

HIGHWAYS

The inclement weather this month has caused significant disruption across the division, with school closures and access to many local communities cut off for several days, in addition to the interruption of bus routes. In response, a number of local residents have expressed, in the strongest terms, their dismay at SCC's revised gritting programme for the winter months. I have forwarded these comments on for response and have been advised that a review of these changes will be carried out in May ahead of a policy agreement for 2019/20.

Concern has been raised by several local parishes in relation to the absence of timely, pertinent responses from Highways, and inconsistent advice, when planning applications are considered.

KINGSTONE SPEEDING

This is an ongoing issue and regular communication continues between PC representatives and Highways to try to find a suitable solution. It is noted that Dowlish Wake shares the boundary with Kingstone and is to be included in any consultation.

PUDDLEBRIDGE SPEEDING

The issue of speeding, and the number of recent accidents, has heightened the demand for speed reduction measures to be put in place as a matter of urgency.

BROADWAY ROAD SAFETY

Local residents have raised the issue of the increase in speeding traffic, and the amount of traffic at peak times. With the number of new properties in recent years, along with planning approvals granted, in addition to the possibility of the junction closure when the A358 is dualled, it is felt that the situation will continue to worsen. Safe access to Neroche School is of particular concern, as are the number of parked cars which decrease visibility for pedestrians.

Highways has been made aware of the situation and I await their response.

RIGHTS OF WAY

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 - Section 53 Application 633M to add a restricted byway over Charmoor Lane, Broadway and Combe St. Nicholas.

SCC has received an application from the South Somerset Bridleways Association, which believes this route has been wrongly recorded and that it should be shown as a restricted byway. The application seeks to modify the Map and Statement to reflect this.

To support their application the applicant has submitted historic documents, and is of the opinion that this demonstrates that, at some point in the past, public rights existed over the route. If this is correct, and those rights have not been extinguished or diverted, then they will still legally exist and will need to be recorded. The case officer has sought comments/evidence that would assist SCC in its duty to investigate the position, before preparing their report

DOWLISH WAKE – Footpaths CH12/2 and CH 12/4

The PC has submitted their comments expressing concern over the planned changes to be made and the reasons for them, which will impact on the current position for local residents in the Moolham Lane area.

NIPPY BUS

The situation in relation to the demise of the Nippy bus service was again raised at Ilminster TC. A comprehensive response was received from SCC's officer, and passed onto interested parties.

ILMINSTER LIBRARY

Plans are going ahead, in conjunction with Friends of Ilminster Library (FoIL) to progress community involvement in retaining the library. This will include the training of volunteers to assist in the running of the library, and also as Fire Wardens, to enable events outside of normal hours to take place. Fund raising is a key priority, to support maintenance requirements and other improvements to encourage greater community use. Grant funding has been obtained from several sources to support this and other activities. A self-serve machine is to be installed in Feb.

DOWLISH WAKE PLAYING FIELD TRUST

At this month's AGM a number of new committee members were welcomed on board, with special thanks expressed to all of those who helped to in so many ways to build the new pavilion.

PARISH RANGER SCHEME

Stephen Fox, from SSDC, is keen to promote this scheme, which enables local communities to purchase experienced, skilled, labour at £19.50 per hour to carry out parish maintenance work. The scheme provides a bespoke flexible approach to carrying out such tasks as gully emptying, RoSPA inspections, painting of village signs, siting of SIDs, repair of styles etc. For more details contact him direct at stephen.fox@southsomerset.gov.uk

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

5/1	Ilminster Senior Citizens Lunch
8/1	Broadway PC
9/1	Winsham PC
10/1	Greenfylde School reading support
10/1	Fairtrade meeting
10/1	Whitelackington VH quiz
12/1	Chaffcombe wassaling
13/1	Donyatt VH Gemini b'fast
16/1	Area West
17/1	Blue Light Services Symposium - London
17/1	SSDC full council
19/1	Charity Wassail
19/1	Whitelackington VH table top sale
20/1	Chillington service of light
21/1	Ilminster Lit. Fest meeting
21/1	Neroche School governor meeting
25/1	150 year of Girl Guides event – Haynes Museum
26/1	Dowlish Wake Playing Field Trust AGM
26/1	Chaffcombe charity quiz
27/1	Ilminster charity quiz for Friends of Ilminster Library
28/1	Donyatt PC
29/1	Broadway PC
30/1	Horton PC