

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR MAY REPORT 2018

Activity this month has been dominated by the annual meetings of parish and town councils. I have attended as many as I was able to, despite the challenge of several being held at the same time on the same evening.

A number of parishes remain concerned about the difficulty of recruiting representatives.

Within SCC and SSDC there have been changes to key post holders, of particular interest are:-

SCC

Scrutiny for Policies & Place: Chair – Cllr Anna Groskop, Vice-Chair – Cllr Mike Lewis

Scrutiny for Policies, Adults & Health: Chair – Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey, Vice-Chair – Cllr Claire Aparicio-Paul

Scrutiny for Policies, Children & Families: Chair – Cllr Leigh Redman, Vice-Chair – Cllr Rod Williams.

Chair of the Constitution and Standards Committee – Cllr. William Wallace

There have been changes to SCC's Cabinet membership and structure, creating two new Cabinet Member roles – Resources, & Education & Council Transformation.

The Council's Cabinet now comprises:

Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Strategy & Customers & Communities: Cllr David Fothergill

Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Resources: Cllr Mandy Chilcott

Economic Development, Planning & Community Infrastructure: Cllr David Hall. Junior Cabinet Member: Cllr Mike Pullin.

Adult Social Care: Cllr David Huxtable. Junior Cabinet Member Giuseppe Fraschini

Children and Families: Cllr Frances Nicholson

Education & Council Transformation: Cllr Faye Purbrick

Highways & Transport: Cllr John Woodman

Public Health & Wellbeing: Cllr Christine Lawrence

For more detail about positions and responsibilities, visit

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s6818/Appendix%20A%20Cabinet%20responsibilities%20May%202018.pdf>

SSDC

Chair of Council – Cllr. Tony Capozzoli

Vice Chair – Cllr. Mike Best

Leader of Council – Cllr. Ric Pallister

Chair of Area West Committee - Val Keitch

Iminster Town Council, along with the parishes within the division, have also seen some changes. The details of the new post holders of key positions can be found on the websites related to the different councils. Congratulations go to all of those who have volunteered to take on roles of responsibility within their communities.

My own membership of committees remains unchanged –

SCC – Health & Wellbeing Board; Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Board + Audit

SSDC – Licensing Committee; Appeals Panel

COUNTY HALL

'A' block out of action – contractors are now carrying out refurbishment work until further notice.

SCC KEY PERSONNEL CHANGES

Kevin Nacey, Director of Finance, will leave in June, after 31 years of service. A number of interim FDs have been identified. A Members Panel will shortly carry out interviews. Richard Williams, Director of Commercial & Business Service will also be leaving. It is the intention not to replace this post, reducing the Senior Leadership Team by one person.

SCC - FULL COUNCIL – ANNUAL MEETING

A number of questions were tabled in relation to items of public interest, mainly concerning adult's and children's services.

SSDC – FULL COUNCIL – ANNUAL MEETING

The Strategic Development & Regeneration plan for transformation was agreed, although some concerns were raised in relation to the delegation and approach towards budgets for Regeneration Programme Boards.

UNITARY AUTHORITY

The SCC leader, along with the leaders of the five district councils, has pledged to work together on a joint review of local governance. They have formally begun exploring whether a unitary model of local government could be a better way to deliver public services to achieve best value for money for residents and businesses in the most cost-efficient and effective way and meet future community outcomes.

The details of the review have not been finalised, but there is commitment to:-

- Ensuring the review is entirely independent, focusing on what is best for Somerset and its communities
- Considering a whole range of options for the future, with all options having a robust business case analysis
- Inviting others, including health care, to work with Councils on the review
- To engage with communities and stakeholders, keeping people informed, undertaking community consultation before any final decisions are made

Work will now commence on drawing up detailed plans and timetables for the review. Further updates will be issued in due course. This could see the abolition of the six current councils, including SCC, and the establishment of one, two or some other configuration of single-tier authorities. Initial estimates indicate that between £18m and £28m could be released annually to invest into front line services, in addition to providing the public with greater clarity through a single point of contact on public services. SCC has stressed the increased role that Towns and Parishes would be able to play in the governance of the County to ensure local participation and consideration. The next stage is for willing partners to debate the approach before moving to a business case and then Government consideration. Concerns have been raised about the wisdom of pursuing this route, especially in relation to the cost of doing so.

BOUNDARY COMMISSION REPORT

The recommendations for SSDC have now been received, and subject to parliamentary approval, the new arrangements will come into force at the local elections in May 2019. There is to be no change to the number of elected members for either Neroche or Ilminster wards.

LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES CONTRACT

Concerns have been raised to the existing service provided by Discovery-Dimensions UK Ltd., particularly in relation to performance standards, staffing levels and the potential impact on safety, including medication errors.

SCC HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

The latest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was received, indicating that healthy life expectancy in the county is 64.8 years for men and 68.4 years for women, and that the gap between the most and least deprived areas is 8+ years. The assessment forms the evidence base for the new 'Improving Lives' strategy for the next 10 years. There is some interesting data relating to all aspects of our lives, available online shortly, as part of the consultation process relating to the 4 strategic priorities.

CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP

SCC has agreed to work closely with Somerset CCG (which plans and buys healthcare services) to deliver a joint Somerset Health and Social Care Strategy called 'Fit For The Future'. The aim is to remove inequalities, ensuring equal access to services; to provide higher quality services in communities, closer to home; to invest in prevention so that people can stay healthy and as independent for as long as possible – and for everyone to have a strong voice in shaping any future proposals.

SSDC LEISURE PROVISION UPDATE

Priorities in Area West include acknowledgement that until now provision has been poor. Ilminster has seen some investment recently so key areas of focus for future provision are in Chard and Crewkerne, relating to – Football; Cricket; Rugby; Hockey. Plans are underway to produce a Strategic Leisure Provision plan for the district.

DILLINGTON HOUSE

Adam Cowell has been appointed as the new manager of the property, which is leased to SCC.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The issue of the continued use of locums to cover staffing needs has been raised, and confirmation has been received that there has been a significant reduction, with the aim of increasing the number of permanent staff employed.

The recent OFSTED report has shown that The Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting of Children is no longer inadequate and statutory intervention by Government has been withdrawn. Early help services have improved but are variable and not yet fully established. There is some concern around 'county lines' (drug supply, violence and exploitation).

ILMINSTER/CREWKERNE SCHOOL REVIEW

The planned meeting between officers and school representatives, due to be held this month, was cancelled. I received the following update this week.

A two-part process has been agreed with Hadleigh Wells from Futures for Somerset.

1. A feasibility study to determine the options there are for reorganising education provision to deliver a two-tier model utilising the existing and planned school estate
2. Project manage the change once a decision is made

A timeline for the process has yet to be agreed. There is acknowledgement that there is currently uncertainty. Officers have issued the following statement (in precis):-

"We have been in discussion with Head Teachers/Chairs of Governors in the Ilminster/Crewkerne area about the future structure. There is a need to ensure there is a financially sustainable structure in place, enabling schools to provide the best quality education. The current structure, (around the two middle schools and the upper school) is not sustainable given the number of secondary aged pupils. Once you start looking at one part of the structure you have to look at all elements of it. SCC are looking at how to utilise existing school buildings. Any proposed change will require consultation with parents, children and other members of the community before a decision is made. Given the statutory process that needs to be followed to agree any change there will be no changes to the existing structures until September 2020 at the earliest".

PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACEMENTS

From 5665 applications: 5313 - 1st preference met – 93.8% - a slight inc. on last year
202 - 2nd preference met – 3.6% 59 - 3rd preference met – 1%

HIGHWAYS ENFORCEMENT - Vodafone has been fined £15k and BT £25k, after pleading guilty to offences relating to illegal roadworks, as part of SCC's commitment to minimising disruption to the travelling public. Vodafone carried out general maintenance works when directed not to, causing severe traffic disruption leading to queues of more than four miles in both directions. In the case of BT, there were a number of incidents relating to the replacement of telegraph poles and cabinets, which involved blocking roads, potentially delaying the travelling public and emergency services.

SMALL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

The annual budget for these schemes is £1.5m. This year there has been over 100 requests for new schemes submitted. It is expected that councillors will be informed within the next few weeks of the outcome of those applications.

DONYATT SMALL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The safety audit of the proposed scheme is due to be carried out in the next month or so. Unless there are major issues, it will be signed off in late July.

SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE SCHEME

Across Somerset, more than 60% of parish councils have opted to join the new SCC programme to pay £100 per SID installation. Several others are intending to buy their own SID, and SCC will support volunteer training.

POT HOLES

In response to concerns, Highways have reiterated their intention to prevent pot holes forming in the first place, with over 18,000 repaired in the last year. SCC's high level of quality and performance in managing this aspect of the service has attracted the highest level of government funding towards maintaining and repairing Somerset's road network.

HIGHWAYS ROAD CASUALTY REPORT

Based on Dept. for Transport figures the financial cost of traffic collisions in Somerset from Jan. – Dec. 2017 was just under £84 million. 2% increase in accidents overall compared to 2016.

Casualties – 22 fatal; 164 serious; 1273 slight injury

Motorcyclists – 109; Pedestrians – 143 (down 7%) Car – 1035 (down 8%) Cyclists – 125 (up 19%)

SSDC AREA WEST – COUNTY HIGHWAYS REPORT

Completed schemes during 2017/18 include:-

Broadway, St Peters Close – Footways; Chaffcombe, Kingstone Well Lane - Drainage
Cudworth Street - Drainage

Surface Dressing proposed for 2018/19

Applying a bitumen tack coat to the existing road surface and rolling in stone chippings is highly effective in preserving the integrity of the road surface. Highways are due to start Surface Dressing 16 A and B road sites across South Somerset and 23 C and D road sites in June.

Schemes proposed for 2018/2019

The structural maintenance budget is lower than last year. Significant schemes are:-

Stocklinch Rd. Surfacing **Cudworth St. (Phase 2)** Drainage **Chaffcombe Main St.** Drainage

Grass Cutting - this has been difficult to carry out to everyone's satisfaction as the size of the task is significant and the highway network exceeds 3500km in length. Verge cutting of main A and B roads has started. This will be followed by the C and D roads within the next 4 weeks, with a further cut of A and B roads at the end of August.

ILMINSTER ROAD CLOSURE – WEST STREET

Following concerns raised by local residents and businesses in relation to the planned temporary 2-way movements along Silver Street, I contacted Wessex Water, who were due to carry out work along the road. Their response from Customer Relations was prompt and arrangements were made to carry out the work overnight to minimise disruption.

CANAL WAY

Concern has been raised by local residents in relation to the problem of overgrowth along the public footpath, which I am pursuing.

SSDC – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

The major focus of the service so far for this period, has been:-

Routine annual work schedule for cleansing and grounds maintenance Service transformation Christmas tree shredding Annual budget

The ability to deliver annual work schedules according to plan has resulted in low levels of complaints and a far greater number of compliments.

The 'spring rush' has proven to be difficult due to poor weather conditions, delaying some operations such as mowing and weed spraying.

A plan is in place to litter pick rural roads and cleaning the A303, despite a condensed timescale. The litter picking of main roads has been completed... resulting in the collection (excluding areas where traffic control is needed to access waste on parts of the highway)

14th Feb. - A358 Southfields > Donyatt 7 bags collected; 19th Feb. A30 Cricket St Thomas > Grove Pitts 30 bags; 13th Mar. Kingstone Hill Dinnington > Ilminster 26 bags.

The verges of the A303 have also been cleared. Analysis shows that on average 10 black bin bags of litter are collected for each mile of verge. 40% of the waste is plastics; 30% paper; 10% cans; 15% miscellaneous debris and car parts 5% (based on volume).

Residents are reminded to exercise caution when hedge trimming at this time of year due to the prevalence of birds nesting.

PLANNING

I have been advised that as SSDC currently has no dedicated Enforcement Officer, this role is being carried out by planning officers.

Measures are being taken to reduce the amount of paperwork sent to parishes.

In response to concerns over the cost of appeals, in the case of applications exceeding 10 properties, where areas wish to overturn an officer's recommendation for approval, these will in future be referred to the Regulation Committee for determination.

LIBRARY CONSULTATION

The consultation process continues as planned, despite the intention to explore a Unitary model of local government. 4,500 responses have been received so far, but this represents less than 1% of the county's population. Residents are urged to complete the questionnaire before the 13th June www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation or at the library. Ilminster is one of 7 libraries that may remain unchanged or require community support to remain open.

SSDC – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The SSDC annual parish meeting for Area West parishes will be held in conjunction with Area South at The Henhayes Centre, Crewkerne on **28th June, 6.30-8.30pm.**

RED CROSS FIRST AID TRAINING

I have a balance of several hundred pounds that parishes or groups may use. Chaffcombe have applied to use some of this. Contact me for if you know of anyone interested in taking this up. Those wishing to hold such an event will however be responsible for its organisation.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

5/5	Fairtrade AGM
5/5	Kingstone May Fair
5/5	Yeovil Hospital Camelot radio quiz
6/5	Chillington – Cudworth Bluebell Walk and Rogation Service
10/5	Fairtrade meeting
11/5	Minster Bible Society Coffee Morning
11/5	Iminster Lit. fest. Quiz
12/5	Town Crier Competition
12/5	BATS Cinderella Performance
13/5	Donyatt VH Breakfast
14/5	Broadway – resident meeting
14/5	Knowle St. Giles meeting re: Stop Line Way
14/5	Donyatt PC Annual Meeting
14/5	Chaffcombe PC Annual Meeting
15/5	Christian Aid Coffee Morning Ashill
15/5	Iminster Annual Town Meeting
15/5	Winsham PC Annual Meeting
16/5	SCC Full Council Meeting
16/5	South Somerset MIND Hardy Appeal Committee Meeting
16/5	SSDC – Area West Committee
16/5	Horton Recreation Ground Committee Meeting
17/5	Winsham – Bishop Ruth ‘Telling Our Story’
17/5	SSDC Full Council
18/5	Honeypot Charity fund raising event
19/5	South Somerset MIND coffee morning – Minster Rooms
19/5	Royal Wedding charity fund raising event
20/5	Chard Museum Historic Military Vehicle Event
21/5	United Pentecost Service – Whitelackington
21/5	Horton PC Annual Meeting
22/5	SCC Library Workshop – Taunton
22/5	Iminster Town Council Annual Meeting
23/5	Neroche School Governor’s Meeting
23/5	Warehouse Theatre – Humble Boy
24/5	SCC – Health & Wellbeing Board & member workshop
24/5	Greenfylde School Reading Support
24/5	SSDC Leisure Provision update
24/5	Broadway PC Annual Meeting
26/5	Cricket Malherbie Flower Festival
27/5	St. Mary Magdalene Trinity Sunday Service - Taunton

Please note that I will now be away until 6th June, and also from 9th - 17th June