

SCC/SSDC COUNCILLOR MONTHLY REPORT JANUARY 2017

WINTER WEATHER ADVICE

As colder weather arrives local residents are being encouraged to keep themselves safe and warm and help vulnerable neighbours, especially those living alone, as prolonged periods of cold weather can be dangerous, especially for the very young, very old or those with chronic diseases. People are reminded to check weather forecasts and plan their day around them, taking extra care to prevent any accidental slips on icy or snowy pavements.

When planning a journey in Somerset information to avoid unnecessary delays can be found at <http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk>.

COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

SCC are inviting anyone interested in standing for election May to attend a welcome event on 1 March from 6pm to 8pm at County Hall. This is intended to enable people to find out more about the role of a County Councillor and what is involved in standing to become one. To register for your place contact democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk or 01823 357628.

SCC CDS BROADBAND UPDATE

A training session was held on this at the end of the month. This included a briefing on several projects; technology used, challenges faced, numbers delivered and engagement with communities:

Phase 1 – contract with BT/Openreach

Phase 2 – contract with Airband to cover the Moors

Phase 2 - contracts with Gigaclear for Somerset County area – this will deliver a £62.25 million network to an additional 35,225 of the hardest to reach homes and businesses in the CDS region by 2019. Homes and businesses will be able to access speeds of up to 1gbps. For info. contact Matthew Ballard, 01823 355867 mdballard@somerset.gov.uk

CONTRACT TO PURCHASE LIBRARY BOOKS

Somerset Libraries have joined a buying consortium (CUSP – ‘Consortium for United Stock Purchase’), based in the South West to provide the best opportunity to obtain value for money in the supply of books to the Library Service. Based on 2016-17 agreed expenditure, the approximate annual spend is £360,000 on Adult and Children’s books.

APPRENTICESHIPS

SCC is actively looking to set up a directory of Employers and/or Companies who will offer work experience and/or an apprenticeship. Anyone able to offer such assistance should contact CMallon@somerset.gov.uk.

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

2016 was a challenging year, but confirmation was received from the Minister before Christmas of the ‘significant progress’ made. Feedback from events held has helped to shape action plans and improvement programmes for 2017/18.

SUPPORT SERVICE FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED CSE

A new service is to be set up to reduce the negative impact child sexual abuse has on the lives of children and families, where it is felt that early intervention will lead to more positive outcomes. Until now there has been limited specialist support in relation to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

NEROCHE PRE-SCHOOL FUNDING BID

A successful bid for £1.5m, enabling nearly 200 working families across Somerset to have access to an additional 30 hours of free childcare per week, has also received £350,000 of capital funding support from SCC.

Locally, this includes the re-location of Neroche Pre-School to the school site. The intention is to purchase a modular building to locate at the front of the school site to create new nursery provision for 3 and 4 year-old children. This will provide 30 new 30 hour places for the community. Planning for the pre-school project is now underway, and must be completed by September 2017.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

SCC has been praised for its 'significant' and 'tangible' improvements in its Children's Services. This follows four reviews by a team from Essex County Council and refers to significant improvements, more manageable caseloads, a more stable workforce and better partnership working, largely as a result of increased resources; an extra £6m over three years was committed to Children's Services to drive forward improvements.

Somerset success in school league tables

Somerset's young people have fared well in Government rankings which compare GCSE results from 5,000 schools across the country, scoring highest in the South West and in the top third nationally, against measures progress students make from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school.

The 'Attainment 8' measure, which measures the achievement of students across 8 subjects (including English and Maths), showed that Somerset is performing above the national average.

Schools Capital Repairs Programme 2016-17 - Phase 2

The 2016/17 Programme will have addressed 95 projects. All current Local Authority maintained schools and children's centres were eligible for inclusion in the programme, but Academy and Voluntary Aided schools were not eligible.

Only Priority 1 issues (urgent repair) were considered for inclusion. Locally these are:

Swanmead Community School, Ilminster - Block A - Replace Windows

Winsham Primary School - Block A - Roof Replacement, Grounds – Play court resurfacing and drainage

PROPOSED SCHOOL TERMS 2018/19

Options are currently out to consultation and closes on Friday 3 **March 2017**.

For more information contact: WJKerslake@somerset.gov.uk Tel. 01823 356683

HIGHWAYS MATTERS - PLANNED ROADWORKS

Knowle St Giles	Knowle Church Rd	Drainage improvement works. Temporary road closure.	06 Feb	03 Mar	20 days
Ilminster	Ditton Street	Carriageway resurfacing. Temporary road closure.	06 Mar	07 Mar	2 days
Ilminster	Station Road	Footway improvement works. Temp. traffic signals.	-	-	TBC
Ashill	Thickthorn Lane	Drainage improvement works. Temp. road closure.	-	-	TBC

NEW HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

SCC and Skanska have signed a new contract, value in the region of £20m. per year, for highways maintenance (covering everything from resurfacing and filling potholes to responding to emergencies and gritting roads), which will be in place until March 2024. There is commitment to reduce the number of potholes through preventative work such as drainage improvements and resurfacing; making sure supply chain spend remains in local communities by supporting suitable local businesses wherever possible; and boosting customer satisfaction by providing a more responsive service. They will also be targeted with improving customer satisfaction levels to at least 85%.

A303/A358/A30 IMPROVEMENTS

Highways England are expected to begin consultation on options for proposed improvements between Southfields and the M5 at Taunton in Feb. Precise details of the consultation options is not yet known.

The development consent order (DCO) process to deliver the scheme complex and will take several years to complete. It involves a number of stages including, project preparation, option identification, option selection, preliminary design, statutory procedures & powers, and construction preparation.

Highways England is now entering the first stage of public consultation prior to preparing the Development Consent applications, and they have confirmed that the following consultation and engagement activity will take place, dates TBC.

- Local events at locations along the route + additional 'drop-in' workshop for invited landowners.
- Consultation will seek views on specific route alignment options.
- Technical reports will be published showing a long-list of all route options considered explaining how the shortlisted alignments were chosen for consultation.
- A stakeholder meeting and meetings for District and County Council elected members will take place before the public sessions.
- There will also be material available at public information points.

For more info. – contact MODowdJones@somerset.gov.uk Tel. 01823 356238

A358 Taunton to Southfields – Ecology Surveys

Highways England is proposing a package of improvements along the A303/A358 route as part of the Road Investment Strategy (2015-2020), including plans to connect the existing sections of dual carriageway between Taunton and Southfields with a dual carriageway.

Ecologists will be undertaking ecological surveys on land in the vicinity of the A358 from 25 January. Letters have been mailed to land owners and occupiers in the area requesting permission to access the relevant land and surveys will only take place on land where permission has been granted by a free post response slip.

Surveys are likely to be undertaken by a pair of ecologists on foot. They will be looking for protected species such as great crested newts, birds, bats, dormice, reptiles, badgers, water voles and otters.

The team of surveyors will carry written permission from Highways England, which you can ask to see. All staff will carry photo identification cards and a copy of this letter. Normally staff are readily identifiable due to the wearing of hi-visibility jackets.

They may need to inspect specific locations - such as ponds, trees and watercourses - which may mean they will need to walk away from the edges.

Some photography may be required to form part of the survey reporting, any images taken will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

For more information - <http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a358-taunton-to-southfields/>.

ILMINSTER PARKING RESTRICTION CHANGES

Location map available online – Station Road (No Waiting at any time, No Waiting Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

M25 UPDATE

A funding agreement has been reached with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSW LEP) for the M5 J25 Improvement Scheme.

DONYATT SIS

Concern has been raised about the delays to this project, which are in the main due to surveys which need to be conducted before work can take place. I have received confirmation that the feasibility report is imminent.

WINSHAM ROAD CLOSURE

Temporary road closure of West Port Lodge Road, Cricket St Thomas and Winsham – becomes effective from 7th Feb., remaining in force for 18 months, for commencement of works, which will take 4 days, enabling BT to have access to overhead network cabling to restore customer service in this road. Visit www.roadworks.org for information on the alternative route.

BEACON LANE, ILMINSTER

The Order for road closure became effective on 23 Jan. remaining in force for six months. The path is only likely to be closed for 10 days.

NHS

There has been significant news coverage of the situation locally. Yeovil hospital experienced an unusually high demand on services during the first week of the month, causing severe pressure on the service. Patients were urged not to attend A&E unless absolutely necessary. The hospital was at 'OPEL 4' – meaning it was "unable to deliver comprehensive care and has an increased potential for patient care and safety to be compromised". The local Somerset NHS advises that A&E and 999 services are for life-threatening and serious conditions only. Local high-street pharmacies can help with minor illnesses and complaints such as coughs, colds, flu, stomach upsets, aches and sprains. If it is not a 999 emergency - but you need medical help fast, dial 111.

PLANNING

In recent weeks there have been a number of applications that have given cause for comment by local communities, where a number of concerns have been raised. As a District Councillor I have, almost without exception, supported the views of the local community and the PCs, even where their views differ from that of the planning officer. In such cases, and where there are PLANNING concerns, I recommend referral to Area West Committee so that the application will benefit from being discussed in a wider forum. Please note though that it is entirely at the discretion of the Area West Chair whether or not such requests are accepted.

YARLINGTON - DONYATT HILL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Concern has been raised by local residents over the provision of future parking needs. I am seeking clarification as to the relevance of this in planning terms. Current SSDC guidelines indicate that for a 3-bedroom property 3 parking spaces should be allocated.

CRICKET ST THOMAS APPLICATION

A public meeting was held, attended by many members of the public, giving them the opportunity to view the proposed plans and to express their views and concerns.

POLICE

A new text number to combat rural crime has been launched (on trial for 3 months) - **81819**. The launch coincides with a recent livestock theft in Somerset and rural communities and businesses are asked to help by providing information and intelligence about suspected crime in their area.

They want to hear from anyone who has information about any suspicious or potentially criminal activity, for example - details of people/vehicles seen behaving suspiciously, potentially stolen goods or livestock being offered for sale either to the public or at markets, sightings of stolen vehicles we might put out an alert for.

The number is not monitored 24/7 but the crime team will be access it when on duty.

POLICE ATTENDANCE AT PC MEETINGS

This has been the subject of discussion locally and I have written to the police commissioner to ask that the sites indicating local crime levels be updated more frequently. For those interested in comparison I have found this site useful.

<https://www.police.uk/avon-and-somerset/AE033/crime/stats/>

DONYATT CRIME

Over the New Year period, a break in took place at Donyatt VH in addition to a private residence in the village – the perpetrator was apprehended.

GOVERNOR/COUNCILLOR VACANCIES/MOVEMENTS

- There are currently vacancies for both a parent co-opted governor at Winsham School. Contact SStringer@educ.somerset.gov.uk
- Following the resignation of long standing member Maurice Brunt, Ashill Parish Council has a vacancy.
- Roger Mazillius has been co-opted as a member of Broadway PC.
- Donyatt PC is hoping to co-opt a new councillor at their next meeting.

HORTON COMPUTER HUB

This important community facility has been successful in being awarded a grant of £1,000 from Aviva Insurance, which will enable them to continue and develop their work teaching computer, tablet and smartphone technology. They meet from 2.30pm to 4.30pm, on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month, at Broadway Hill Methodist Church, Pound Road, Horton. The £2 charge includes refreshments.

DONYATT MESSY CHURCH – I have been asked to remind those interested that ‘messy church’ is held at Donyatt Village Hall on the second Sunday of each month, at the same time as the village breakfast and farmer’s market.

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES ATTENDED

3/1	SSDC Scrutiny
4/1	Ilminster – local resident social care meeting
6/1	Dowlish Wake, Phoenix Project Wine Tasting
7/1	Ilminster Senior Citizens Lunch
7/1	Safer Recruitment Training
8/1	Donyatt VH Breakfast
9/1	SSDC – Licensing sub committee
9/1	Dowlish Wake PC
9/1	Donyatt PC
10/1	Lynx 2 Business meeting - Yeovil
10/1	Ilminster TC – meeting with SCC re: County land
14/1	Samaritans – Postvention training for schools
14/1	St. Peter’s Church, Horton – curry lunch
15/1	Horton VH big breakfast
15/1	Combined Plough Sunday service - Horton
16/1	Winsham School Breakfast Club
16/1	SSDC – Licensing sub committee
16/1	SSDC – planning
16/1	SCC – HR Policy committee
16/1	Horton PC
16/1	Ashill PC
17/1	SSDC - Shudrick Lane inquiry
17/1	Broadway PC
17/1	Ilminster Town Council
17/1	Chaffcombe public meeting
18/1	SSDC - Shudrick Lane inquiry
19/1	SSDC - Shudrick Lane inquiry
19/1	Greenfylde School – reading support
19/1	Fiveways School – governor meeting
19/1	SSDC – full council
20/1	SSDC - Shudrick Lane inquiry
21/1	Chaffcombe Charity Quiz for CRY
24/1	Trading Standards workshop - Taunton
25/1	Ilminster – site visit – Shudrick planning inquiry
25/1	Shrubbery - Children’s Hospice SW talk
25/1	Rotary Youth Speaks competition
25/1	PFP charity quiz - Horton
29/1	Charity quiz for St. Margaret’s Hospice
30/1	Winsham School Breakfast Club
30/1	SSDC Scrutiny (+transformation update)

Please note that I will be away from 23rd February until 11th March.