

COUNTY COUNCILLOR NOVEMBER REPORT 2017

SCC - DEVOLUTION UPDATE

A dual committee has been set up involving 19 local authorities across Devon and Somerset, with a remit to progress the productivity strategy. SCC will be the administering authority and whilst the exact format is yet to be agreed, it is felt that this will enable more effective engagement with central government to ensure the needs of the SW are met. There are no plans for a 'Metro Mayor'.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION - DISTRICT COUNCIL WARDING

Ilminster and Neroche - due to the proposed development on the outskirts of Ilminster SSDC feels that they are unable to stay within tolerance for a 2-member ward in Ilminster. A proposal has been submitted to join Ilminster with Neroche as a 3-Member ward; the parishes currently in Neroche have expressed concern over this. It was decided that Whitelackington parish relates better with Ilminster.

SOMERSET BUSINESS RATE POOL

At this month's SSDC full council meeting a 'Pool' for Business Rate Retention was put in place, with a view to increasing the amount of funding retained locally. By pooling Business Rates with other Somerset local authorities, it is expected that any risk will be shared. The pool will be a pilot, for one year only, for 100% Business Rate Retention in the 2018/19 financial year. Each authority will outline key areas that will benefit from this arrangement. In the case of SCC this will focus on both Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

In recent weeks, I have been asked to intervene in a number of cases relating to adult social care within the division. So far, I have been dissatisfied with SCC officer response.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION REVIEW

SCC has highlighted improvements in handling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in response to a recent Serious Case Review Report published by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB). This followed an investigation into offences that took place between 2010 and 2014, resulting in the conviction of two men for sexual offences against a total of seven victims aged between 14 and 18. Since that time, work has been undertaken to improve the way that all organisations work to identify and respond to incidents of CSE.

Within SCC, wider improvements within Children's Social Care have included a 20% increase in social work workforce, reducing caseloads, improved practice, management capacity and supervision, to respond more quickly when a child goes missing.

Improvements made by SCC's Children's Services include:

- A new regional CSE support service jointly commissioned with the Avon & Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner
- CSE training from Barnardos available to all professionals
- School safeguarding leads provided with guidance and best practice around CSE

If you know or suspect a child is in immediate danger, dial 999.

If you suspect a child is at risk call Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224.

MENTAL HEALTH

SCC has signed up to the Mental Health Challenge, and is to appoint two mental health champions to support mental health in the county.

LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES

There remain concerns over the commissioning and monitoring of the new contract, and the impact this has had on vulnerable residents.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

At the time of writing OFSTED are carrying out a monitoring visit.

CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Concern has been expressed over proposed changes to the service (moving from a premise based service, to greater community input) and the way in which the consultation process has been handled.

ILMINSTER SCHOOLS UPDATE

SCC officers are actively involved in discussions with all schools covering the Ilminster area, and keen to reiterate that no decision has been made. The relevant officer has offered to attend governing body meetings in an effort to work collaboratively, to find a suitable solution utilising available resources in the area to best effect to improve outcomes. A joint meeting with governing bodies is planned for early Dec., which I am hoping to attend.

HIGHWAYS

The lack of a timely response to questions raised by members of the public, through me, has been frustrating. I am informed however, that having completed the gully clearance in Ilminster the Winter maintenance programme has now started and parish councils have been contacted for clarification on grit bin re-filling.

Parishes should notify Highways directly of the location of new grit bins installed this year.

ROADWORKS UPDATE

Cudworth Street & Knights Lane - Carriageway resurfacing preparation works. Temp. road closure/traffic lights. 22 Jan. – 2 Feb. – 10 days

Carriageway resurfacing. Temp. road closure. 5/6 Feb. – 2 days

LOCAL TRANSPORT

In response to a question from a member of the public at this month's SCC full council meeting, concerning public transport, it was stated that there are no funds to re-instate local railway stations, including Chard Junction. In relation to local bus services, there is a commitment to continue to work with local organisations to provide a solution.

NIPPY BUS

Local residents continue to be frustrated over the impact of the cessation of the "Nippy Bus" service. I am continuing to urge highways to find a more suitable solution for those residents most affected, particularly in the Ashill area, who are now feel isolated.

DITTON STREET FLOODING UPDATE

During Sept., Highways cleaned road gullies in roads prioritised by local residents at the post flooding drop-in event - Ditton St., Shudrick Lane, East St., Silver St., North St., Old Road, New Road. No blockages to pipe runs were reported from this work but I have since been alerted to ongoing problems which I have reported. Highways will be undertaking wet weather inspections to check for any problems.

Highways have arranged for the Rights of Way team to clear the full silt trap at the end of the public RoW adjoining High Street. They are investigating queries around the ownership and function of this asset.

The Flood Team has arranged a CCTV survey of the Shudrick Stream culvert, with the findings expected shortly. They have also undertaken follow-up meetings with several residents and businesses that were flooded, to gather information on the flooding impact and offer advice on property protection and recovery.

Highways remain on course to issue a full flood investigation report by the end of Dec.

A358 CONSULTATION

In response to the non-statutory public consultation to gather views on its proposals, Highways England have taken the decision to hold a supplementary consultation, focusing on options for improving the road between the M5 and West Hatch. They will now consult again on the whole route in early 2018 and have decided to widen the scope to provide the public and stakeholders with the opportunity to have a fuller say. A number of options will be presented for consideration.

The decision to widen the scope of the consultation to the whole route will require additional time to work on finalising the necessary materials to support the process. As Highways England want to avoid consulting during December and over the Christmas/New Year period, consultation dates are yet to be confirmed, but SCC have received assurances that suitable notice would be given of the consultation dates. A launch event for councillors prior to the public consultation is planned.

Further information on the scheme can be found at

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

For live travel information across Somerset: <https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/> and Travel Safely: www.somersetroadsafety.org

PLANNING

Local parishes have received a number of planning applications in recent weeks, giving rise to considerable local interest particularly in relation to the impact on their existing community structure, lack of overall infrastructure, local transport, highways concerns, and education provision, in addition to environmental, flooding and drainage issues.

CANAL WAY DEVELOPMENT

At this month's SSDC Regulation Committee, attended by a large number of local residents, outline planning permission was granted to the applicant, Persimmon, to build up to 400 homes on the site.

WARMER CHARD AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES PROJECT

Councillors are encouraged to ensure that local residents are aware of the Home Energy Centre, Ditton St., Ilminster and ways in which it can help to reduce fuel poverty in the area over the winter months.

ILMINSTER COMMUNITY CENTRE

The current office arrangements are due to be discontinued in Feb. 2018. At present no firm decision has been made as to exactly where any future service provision will be located, although it is likely to be at the Library.

LIBRARY SERVICE

The decision has been taken for the delivery of the library service to be retained in-house for the next 3 years to enable the continued development in joint working with other SCC services. Some re-design of the existing service will take place, in line with anticipated cost reductions of £500k over the next 3 years. SCC has a legal obligation to provide 'a comprehensive and efficient library service'. The full report and recommendation can be found at <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=566>

CHARD HOSPITAL

The decision to close the community bed ward here was challenged at this month's SCC meeting, along with comment that insufficient information was provided to Scrutiny to enable them to effectively make comment.

PARISH COUNCIL TRAINING

Winsham Parish Council are holding a training evening for Councillors on Thurs. Feb. 2018, from 7 - 9pm at Jubilee Hall, Winsham, costing £20 per person. The training will include 'Being a Good Councillor' and the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Any councillors wishing to attend should contact winshampc@hotmail.co.uk by Wed. 3rd Jan. 2018 at the latest.

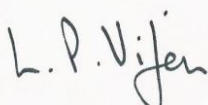
PARISH COUNCILLORS

A number of parishes within in the division have seen some changes to their membership in the last few weeks, with new councillors being co-opted. Congratulations to those who have stepped forward to represent their local communities.

SWANMEAD SCHOOL

The school is actively seeking new governors. Those interested should contact the school directly on 01460 52431 or by email swanmead@educ.somerset.gov.uk

**Wishing you, and your loved ones, a very happy, healthy and peaceful
Christmas, and a prosperous 2018.**



ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

4/11	Chaffcombe VH concert
5/11	Cudworth Communion service
5/11	Taste of the West activity
7/11	Knowle St. Giles Parish Meeting
8/11	Taunton Lit. Fest. event
9/11	Greenfylde Reading Support
9/11	SSDC Local Plan drop-in event
9/11	Frogmary Farm Christmas Fayre
10/11	SCC – Personal Development Interview
10/11	Horton – Resident Social Care meeting
11/11	Broadway Hill Methodist Church Coffee Morning
11/11	Taunton Lit. Fest. event
12/11	Ile Valley Benefice Remembrance Service
12/11	Iminster Civic Remembrance Service
13/11	Neroche School Appeal hearing
13/11	Donyatt PC meeting
13/11	Ashill PC meeting
15/11	SCC – Health & Wellbeing Board
15/11	SSDC Area West Meeting
16/11	Winsham Jubilee café
16/11	Winsham School OFSTED update
16/11	Greenfylde Reading Support
16/11	SSDC Full Council
17/11	Iminster Victorian Evening
17/11	BATS Performance of Oliver
18/11	Mentoring and Standards Training
18/11	Whitelackington Christmas Fair
18/11	Cudworth Christmas Fair
18/11	Winsham PC walk-in session
18/11	Winsham Street Fair Fund Raiser
19/11	Horton Church Stir Up Sunday
20/11	Wadham School Interview Practice
20/11	Chaffcombe PC
20/11	Horton PC
21/11	SSDC Regulation Committee
21/11	Iminster Lit. Fest meeting
21/11	Iminster Town Council
28/11	Broadway PC
29/11	SCC full council
30/11	School GDPR training