

COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR FEBRUARY REPORT 2018

Budget setting has dominated activity this month.

SCC - FULL COUNCIL

This month's meeting focused on the budget for the coming year. The 2018/19 revenue budget was agreed at £316,881,900, with a council tax requirement of £215,378,600.

This has resulted in a total council tax increase of 5.99% (2.99% + 3% precept for adult social; care), giving a Band D household value of £1,192.16 (an annual inc. of £67.37).

A number of savings are still required to close the estimated budget gap of £13m., using 'themed' areas highlighted in the 'Listening, Learning Changing' exercises carried out (at Ilminster during IMEx), improving procurement and reviewing existing contracts. It is expected that 100 posts will be affected by the required savings.

SCC currently has £329.55m of borrowing. To deliver capital projects valued at £120m., it is estimated that further borrowing of £40m may be necessary.

There were a large number of public questions submitted, on matters relating to bus services, children's centre, library closures, and the current learning disability provision contracted out to Dimensions.

Confirmation was received that in the coming financial year there would be significant capital expenditure on 14 new schools, and the expansion of 10 further schools throughout the county. This element of council tax spend is ring fenced.

The appointment of Scott Wooldridge was confirmed as the new monitoring officer, as the current officer has taken on a new role for the next two years, as SCC is the administering authority for the Heart of the South West Joint Committee.

SCC members voted unanimously for a ban on the use of single-use-plastic on its premises and to lobby central government.

COUNTY FARMS

I met with local tenant farmers and officers responsible for handling the disposal of County Farms. I am awaiting the result of further discussion between the Leader and the CEO.

BROADBAND UPDATE

I have no updates on the situation but note resident comments that the website is not up to date. My home access to the internet is spasmodic, which can mean delays in response.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

DSFRS is the largest non-metropolitan fire service in the country, with 85 stations (13 full time). Key risks include tourism doubling the population, Hinkley Point, Devonport Dockyard, national parks, M5 & A303, thatched properties and an ageing population.

At this month's budget meeting an increase in the precept of 2.99% was agreed. This equates to a precept of £84.01 for a Band D property.

Concern was expressed over the impact of resource changes to the fire service, particularly in relation to the location of fire stations in areas undergoing change, and also the resource implications for a major incident, where flexibility is necessary.

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

A number of issues across the division are giving cause for concern. I am meeting with the head of service in early March.

SWANMEAD SCHOOL

The school received an OFSTED inspection this month. The outcome of this will not be known for several weeks.

ILMINSTER/CREWKERNE SCHOOLS REVIEW

Belatedly, I have received SCC correspondence relating to proposals for structural change. The planned working group meetings, held at Wadham, will now run over into April. Written response has now been received to the questions raised at the initial meeting with school heads and Chairs of governors. It is anticipated that a two-tier system will allow for the redistribution of resources to ensure sustainability, and prevent closures, although there may be changes to admission numbers. The condition of the premises at Greenfyld, and the annual rent, remains of concern, and the cost of any proposed changes to the current structure has been raised. The earliest date for a change to a two-tier system will be 2019.

LIBRARY SERVICE

SCC is aiming to keep as many library buildings open as possible and is consulting on two options – either to seek community involvement or to retain existing library services. SCC officers have reiterated that no decisions will be taken until the consultation exercise is concluded and all results are analysed. A number of Ilminster residents have raised concerns in relation to the specific proposals. In response I have received this from SCC – “The Ilminster Library building was purchased by SCC outright in 1957 for £400 and the deeds show that there is no covenant or limitation on the building apart from its listed status. We hope to find a solution which will enable library services to continue to be provided, however under one of the options this may require community/Town Council support through finance and/or volunteers – it very much depends on the consultation outcome and we are at an early stage at the moment. We have not, at this early stage, quantified the costs of disposing of the Ilminster library building and so cannot answer questions accurately. We do believe, however, that as the owners of the building SCC would be able to sell the building and avoid the costs you outline – although, as noted, our preferred option would be to maintain the building as an operational library (either as now or through a partnership with the community).”

To give your views visit www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation, click on ‘Have your Say’. Or visit the website below to see what has been proposed by SCC

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=632>

I attended a meeting with representatives of the Town Council and the SCC officer, where the options were discussed along with possible future local community/Town council involvement. There are plans to hold a public meeting in the near future to explore further.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

The current contract with Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust comes to an end in Mar. 2019. Public Health Nursing services will then be delivered directly by SCC as part of the Family Support Service. Proposals included increased use of technology and providing a network of local community venues for the delivery of Health Visitor services. The public consultation received 850 responses.

The intention is for 8 Family Centres to continue offering early childhood services including education and nursery places. The planned integration of Getset and Health Visitor/School Nursing service is in addition to support for focusing spend on services rather than buildings. Nurseries currently operating from children’s centre buildings will continue; in some areas expanded and enhanced.

FUNDED CHILDCARE

The government has extended the entitlement for three and four-year olds to 30 hours a week (for up to 38 weeks a year). In Somerset, families can 'stretch' this entitlement to a max. of 1140 hours a year. This is known as the 'extended entitlement'. To apply for this go to www.childcarechoices.gov.uk or call 0300 123 4097.

Information about the extended entitlement, including eligibility criteria, can be found on [Somerset Choices](#) about the providers offering the extended entitlement.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

SCC is active in supporting social enterprises through funding for the Somerset Social Enterprise Fund and the Enhance Social Enterprise Programme. SEs sell goods and services in the open market, reinvesting profits into the business, or the local economy; this allows them to tackle social problems, improve people's life chances, support communities and help the environment. SEs, can deliver flexible services that end users need, rather than adopting a one size fits all approach. They deliver outcomes which reduce the financial burden for SCC, by delivering comparable services (often need focused) with the same aims and outcomes. This is beneficial as central government funding cuts continues.

Across Somerset support for potential and existing social enterprises is provided by:

The Social Enterprise Network Somerset (SENS) - a social enterprise in its own right as a Community Interest Company, operating across the whole county. The dedicated website <http://www.socentsomerset.org.uk> is managed by the Community Council for Somerset.

It is a membership organisation, providing a range of support activities, including training. It works with a range of partners and is keen to hear from new and established social enterprises and charities interested in becoming more enterprising. For further details contact Social Enterprise Manager Jane Birch jane@somersetcc.org.uk

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)

SCF manages and supports several funds providing the following financial support:

Reach fund – grants, normally up to £15,000, for organisations wanting to attract social investment, which need additional support to become 'investment-ready'

Social investment programme (Somerset Social Enterprise Fund) – loan and grant finance to support developing social enterprise business models, mainly targeted at smaller organisations and start-ups with investments between £25,000 and £100,000.

Foundation grants – small grants for project costs and organisational development, average £2,000, to support early stage start-up of small enterprises.

Solutions for an Ageing Society – grants, typically up to £5,000, to individuals with a social enterprise-based idea to help older people (in partnership with UnLtd).

For further detail on SCF, and available funds go to www.somersetcf.org.uk/

Enhance Social Enterprise Programme - providing social enterprises at all stages of their journey with 12-hours of tailored business support. The following offer a variety of support: -

Dartington School for Social Entrepreneurs - offers learning programmes, and expert led help including themed workshops, one-to-one coaching and individual start up grants.

Cosmic - digital business support programme to stimulate growth via digital transformation, including sessions around building capacity, IP, digital fund raising and digital leadership.

Iridescent - provides specialist support on legal structures and governance advice.

RIO - assists organisations through workshops and individual training to identify intended social impact, measure progress and balance a commitment to values with a results focus.

SCC in partnership with the Somerset Community Foundations offers support for public sector commissioning and procurement, bid writing etc.

For more details contact Richard Snell (HotSW Prog. Manager) richard.snell@devon.gov.uk or Nathaniel Lucas at NMLucas@somerset.gov.uk or Tel: 07976 690 942

SSDC – FULL COUNCIL

The net revenue budget for 2018/19 is set at £16,483m, which will mean a council tax increase of £5, increasing the Band D rate by 3.18% to £162.48

Implementation of the transformation programme will be SSDC's main focus for the coming year, as it adopts new ways of working and delivering services, using technology as an enabler, in order to make the necessary savings (targeted at £2.483m), where there is currently a budget gap of £2.7m. In the next five years it is likely that the budget gap will increase as central government funding streams continue to reduce.

Other priority projects include 'the facilitation of appropriate local development to that local housing and infrastructure needs are met', and 'support for small and medium sized businesses, including internet access'.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION BOUNDARY REPORT

Views on the proposed boundary changes, and the recommendation for Ilminster to become a 3-member District Council Ward should be submitted by 19th March 2018. The full recommendations are available on the Commission's website at consultation.lgbce.org.uk (go to South Somerset and insert your postcode).

Ilminster town council have unanimously agreed to submit an objection to the proposed boundary changes.

SSDC- FIVE YEAR LAND SUPPLY

In response to an enquiry from a member of the public, SSDC's Planning Policy Department have confirmed that there is not yet a 5-year supply. It is currently at 4.2 years.

SSDC - PLANNING APPEALS

The appeal relating to the land adjacent to the village hall in Broadway has been dismissed.

SSDC - AREA WEST GRANT

After some discussion, a grant of £10,000 was awarded to the Warehouse Theatre to contribute towards the purchase of the Old Bakery to allow for necessary expansion, recognising their own fund-raising efforts. Concern was expressed that Ilminster Town Council had not supported this financially, which would normally be expected.

CITIZENS ADVICE AREA WEST

The service is available in Ilminster every week at the health centre and two days a week at Forefront in Chard. The CAB is currently supporting residents moving to Universal Credit. A new dedicated employment service is to be set up next year. A Skype link to a legal service in Bristol is also planned. There is a rising number of young people using the service, often preferring to access advice by live chat, websites or email.

HIGHWAYS

PLANNED ROADWORKS

No further notification of upcoming roadworks has been received this month.

ILMINSTER FLOODING UPDATE

The team responsible for investigating this has now published their initial findings on their website. They are currently looking at programmes of work for this coming year. A study for Ilminster is one of the options being promoted as the next step to addressing the flooding problem. One local resident has been in direct contact with the Flood Risk Management team to discuss queries around highway drainage and maintenance.

HIGHWAYS – Small Improvement Scheme PROJECTS

Donyatt – PC representatives and I had a productive meeting with SCC officers this month. Subject to agreement, the scheme should now enter into the next stage.

Winsham – no further progress as the scheme is not yet due to be considered.

HIGHWAYS – A358 CONSULTATION

I have attended a number of meetings, and have been in receipt of correspondence expressing concerns, particularly from Ashill, Broadway and Horton residents, who are concerned about access arrangements. I have passed on their concerns, so that they will be reflected in SCC's formal consultation response submitted to Highways England at the end of this month. More information is available via

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

Fears remain over the lack of consideration of the impact on Southfields roundabout, and the absence of any improvements to it. Highways England is urged to consider moving the future investment for this junction forward as part of the A358 scheme.

HORTON RECREATION GROUND

Meetings to look at the way forward, including fund raising efforts, are ongoing.

ILMINSTER WINTERHAY LANE PARKING ENFORCEMENT

Following enquiries from the town council in relation to concerns in this area, specific requests for this to be monitored can be made at:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport/parking/report-a-badly-parked-vehicle/>

HIGHWAYS – SPEEDING, PUDDLEBRIDGE HORTON

Following enquiries from the parish council the following response has been received. 'The Department for Transport (DfT) guidance, for setting local speed limits, has clear criteria for where local authorities should install speed limits

SCC Highways records, provided by the Police, indicate that there have been two personal injury collisions recorded over the last five years. Initial readings show that the average speed was recorded at 37.8mph.

The feasibility of a 30mph speed limit in was investigated in 2005 but as this section does not meet criteria to enable the matter to be progressed further.'

WINSHAM SID REPORTS

The recorded median speed was 29mph, compliant with the posted speed limit of 30mph.

The 85%ile speed was 34mph, 2mph below the intervention limit speed of 36mph.

Speeds shown are the approach speeds recorded by the device, and do not reflect the 'adjusted' speeds motorists may switch to on being 'reminded' of the speed limit by the device. Where highways have been able to measure 'adjusted' speeds elsewhere there has been an average reduction in speed of approx. 4-5mph.

The intervention limit is the speed, calculated by taking the posted speed limit, adding 10% and then adding a further 3mph, (equating to 25mph in a 20mph zone; 36mph in a 30mph zone and 47mph in a 40mph zone).

The 85%ile speed is the speed at which 85% of all vehicles are travelling either at or below, (the remaining 15% travelling at a higher speed).

PARISH COUNCILLOR TRAINING

Councillor training has now been re-scheduled for Thurs. 19th April 2018 at Winsham Jubilee Hall, to book a place contact Teresa Pinder on winshampc@hotmail.co.uk

COMMUNITY EVENT

A What Matters/Who Cares? event has been organised for Mon. March 5th at The Shrubbery, 7.30pm – 9.30pm, to explore ways in which local groups and individuals such as schools, farming, businesses, public services etc. can work together to support community issues and activities. Several speakers from local businesses have confirmed attendance and representatives of local community groups are urged to attend.

EASTER ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

I have been asked to alert local residents to the MaKe Performing Arts song, dance and drama this holiday workshops Easter, with a theme of 'Dream the Impossible' These are for children aged 8-16 and will be held at Broadway Methodist Chapel from Mon. 2nd – Fri. 6th April, 10am – 4pm at a fee of £75 for the whole week, or £60 for local children and siblings £37.50. To find out more contact MaKe Performing Arts on 07765253294 or sophy@maddrama.co.uk www.makedrama.com

CHARD MUSEUM

Chard resident, Margaret Bondfield, has been named as one the country's 100 women pioneers.

Pre-opening event - there have been a lot of changes to the displays during the winter. To celebrate this the museum will be holding an opening event on Sat. 17th Mar., from 11am – 1pm. All friends & volunteers are welcome.

The museum will be open to the public from 19th Mar., times & prices remain unchanged. For those interested in volunteering as custodians (even if only as a stand in), there is a training session on Thurs. 15th Mar. from 2pm till 3pm. The training will focus on introducing custodians to the new displays.

AGM – to be held on Wed. 28th Mar. at 7pm. The museum will be open to members from 6pm and refreshments provided. There will also be an exhibition of photos from the museum archive.

Subscriptions – Friends subscriptions for the coming year remain at £10 per person.

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

Just a reminder that there will be a tasting of 15 different Fairtrade wines at Ilminster Bookshop on Saturday 10th March from 10.30m. No charge but donations welcome.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

2/2	Women of WW1 – Meeting House
3/2	Charity Quiz – Cricket St. Thomas
5/2	Ashill planning meeting
5/2	Neroche School governors' meeting
6/2	Horton – St. Peter's Church
6/2	Combe St. Nicholas pantomime
7/2	Dowlish Wake SCC County Farms meeting
7/2	Wadham School – Legally Blonde
8/2	100 of Women's vote – Shrubbery
8/2	IMEx meeting
10/2	Warehouse – Evening of Comedy
11/2	Donyatt VH b'fast
11/2	MIND fund raising event Symondsburry
14/2	Iminster – resident adult social services meeting
14/2	Ash Wednesday service - Broadway
14/2	Ashill resident meeting
15/2	Warehouse fund raising quiz
16/2	Fire service budget meeting
16/2	Samaritans fund raising quiz
17/2	Horton lent lunch
18/2	Iminster Mayor charity fund raising event – Warehouse Theatre
19/2	Chaffcombe PC meeting
19/2	Horton PC meeting
21/2	SCC full council
21/2	SSDC Area West
22/2	SCC – highways meeting – Donyatt SIS
22/2	SSDC – transformation update
22/2	SSDC – full council
27/2	Young Voices – Greenfylde School
27/2	Iminster TC meeting
28/2	Iminster TC meeting re;library

Please note that I am away from 1st – 10th March.