

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT MONTHLY REPORT FEBRUARY 2019

SCC FULL COUNCIL

At this month's budget meeting it was agreed to make available an additional £500k. for prevention work to support the transformation work mentioned below.

SCC TRANSFORMATION

Acknowledging some service improvements over the last five years SCC has recently announced its 'Vision to Improve Lives'. This will involve some further change in order to continue working within the current financial constraints. There is a degree of financial stability in the short-term, but with continued uncertainties a new approach is needed to create a sustainable organisation.

The plan is to work more closely with partner organisations to prevent rather than react and manage demand by working with communities and volunteers to make best use of available assets, to improve outcomes and enable communities to be strong and resilient. Some work in this area is already being carried out e.g. increasing recycling rates, which reduces the residual waste requiring disposal, thereby saving money.

The Homefirst work with health is allowing people to leave hospital sooner, freeing up bed spaces and supporting them to regain their independence quicker.

To support this work SCC plans to get Somerset up to speed with digital solutions, using developing technology to deliver services, whilst retaining efficient, effective corporate support services to support all business areas.

1. *Commissioning for the future* - creating the right conditions for people and communities to help themselves, managing partnerships to ensure they deliver the outcomes needed.
2. *Managing demand and building stronger communities* - Developing a shared vision focussed on improving lives, emphasising prevention and reduce demand on key services.
3. *Helping people to help themselves* - Enabling people to resolve their own queries, meet their own needs and resolve their own problems quicker, at a time to suit them.
4. *Core Services* – Emphasis on developing stronger communities & preventative services.
5. *Corporate Support Services* – re-focus in line with the new organisation design.

The intention is for SCC to be proactive, investing in prevention, managing demand on services, working with partners to enable residents to improve their own outcomes.

The current financial position is an underspend forecast for the end of year, while still rebuilding general reserves to a safe level once more. Planning for the next three years is hindered by a lack of insight into what Government intends to do with Local Authority funding. A consultation paper on Adult Social Care, a review of spending across Local Government and a review of fair funding for councils are awaited.

SCC feels that it has turned a significant financial corner and is in a good financial state.

Key achievements:

National rate of breastfeeding in deprived areas is declining but is increasing in Somerset. Adult services are recognised as leaders in their field. There have been zero delayed transfers of care from hospitals, a key government measure. Children's services have been through another Ofsted inspection in key areas and although formal results have not been released SCC are confident. Customer service feedback is considered to be excellent.

BREXIT

SCC had been awarded the sum of £175,500 from Central Government, spread over the next two years, which is to be spent on work required to deal with any Brexit outcome.

CLIMATE CHANGE

In response to public concerns unanimous cross-party agreement was reached to declare Somerset as a climate emergency zone, and to aim to reduce CO₂ emissions. In support of this motion it was agreed that SCC would allocate £25k. in officer time to work with the relevant scrutiny group to ensure this is given priority in making Somerset carbon neutral.

SCC INTERIM FINANCE DIRECTOR

Peter Lewis, Interim Director of Finance, will be leaving this month. He has been instrumental in supporting financial turnaround work, leaving SCC in a much better position. Sheila Collins, an experienced Finance Director, will be stepping up into this role on an interim basis. Her salary of £900 per day has given cause for concern publicly.

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

Despite my best efforts, I have been unable to secure face-to-face meetings recently.

CARE FEES - Following an independent review of fees paid to Adult Care providers in Feb. 2018, for 2019-20, all providers have been invited to 5 workshops organised by the Registered Care Providers Association.

The agreed response has been 'We understand the pressures of trying to suggest allocating more to different services, however, all of us will only be able to survive in the long term or adapt our business should we be in the financial position to do so. The only fair way to allocate the 2.5% increase is to try to allocate this across the board. We are all facing similar cost pressures; increase in National Living Wage, pension costs, general inflation. The increase offered just about covers our cost increases.'

Nursing home providers have said 'Nursing care is chronically underfunded and has been for some time. Unless there is a substantial realignment in fees expect some closures'.

SCC have agreed to revisit and monitor the situation once the government announces the fee levels for Funded Nursing Care which forms part of the income for these homes.

AVON & SOMERSET POLICE

The budget for the coming year has been agreed. The Commissioner has allowed a one-off increase of £24p.a. per Band D household. It is believed that the extra funds will be used to recruit an additional 100 officers, above those already planned.

As mentioned in last month's report, it is important that where anyone witnesses anything that gives cause for concern it is vital that as much detail as possible is gained (time, date, description car reg. etc.) and that it is reported to the police. It is only by gathering this ad hoc evidence that patterns of behaviour can be monitored so that action can be taken.

You are asked to note that regular beat surgeries are held at Summervale Surgery, Ilminster every Wed. from 10 – 11am.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

The Council Tax element of the precept has been raised by 2.99% (just below the amount that would trigger a referendum). A Band D Property contribution will now be £86.52p.a., an increase of £2.51 p.a. Efforts to lobby Central Government to permit an increase of £5 p.a. were unsuccessful. The impact of this increase on future investment was discussed. In response to the current Local Government Fairer Funding Review, the lack of up to date information means that forming an appropriate response has been difficult. Following peer assessment, changes to the Executive Board Structure have been agreed the post of Director of People and Organisational Development is to be created.

HIGHWAYS

Please note that queries re: traffic should be directed to TrafficManagement@somerset.gov.uk

TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURES

North Street, Ilminster - to introduce a temporary suspension of the one-way system, and temporary prohibition of motor vehicles. To take effect from 14th Mar. and remain in force for 18 months. Work will commence on the 20th Mar. for 3 days. The restriction will apply when indicated by traffic signs.

Broadway, Bullen Moor Lane Footpath CH 14/24 – prohibiting all traffic from proceeding along Bullen Moor Lane from Goose Lane at Bullen Bridge in a SW direction for 200m. to Paulls Lane, due to the danger to the public whilst a new water supply is being installed. To take effect from 11 Mar., remaining in force for 21 days (path likely to be closed for 7 days).

Cudworth St. - from jct. with Dowlish Lane to the jct. with Cudworth Road, for 1200 metres. Proposed closure date is 4th March for 11 days.

Purtington Road, Winsham - from jct. with Down Lane to jct. of Crewkerne Hill, for 482 metres. Proposed date of closure is 9th Mar. for 7 days

Nash Lane, Chillington - from jct. with Hebers Lane for 1015 metres in a northerly direction. Proposed date of closure is 16th Mar. 2019 for 15 days.

Limeklin Lane, Winsham - from jct. with Purtington Road to jct. with Cricket St Thomas to Chalkway, for 2634 metres. Proposed date of closure is 20th Mar. for 7 days

Crewkerne Hill, Winsham - from jct. with Purtington Road for 25 metres in a southerly direction. Proposed date of closure is 19th Apr. for 1 day.

Sheephouse Farm Lane, Chillington - from jct. with Lambert Lane to its jct. with Fisherway Lane, for 583 metres. Proposed date of closure is 22nd Apr. for 4 days.

ILMINSTER - BAY HILL PARKING

I have been in receipt of correspondence relating to objections to the proposed parking restrictions at Bay Hill.

In response, Highways have stated that their primary concern is obstructive parking at the main junction; no vehicle should park within 10 metres of a junction in length in line with rule 243 of the Highway Code and this restriction will mirror this. The next stage is to bring this forward as part of a determination report, although issues relating to junction parking progress irrespective of objections when complying with the Highway Code.

TRAFFIC ORDER – RAPPS, ASHILL

Notice has been served by SCC under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, to impose a 40mph speed limit on the length of road specified.

DONYATT - SMALL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The Road Safety Audit has been signed off. Highways are now aiming to upload the detailed design drawings onto the website for public viewing soon.

M5 JCT. 25

SCC will soon be starting work to upgrade M5 Jct. 25 roundabout at Taunton to improve traffic flow, ease peak hour congestion and unlock land for employment. The scheme involves full signalisation, enlarging the roundabout, widening the eastern exit, a new roundabout to access the proposed Nexus 25 employment site, pedestrian/cycling facilities.

LAND DRAINAGE

Landowners with watercourses on or adjacent to their land, known as riparian owners, have a number of responsibilities, including for maintenance. SCC has permissive powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991 to ensure riparian owners undertake their common law duties on certain types of watercourses.

A policy has been prepared by the Flood & Water Management Team to provide guidance on SCC's approach to land drainage enforcement under the Land Drainage Act. It sets out a framework to ensure best use of resources and funding in applying the powers available under the Act. The policy sets out when and how SCC will use of these powers.

SSDC FULL COUNCIL

I was unable to attend the meeting, the key results of which are:

- Economic Development Strategy for 2019 – 2028 was approved.
- Net Revenue Budget for 2019/20 of £16,197,800, was approved, subject to any final amendments.
- 2019/20 Council tax annual increase of 2.85%, increasing the annual Band D rate by £4.63 to £167.11 was approved. This new annual rate comprises £165.26 for SSDC services, raising £9,959,571, and £1.85 on behalf of the Somerset Rivers Authority, raising £111,492.
- reprioritisation of £2.5m from the Mid Term Financial Plan support fund to regeneration.
- additions to the Capital Programme for new capital bids of £1.7395m were approved.

CREWKERNE/ILMINSTER SCHOOLS UPDATE

The review by Futures for Somerset (FfS) is progressing and all schools will be visited as part of that. The completion date will now be after Easter to allow for a comprehensive review and for SCC to respond to any challenge that may be made in relation to proposed decisions. Local rumour, often without foundation, has been a cause of concern

FfS will be meeting LA officers and head teachers to discuss the review on 12 Mar.

Both middle schools governing bodies have now decided to join the Bridgwater College Academy Trust subject to due diligence on all sides. For Swanmead, this will require it to convert to academy status – given the numbers of schools that are currently seeking to convert, it is unlikely that this will happen this calendar year.

The two middle schools (unofficially) are considering changing their age range to become 9-16 schools. SCC is meeting with the heads and chairs of Wadham and the two middle schools along with Asst. Director of the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Education for the Diocese on the 11 March to raise concerns. Changing age ranges is not a straightforward process and it is felt that the review should be the basis to determine the way forward. I am due to meet with Wadham's head teacher within the next few days.

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

In Sept. 2018 Cabinet approved the proposal relating to SCC's support for youth and community provision, in which SCC would 'cease the provision of support, resources and training to voluntary youth organisations, and to close the existing grant schemes'. The proposal also confirmed that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Youth Equipment Store would be retained, moving to full cost recovery within two years. Management of both will move to Somerset Outdoor and Residential Learning Service.

Those groups and organisations in receipt of grant aid were informed and meetings held to support them in identifying alternative funding and explore options.

The existing Somerset Youth website will close at the end of Jan. and several Officers will have vacated their posts by March.

Students to the SCC-funded youth work training programme in the 2018 cohort will be supported to complete the programme.

The largest voluntary youth organisations and Somerset's two infrastructure organisations – Spark and Engage – have begun discussions about the future of a youth sector partnership.

AREA WEST GRANTS

Speke Hall, Dowlish Wake, was successful in obtaining the requested grant of £10,000 for kitchen and car park improvements.

RIGHTS OF WAY - BROADWAY

Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 an application has been made to add the following Bridleways to the Definitive Map. These applications have now been investigated in accordance with SCC procedures, and the draft report, which has been sent to affected landowners, the applicant and the parish council, can be found at

www.somerset.gov.uk/rowdraftreports

- Dingford Farm to Long Drove
- Long Drove
- Hare Lane to Long Drove

Claimed Restricted Byway from Hare Lane to Barrington Hill over 569M (Long Drove)

No decision has been made at this stage and comments are being sought, by 18th Mar. If necessary, further evidence interested parties consider relevant will be fully considered before a decision is made, and views as to whether or not the application should be determined under delegated powers or considered by Regulation Committee will be sought. NB - information provided in response to this consultation will be put in the public domain.

SSDC PLANNING

WINSHAM SHOP

This application was considered at this month's Area West Committee. There was considerable public presence, and much debate, resulting in the decision to uphold the planning officer's recommendation for refusal. Discussions about the future direction of this project are ongoing.

SHUDRICK VALLEY

The possibility of including this site in the future local plan has given rise to considerable concern locally.

ILMINSTER LIBRARY

A new self-service touch-screen kiosk was installed on 28th Feb. With library staff on hand to help, library users will be able to issue and return books, DVDs etc. for themselves, enabling staff to focus on dealing with customer enquiries. To use the kiosk, library users will need to bring their membership card and PIN (Personal Identification Number). Members of staff will be on hand to help with any teething problems, or call 0300 123 2224

CHARD JUNCTION

At this month's Full Council meeting Cllr. Broom put forward a request from Chard School for SCC to consider what support they could give to putting in place measures to re-open Chard Junction. In response, the Cabinet member said that whilst there was a willingness to explore the extent to which there was demand, and to undertake a feasibility study, there was currently no funding in order to be able to do so.

CRESTA POOL

When asked for an update on the situation, the SCC Cabinet member responded by saying that in considering options for disposal or demolition, the site is not deemed suitable for educational use without further investment, which is not available.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

6/2	Winsham PC
7/2	Neroche School Head teacher Appraisal
8/2	Whitelackington VH quiz
11/2	Ilminster Lit. Fest meeting
12/2	Kingstone PCC meeting
14/2	Fiveways School Staffing Meeting
15/2	Broadway Church Quiz
16/2	Friends of Ilminster Library coffee morning
16/2	Dillington lunch
16/2	Whitelackington VH Table Top Sale
17/2	Horton family service
18/2	Chaffcombe PC
19/2	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service – budget meeting
20/2	SCC – Full Council
20/2	SSDC – Area West
21/2	Warehouse Theatre
22/2	Donyatt VH fund raising bingo event
24/2	Ilminster Bowling Club charity quiz for Senior Citizens lunch
25/2	DSFRS – Authority workshop
26/27	LGA - Leadership Essentials programme - Warwick
27/2	Kingstone annual meeting