

Meeting AN 09M 12/13  
Date 19.12.12

### **South Somerset District Council**

**Draft Minutes** of a meeting of the **Area North Committee** held in the Village Hall, Chilthorne Domer on **Wednesday 19 December 2012**.

(2.00pm – 4.20pm)

**Present:**

**Members:** Patrick Palmer (Chairman)

|                         |               |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Pauline Clarke          | David Norris  | Sue Steele    |
| Graham Middleton        | Shane Pledger | Paul Thompson |
| Roy Mills (from 2.10pm) | Sylvia Seal   | Derek Yeomans |

**Officers:**

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Charlotte Jones    | Area Development Manager (North)               |
| Charlie Coward     | Healthy Lifestyles Officer                     |
| Cheryl Lingard     | Community Activity & Lifestyles Officer        |
| Andrew Gunn        | Area Lead West (Development Management)        |
| Adrian Noon        | Area Lead North /East (Development Management) |
| Nick Whitsun-Jones | Principal Legal Executive                      |
| Becky Sanders      | Democratic Services Officer                    |

*NB: Where an executive or key decision is made, a reason will be noted immediately beneath the Committee's resolution.*

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#### **100. Minutes (Agenda item 1)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2012, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

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#### **101. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Terry Mounter and Jo Roundell Greene.

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#### **102. Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

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#### **103. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda item 4)**

Members noted that the next meeting of Area North Committee would be at 2.00pm on Wednesday 23 January 2013 at the Village Hall, Long Sutton.

**104. Public Question Time (Agenda item 5)**

There were no questions from members of the public.

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**105. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 6)**

The Chairman reminded members that the planning application for the Norton Sub Hamdon affording housing scheme would be considered at Area West Committee later the same day.

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**106. Reports from Members (Agenda item 7)**

Cllr Paul Thompson wished to pass on gratitude from parishes in his ward to Streetscene for their assistance during the recent flooding. Cllr Sylvia Seal also noted that in some circumstances sandbags had been delivered to properties not in desperate need of them, and suggested the allocation of sandbags needed to be carefully assessed.

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**107. Promoting Community Safety in Area North (Agenda item 8)**

The Area Development Manager (North) explained that the report had been placed on the agenda to allow the Police to attend and give a brief report. Unfortunately Sergeant Christian Wells had been required to be part of a local police operation taking place, and had tendered his apologies for the meeting. She advised members that she would rescheduled the report for some time early in 2013.

During a very brief discussion, members raised their concerns about the accuracy and accessibility of some information on the Avon and Somerset police website, as some information and statistics were difficult to find, and information about some meetings and staff contact details were out of date. In response, the Area Development Manager (North) commented that she would take forward the issues raised.

*Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)  
charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462251*

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**108. County Highway Authority Report – Area North (Agenda item 9)**

The Highways Officer had again tendered his apologies for the meeting. Members unanimously agreed to defer the report to a future meeting, in order that the officer could respond to any questions.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be deferred to a future meeting of Area North Committee.

*(Voting: unanimous)*

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**109. Healthy Lifestyles and Pad-e (Agenda item 10)**

The Healthy Lifestyles Officer introduced herself and the Community Activity & Lifestyles Officer. She gave an informative presentation to explain and demonstrate the Pad-e online physical activity directory. In response to a member comment, she informed

members that Pad-e would be promoted to town and parish councils and officers were happy to give presentations if requested.

The officers explained in further detail the work of the team which provided support to communities to encourage healthier lifestyles. Recent events and activities in Area North had included:

- Health Walks – training up volunteers to be walk group leaders
- Risk and falls courses to promote balance and co-ordination
- Flexercise
- Activity links with Yarlington Housing Group
- Healthy Community programme in Somerton – with links to the Childrens Centre in Langport
- Zumba classes
- Active Somerset

A councillor indicated that local activities led by Somerset Age UK, could be eligible under the SCC Councillors Health and Well-being grant. The Community Activity & Lifestyles Officer offered to follow this up.

Ward member and Portfolio Holder, Cllr Sylvia Seal commented that team worked very hard and with a wide spectrum of ages. She commended the officers for their work.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their informative presentations.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

*Charlie Coward, Healthy Lifestyles Officer*  
*charlie.coward@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462347*

## 110. Langport and River Parrett Visitor Centre – Update Report (Agenda item 11)

The Area Development Manager (North) introduced the report as shown in the agenda, which provided an update on the re-use of the Langport Visitor Centre. She informed members that a review and consultation were ongoing, and that several expressions of interest for varying uses had been received. She was confident that there would be a good use for the property in future. It was hoped a decision regarding the future of the property would be made by the end of January 2013.

She noted that at the meeting in October 2012, comments had been raised about the River Parrett Trail. Members were informed that an officer from Somerset County Council would attend a future meeting, probably January, to provide an update.

During a brief discussion, one member expressed their disappointment that only a commercial future was being considered. In response the Area Development Manager (North) commented that evidence indicated more visits to the centre had been related to the commercial business than to the visitor information aspect. The property had been discussed as the Strategic Asset Management Group and ideally the building would be cost neutral. It was hoped to have a tenant whose business was relative to and would promote the Langport area.

Other member comments included:

- Selling the property should be a last option
- Building need to 'freshened up'
- Having a tenant and making property at least cost neutral would be a bonus

- The River Parrett Trail no longer featured highly at Somerset County Council
- Change of use of the property unlikely to have a negative impact on Langport

The Chairman thanked the Area Development Manager (North) for the update.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

*Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)  
charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462251*

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### 111. Area North Committee – Forward Plan (Agenda item 12)

The Area Development Manager (North) updated members that the Forward Plan would need reorganising as in addition to the reports listed, reports on Highways, Neighbourhood Policing and the River Parrett Trails were likely to be scheduled for January.

One member requested that the report on Welfare Benefits Take-up included information on how the changes to Universal Credit would be dealt with and what arrangements were being made for the transition period.

**RESOLVED:** That the Forward Plan be noted.

*Becky Sanders, Committee Administrator  
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### 112. Planning Appeals (Agenda item 13)

The agenda report was noted, which informed members of planning appeals that were lodged, dismissed or allowed.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

*David Norris, Development Manager  
david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462382*

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### 113. Planning Applications (Agenda item 14)

The Committee considered the applications set out in the schedule attached to the agenda. The planning officer gave further information at the meeting and, where appropriate, advised members of letters received as a result of consultations since the agenda had been prepared.

(Copies of all letters reported may be inspected in the planning applications files, which constitute the background papers for this item).

**12/00951/FUL – Erection of a building for B1, B2 and B8 uses with associated infrastructure, parking and landscaping at Lopen Head Nursery, Lopenhead, South Petherton. Applicant: Probiotics International.**

Prior to presenting the application, the Area Lead (West) referred to a recent multiple paged letter of objection that had been circulated by James Smith (Planning Law Services) Ltd ('James Smith'), raising a number of issues with the officer's report. Having

taken legal advice, due to the number of issues contained within the letter, it was felt important that they were properly addressed and included within a written report, if necessary, rather than by a verbal update. It was suggested that members considered deferring the application to a future meeting, probably January.

The Principal Legal Executive advised that by deferring the officer's report, the Council was not acknowledging that there was any merit in what had been said in the letter from James Smith or that any issues mentioned in the report had not been fully and properly addressed.

Members were unanimous in favour of deferring the application.

**RESOLVED:** That planning application 12/00951/FUL be DEFERRED to enable issues raised by a late objection to be considered and an updated report, if necessary, to be placed on a future agenda (January 2013 if possible).

*(Voting: Unanimous in favour)*

**12/03855/REM – reserved matters details relating to part of the site approved under outline permission (11/01556/OUT) for the provision of a care home and associated parking and access at Somerton Health Park, Behind Berry, Somerton. Applicant: Mr J Bailey.**

The Area Lead (North/East) introduced the report as shown in the agenda. He informed members that the previous full planning permission granted (11/04811/FUL) offered up a unilateral under-taking (s106 agreement) that obliged the developer not to occupy the care home until the new surgery was substantially complete. However the situation regarding the surgery deal coming forward had fallen through and the S.106 could no longer be complied with.

Rather than proceeding with the approved full application the developer had gone back to the outline permission already granted and was now seeking reserved matters approval for the care home only. The detailed layout plans indicated that the applicant was mindful of the aspiration that a new surgery would still come forward in the future at some point, the same area of land as before was reserved for a surgery. It was also noted that the need to replace an existing care home in the town, Wessex House, was pressing.

Key considerations were design, visual impact, scale, landscaping and the omission of the surgery. The full height, three-storey design had been raised as a concern by members previously when it was part of a larger scheme. At that time it had been considered to be acceptable in order to provide a way forward for a new surgery. The care home building now being considered was as it had been considered before. The applicant's view was that the care home was deemed acceptable previously, and if the design had been so unacceptable it should have been refused. It was acknowledged there merit to the applicants view. In response to a member request, Building Control had confirmed that the costings provided by the applicant were realistic.

Whilst it was regrettable the situation at the site had progressed how it had, omission of the doctors surgery was beyond the control of the applicant. There was no longer a doctors consortium to bring the new surgery forward at the current time. The officer recommendation was for approval for the reasons shown in the agenda report.

Mr E Williams, representing Somerton Town Council, commented that Wessex House was coming to the end of its reign, and many residents were local, with local families. No-one wanted to see the home close and residents forced away from the area. The council were very supportive of a new surgery.

Ms P Short, objector, questioned if the care home would have been supported by members at the outline stage, had it not been put forward with the surgery proposal. She considered the scale, height, position and lack of outside amenity space would be questioned by a Planning Inspector. She felt the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the built environment of Somerton, while a new surgery was still left wanting.

Ms T Oliver, supporter and manager of Wessex House, commented that current facilities at Wessex House were no longer suitable and would not be acceptable for care in the future. Space in individual rooms and communal areas was restrictive, and few rooms had en-suite facilities. Existing residents were excited at the prospect of new facilities, and a year had gone by with no progress.

Mr C Meek, spoke in support of the application. He commented that Wessex House had gone past its sell by date, and questioned why the new care home could not go ahead without the surgery. He felt a new surgery would come in time as Somerton was growing.

Mr J Bailey, applicant and director of Close Care Homes, noted they were still committed to bringing forward a surgery as soon as possible, but until an end user was found they could not build it. Wessex House needed a replacement facility, and the new care home would provide a first class facility at an affordable budget to residents. The three storey element was required for financial viability and to enable public funded residents.

Ward member, Cllr David Norris, acknowledged that the three storey care home was deemed acceptable when there was assurance that the new surgery was coming forward, but was disappointed that the proposal had fallen through. Meetings had taken place to try and reach an agreement about securing the land for a surgery, but no agreement had come forward. Wessex House needed replacing to give residents dignity. He questioned if the surgery would ever be built and raised concerns that the design of the new care home was out of keeping with the neighbouring area.

Ward member, Cllr Pauline Clarke, commented that many of the local community were disappointed the new surgery was not coming forward, but would also be shocked if the care home did not go ahead. The site was currently derelict and an eye sore, and she felt the impact of the new building would not be any worse. She noted 40 local people currently in Wessex House were receiving a subsidy and would be unable to afford a private care home. She was content that the applicant had indicated that the land would be informally reserved for a new surgery, and felt there would be some funding available in the future to provide the surgery.

During the discussion members raised varying comments including:

- The elderly need to be cared for and deserve a quality home
- Unfortunate surgery aspect not coming forward
- Would be more ideal if the land for the new surgery could be secured
- Developer still had intention to bring surgery forward
- The building was too high
- Site too constrained with too little outside amenity space and insufficient parking
- Good location for a care home as mobile residents could easily get into the town centre
- Delivery of a new surgery was more likely to be dependent on funding than land availability
- Plans for the future surgery had been approved by the Primary Care Trust

In response to comments made the Area Lead (North/East) clarified that:

- Highways were happy with the proposed number of car parking spaces
- Outside amenity space had not been raised as a fundamental issue previously, and was probably best left to the operator to determine the best needs for the residents
- The pitch of the roof was determined by the depth of the building and use of floor space, a lower pitch would compromise usage of the top floor rooms

At the end of the discussion, members requested it to be minuted that the Area North Committee hoped, and had an expectation, that a new surgery would come forward on the remainder of the site.

It was proposed to approve the application as per the officer recommendation and conditions, as detailed in the agenda report. On being put to the vote the proposal was carried seven in favour and three against.

**RESOLVED:** That planning application 12/03855/REM be APPROVED as per the officer recommendation and conditions as detailed in the agenda report.

*(Voting: 7 in favour, 3 against)*

*David Norris, Development Manager  
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*Chairman*