

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Area East Committee** held in the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil** on **Wednesday 8 March 2023**.

(10.00 am - 11.20 am)

Present:

Members: Paul Rowsell (Chairman)

Robin Bastable
Tony Capozzoli
Mike Lewis

Kevin Messenger
Lucy Trimnell



Also present:

Charlie Hull (on-line via Zoom)
Colin Winder (on-line via Zoom)

Officers:

David Crisfield	Specialist (Communities)
Tim Cook	Locality Team Manager
Terena Isaacs	Locality Officer
Jo Boucher	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Becky Sanders	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Angela Cox	Specialist (Democratic Services)

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

29. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 January 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hayward Burt, Nick Colbert, Sarah Dyke and Henry Hobhouse.

Councillors Charlie Hull and Colin Winder were in attendance virtually via Zoom.

31. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Public Question Time (Agenda Item 4)

A member of the public addressed the Committee about their planning application (22/03563/FUL), as they wished to put their point of view across as to why they felt they should be granted permission and access to their site, as it was currently landlocked. They explained in brief detail the history of the site, including particular reference to a section of wall, and their now need to gain planning permission. They explained they had submitted a retrospective planning application in December 2022, but were still awaiting the outcome of that application. They noted that if access to the site was refused then they would no longer be able to look after the land which is in a conservation area.

One member expressed his opinion about the situation and felt an officer should carefully consider the circumstances of this application and whether planning permission was required. He asked if the committee could encourage the case officer to speed up the process for this application.

There was no further discussion. The Chairman thanked the member of the public for his comments and asked if contact details and the application reference could be provided to the Committee Administrator, so that the comments raised could be forwarded to the planning department.

33. Chairman Announcements (Agenda Item 5)

There were no formal announcements from the Chairman.

34. Reports from Members (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Tony Capozzoli referred briefly to submitted planning applications in general and ward members being kept informed of applications. He hoped the new authority would be on board as ward members need to be aware of what's going on in their areas so they can liaise with parish councils.

Councillor Colin Winder noted he had written to the Town Centre Regeneration Board about the grants for work on listed buildings, and whether the relevant listed buildings officer was aware of the grants scheme and was monitoring the works being undertaken. He referred to a recent communication from a member of the public who had been advised they could not submit a complaint about a plastic window that had been installed as the complaint had not been submitted in the right format. He sought reassurance that a conservation officer was aware of all the scaffolding in Wincanton at the moment and the repair works to listed buildings.

He also referred to an ongoing planning appeal for a property in the High Street, Wincanton, He understood the applicant had submitted an appeal on the grounds of non-determination. He noted as a ward member he had not been kept informed on the matter and he was interested to know what defence the planning department would put forward for the case. Councillor Lucy Trimmell also noted there seemed to have been no progress with the particular application. If the matter had not been dealt with by vesting day she asked that as she was one of the unitary members for the ward if she could be kept informed of progress.

Councillor Lucy Trimnell wanted to make others aware that some parishes were experiencing an increase in vandalism. Recently in Bruton some fencing and bins had been vandalised. The incidents had since been repaired and cleared up but at a cost to the Council. She encouraged any similar incidents be reported to the Police.

Councillor Kevin Messenger referred to his own personal experience with a planning application, including pre-application advice and the impact of the phosphates situation. He noted the current timeframes for dealing with some applications was lengthy and caused great stress and worry to applicants. He was of the opinion that any matters that may lead to delays should be highlighted to applicants at the pre-application stage.

Councillor Mike Lewis, noted that with reference to earlier comments raised about listed buildings, that SSDC were currently engaging the services of a Conservation Officer from Somerset West and Taunton Council, and the members may wish to make contact with that officer regarding their concerns.

Councillor Mike Lewis advised he had been informed that the dualling of the A303 between Sparkford and Podimore was on schedule to open in March 2024. He also noted that some parishes were reporting that costs for grass cutting had substantially increased since last year, in one case the costs seemed to have tripled. Apart from seeking other quotes he was unsure what other advice could be offered, but he wanted to make other members aware of the situation that some parishes may be facing for upkeep of their play areas and recreation fields etc.

35. SSDC Community Support with the Cost of Living Crisis - Verbal Update (Agenda Item 7)

The Specialist (Communities) provided a short presentation which gave an update on the support provided with the cost of living crisis, including Warm Spaces, food projects and community organisations experiencing hardship in meeting their running costs. He highlighted some key statistics including:

- 20 South Somerset groups / organisations and 9 Warm Spaces had received a grant from the Somerset Community Foundation Hardship Fund. The total of grants to South Somerset groups was £74,497 of which £17,680 had been to those in Area East.
- SSDC grants of between £2,000 and £5,000 had been distributed to South Somerset Food Projects (food banks, food cupboards, community kitchens).
- SSDC had undertaken the mapping of all Food Projects and Warm Welcome spaces in Somerset.
- Support and funding had been provided to support two new Food Pantries – Westfield in Yeovil and Chard – both opened in late February 2023.
- 121 Warm Welcome spaces had been registered to date across the Somerset Network (managed by Spark Somerset) – of which 36 are in South Somerset, with 10 of those being in Area East.

During a short discussion the Specialist (Communities) responded to points of detail raised, including:

- Spark Somerset were currently gathering information to assess the take up of Warm Welcome spaces, but at the moment the picture was incomplete.
- At the current time the availability of future funding for similar schemes next winter was unknown.

- Some spaces have been more well used than others, Evaluation was taking place in order to be better prepared for next winter.
- Acknowledge comments made about engaging more with parishes and communities to ensure the most appropriate location and venues are used for the Warm Welcome Spaces – will feedback the comments to Spark Somerset.

Members thanked the officer for his informative presentation and were content to note the updates provided.

36. Area East Committee - Achievements 2019-2023 (Agenda Item 8)

The Locality Manager introduced the report which gave an overview of the progress made on local priorities, achievements and investment made through grants during the current term from May 2019 to present (for Area East). Together with the Locality Officer, a presentation was provided highlighting some statistics, grants and projects over the last few years, including:

- A reminder an overview of the Area Chapter of the Council Plan and the Area Priorities.
- Capital projects including play & youth facilities, community halls / facilities, community transport and community radio – total of £121,717.
- Revenue projects including Local Information Centres – total of £23,347.
- Some of the projects supported by SSDC Community Grants and / or the team included:
 - 5 defibrillators installed
 - 3 Speed Indicator Devices installed
 - Support for recovery from the impact of the Covid pandemic
 - Projects for community transport including revenue support for a social car scheme, and a capital grant towards a new minibus.
 - Revenue support and core funding to the Balsam Centre towards a programme of work.
 - Section 106 project delivery for projects in Henstridge, Milborne Port, The Charltons, Keinton Mandeville, Kingsdon, Sparkford and Wincanton.
 - 4 Health Walk groups
 - Play Days
 - Neighbourhood Plans
 - Thermal Image Camera Project
 - Tackling litter and fouling

During discussion, several comments were raised by members including:

- Over the years have tried to champion for more cycle routes into the countryside especially to and from Yeovilton. Hope ward members going forwards will continue to support the idea.
- Good to have a reminder of all the projects supported in the area over the last few years, Are there areas of work we've done in the past that we don't yet know how will be covered or supported in the future?
- In the short term, parishes are likely to ask who they contact if they are seeking funding or are mid project, but at the moment don't have the confidence of what to say.
- Members and parishes need to know how they can seek grant funding or funding advice going forwards. For some projects like community transport and village halls we need to know what support may be available in the future.

- Parish Councils would find the report and presentation interesting – could they be circulated.

In response to some comments made, the Locality Manager noted that:

- Going forwards into the new authority there were definitely areas of uncertainty but also of continuity, Grants had been looked at across the districts as all had approached differently until now. Things were likely to evolve and be aligned as we move forward into the new authority and new ways of working.
- Contacts for advice and support for projects would remain the same as now until further notice. Acknowledge the comments made and will feed back the need for further communications to parish councils and groups about who to contact etc.

Members were content to note the report and thanked the Locality Team for the presentation and all the work achieved.

RESOLVED: That the report on Area East Committee – Achievements 2019-2023 be noted.

37. Update on Section 106 Schemes (Agenda Item 9)

Members considered the report which provided an update on the Section 106 schemes across South Somerset and also an update regarding the new system for monitoring Section 106s going forwards. The same report had previously been considered by Scrutiny Committee and District Executive at their January meetings, The Director (Service Delivery) was not present at the meeting but the Locality Manager was able to provide some responses to comments from members.

A member raised concern at the dates for some of the schemes as he understood that if money wasn't spent within a specific timeframe then the money could be reclaimed by the developer, He was concerned some communities may lose some 106 monies if they were not aware the funding was still available. He also asked if the report had been circulated to all town and parish councils.

In response to the query, the Locality Manager explained that many of the contributions received were time limited. However, each Section 106 was slightly different and would have a different trigger point - for example date of occupation of a certain dwelling or when a development was completed etc, and in some cases the trigger point may be some time after the planning permission had been granted. He understood in the future it was hoped the detail as provided in the example at Appendix B to the report would be available on the website for ease of reference.

The Locality Manager advised there had been internal audits around spend relating to Section 106s, and there were no schemes that had reached, or were near, their timeframe threshold, Each Section 106 scheme was slightly different and might have different timeframes. Acknowledge it would be useful for the report to be circulated to parishes for information as they could factor the information into any future project planning, also it might provide an opportunity for local information regarding if it's thought a trigger point has been reached.

There being no further questions, members were content to note the recommendations as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED: That Area East Committee:

- a) Noted the contents of the report:
 - b) Reviewed appendices A and B and noted that members should inform the CIL & S106 Monitoring Officer by 24 March 2023 if they are concerned that any development schemes, whether live or completed, do not appear to feature on the list, to ensure that the record of Section 106 contributions reflects local understanding.
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38. Planning Appeals (Agenda Item 10)

There was a brief general discussion about appeals, with members wondering about procedures in the new authority, and whether ward members would continue to be notified of planning appeals going forwards, and if the new authority would take the same stance where SSDC had refused a planning application.

Members were content to note the report that detailed the planning appeals which had been lodged, dismissed or allowed.

Prior to close of the meeting, Councillor Mike Lewis wished to thank all elected members, past and present, for their contribution, and he personally had appreciated all the work undertaken. On behalf of Area East Committee he wished to thank all officers who had worked with the Committee for their support as without them Area East would not have achieved so much. Other members concurred, and best wishes conveyed to everyone.

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Chairman