

Area North Committee – 22 August 2012

10. Area Development Plan – Area North – 2012-13 – Update report

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Purpose of the Report

To provide an update of the work undertaken by the Area Development (North) Service, to address the priorities of the Area Committee and local communities.

Councillors are asked to contact the Area Development Manager (North) or other named contacts in advance of the meeting with requests for further information.

Public Interest

In a rural area such as Area North in South Somerset, economies of scale can be harder to achieve for public services. Building on existing partnerships, or promoting voluntary action can assist to make real improvements for local people.

South Somerset District Council aims to address this challenge, and build upon the local skills and knowledge found in local communities, through its well-established Area Working system, the Council's 'enable-partner-deliver' ethos, and its ambition "to strive to deliver an improving quality of life for all".

Four SSDC Area Development teams support four Area Committees and 60 ward members to identify and address local social, economic and environmental priorities for Yeovil, the market towns and rural areas of South Somerset, in Areas West, North, South and East.

This includes directing the work of the Area Development team, together with an annual grants budget, and a dedicated allocation of the council's capital programme.

This report provides information on the work supported through partnership working or direct investment) completed or taking place since April 2012.

Recommendation

Note and comment on the report and presentation highlighting any specific current priorities within wards and parishes.

Introduction

a) Area North Priorities 2012-13

Agreement on priorities helps direct the allocation of time and finance held by the Area Portfolio, and acts as a basis for work with SSDC services, other public agencies and

communities. This might include local scrutiny of public service delivery, promoting local partnership working and supporting community engagement activities.

Following the re-election of the Area North Committee in May 2011, area priorities were reviewed and agreed as follows (for further details see report to Area North Committee November 2011).

- a) **Jobs** – we will aim to add value to the economy in Area North, through promoting sustainable economic growth, assisting with the delivery of the Somerset Rural Broadband Programme, promoting tourism and enhancing the offer to visitors.
- b) **Affordable Housing** – we will assist with the delivery of affordable homes in Area North, including support to test and develop new models.
- c) **Self-Help** – we will promote greater levels of self-help to promote the sustainability of local services and facilities for all ages.

Given the dispersed nature of Area North, addressing these priorities is often on a parish by parish (or even site by site) basis, with a range of distinctive projects supported. The default model for project delivery is to be community led.

b) The SSDC Council Plan – 2012-2015

The SSDC Council Plan sets out a sharp focus on priorities and what SSDC wants to deliver within available resources.

Appendix A provides extracts from the SSDC Council Plan with links to the work programme of the Area Development (North) service and current priorities set by the Area Committee and by district councillors at a ward or parish level. The Council Plan can be viewed in full at:

<http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/408146/ssdccouncilplan2012-2015.pdf>

c) Area North Development

In summary the Area Development Service provides support for:

- New projects and initiatives that invest in long term local economic, social and environmental well-being. The significant majority of work supported is community led – including business groups - and / or in close collaboration with other SSDC / public services.
- Community involvement in public decision-making and problem solving including community forums and the work of the Area Committee.
- Local access to SSDC services for residents, businesses and visitors through SSDC community office service and Local Information Centres; through publications and events.

Current highlights

A few highlights of recent months: -

- Norton Community Land Trust awarded funding from Homes and Communities Agency (subject to planning) and registered with Financial Services Authority (costs supported from Area North reserve fund for affordable housing).

- Kingsbury Episcopi Community Shop official opening
- Area North community forum / networking meeting. Eight public / voluntary services represented around 60 people attended.
- Grant offers in place to South Petherton and Langport / Huish from s106 and capital programmes for improvements to local community facilities. (Work led by Community Health and Leisure).
- Successful bids to the Levels and Moors programme for a number of South Somerset / Area North projects including £20,000 to “Walk Langport”.
- Martock Opportunity Shop co-ordinator appointed (also with funding from Levels and Moors); successful Growing Martock Business breakfast event (led by M3 community partnership).
- Closure of Somerton Community Office. Communications plan in place to assist customers with alternatives.
- Planning consent for former public toilets, Stoke sub Hamdon granted, securing a commercial re-use in the heart of the village.

Please refer to **Appendix B** – the Area Development Plan for further information on recent work to address area priorities including support to a range of community-led projects.

Further details are available on request from a member of the Area Development team – phone (01935)-462252 email: areanorth@southsomerset.gov.uk

Financial implications

None from this report. The Area North budget was approved by Full Council in February 2012. There is additional information within the Budget Monitoring report elsewhere in this agenda.

Council Plan Implications

In the main the Area Development Plan is drawn from local priorities raised by community groups, residents, local businesses and Town & Parish Councils. In consultation with ward members, time and finance provided will be directly linked to corporate priorities as set out in the Council Plan. The most likely contributions to the Council Plan actions are shown in Appendix A.

Carbon Emissions and Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

None directly from this report. There are a number of local initiatives designed to promote carbon reduction including support to ‘Transition’ volunteers. In particular where we are asked to support buildings projects, applicants are expected to assess the business case for energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Opportunities for sustainable transport and promoting local self-containment are priorities.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None directly from this report. The Area Development Plan includes a number of projects and initiatives, which actively promote equalities through removing barriers to discrimination and promoting diversity.

Background Papers: *Area North Development Plan 2012-13*
