

End of year Performance Report

2020 - 2021



Find out about our achievements for South Somerset



**Protecting
Core Services**



Economy



Environment



**Place making,
regeneration &
infrastructure**



**Healthy, Self-reliant
Communities**

Our Vision for South Somerset:

A naturally beautiful and sustainable environment, which also allows business to flourish and good homes to be delivered. A place where our communities are safe, vibrant and healthy and have access to exceptional cultural and leisure activities.

South Somerset District Council (SSDC) is an ambitious and forward-thinking council that is committed to transforming, improving, and adapting to be ready for the future. We place our residents and businesses firmly at the centre of everything we do, and we are incredibly proud of the work we have achieved alongside our communities in 2020/21.

The past year has been extremely challenging for us all. Our Staff and Communities have stepped up to provide help and support where and when it was needed. We have continued to deliver our services despite resources being diverted to aid with the pandemic. We have met ongoing demands, even with the changes to services that were made in line with Government guidelines.

Despite the changes made due to the pandemic, we continue with our regeneration projects, supporting three of our key towns – Yeovil, Chard and Wincanton.

Substantial progress is being made towards our Environment Strategy, which aims to make the district carbon neutral by 2030. The 10-year Economic Development Strategy has been embedded ensuring that we are well placed to attract new businesses, help start-ups, and encourage diversity and innovation. All our teams have worked hard to help businesses and individuals across the district in terms of employment support and the payment of business grants during the pandemic.

We continue to be a commercial organisation, investing in projects that provide essential income to pay for our highly valued services.

Customer Service continues to be improved with innovative technology, supplying dedicated resource to support those who are most vulnerable, continuing our great work to alleviate homelessness and working hard to protect the environment.

The Digital Team have worked tirelessly to ensure all our staff have been able to continue working remotely whilst implementing fresh solutions to speed up customer interactions.

Although some of our services and venues have had to change the way they work, we are proud to highlight the excellent value we continue to support residents including free school holiday Play days, a superb network of parks and open spaces, waste and recycling collections, leisure, arts and entertainment services including swimming facilities at Wincanton and Yeovil, The Octagon Theatre and Westlands.

This achievements report provides you with an overview of just some of the great work being undertaken by SSDC as we continue to commit to our goals of being great to work for, excellent to work with, leading the way and delivering for our communities.



In order to protect front line services we set out to:

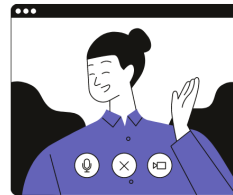
- Be great to work for, retaining, developing and attracting talent into the organisation
- Predict the peaks and troughs in demand for our services, to prioritise and direct organisational resources appropriately, address capacity and build resilience
- Establish a commercial culture and approach to become self-sufficient financially
- Deliver a high quality, effective and timely service to our customers and communities
- Exploit emerging technologies and their potential for improving our performance
- Harness intelligence, feedback and data to ensure that we continue to shape and improve services based on evidence and are equipped to proactively and effectively deliver interventions to ease preventable demand for our services

Working with partners to develop digital applications for Test and Trace Isolation Payment, Local Restriction Support Grant, Additional Restrictions Grant & Restart Business Grants.



The successful implementation of a voice over internet protocol communication system

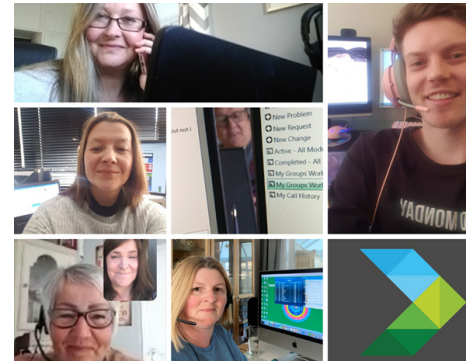
Implementation of Connect 360 for various enquiries.



Recruitment and training of staff in a virtual environment.

Trained numerous team members that were redeployed, including those who supported the Covid calling and waste demands.

Maintained business as usual whilst working from home and, for some, home schooling.



The Connect team have taken on a new ongoing Covid support telephone line, that has at times required 7 days a week cover to support the needs for food, medicines, transport, finance, and general welfare amongst a multitude of other things.



30,000+

calls have been made for covid vaccinations between SSDC colleagues, and other Somerset Councils. Actively involved in the Covid Vaccination centres both onsite and in making calls 7 days a week to book appointments.

9,300 calls answered in March 2021.



+80%
of our contact is now online due to channel shift.

Connected with colleagues at local District and County Councils to ensure a streamlined service to support our customers.

Apprenticeships within the team for Customer Services and Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.



Updates and improvements to SSDC internal systems have enabled better service for our customers, benefits in back-office efficiency and improved collaboration with partners such as Town and Parish Councils.



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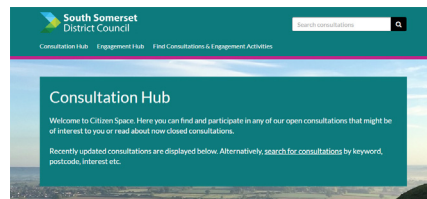
Trialling the use of robotic process automation (RPA).

This can deliver services faster and more accurately. Having RPA carry out the rules based, repetitive elements of processes free up officers to spend time on difficult, challenging, and sensitive cases.



Enabling staff to work from home during Covid-19

Setup and deployed 90 new laptops.
Re-provisioned 30 existing laptops
Deployed over 50 headsets and monitors. Setup and deployed 10 mobile Wi-Fi hotspot devices for staff without broadband / internet at home.



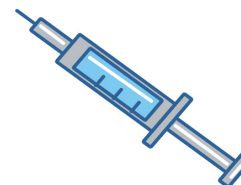
Delivered a new Consultation portal, Citizen Space.

Joint funded a new Disability Consultation/Engagement service.



Improvements in cyber security has allowed us to exchange sensitive data with other government departments securely over the public network. Allowing us to improve the delivery of services, particularly related to welfare and benefits. We have achieved Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard accreditation, allowing us to safely use credit card payments.

Supported COVID-19 community resilience initiatives via the Brokerage Cell including facilitating financial assistance to 9 Food Banks, project funding to support vulnerable young adults and covering costs of call outs to Clinically and Extremely Vulnerable/shielding.



Managed volunteer rota for Yeovil Vaccination centre.



Keeping polling stations safe during the Covid pandemic.



Facilitated virtual council meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in better attendance to these meetings.

Evidence base to inform the Local Plan Review has been commissioned including: Local Plan Transport Assessment, Historic Environment Assessment, Town Centre and Retail Assessment and Economic Development Needs Assessment.



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Responses have been submitted to Government consultations on:

Supporting Housing Delivery and Public Service Infrastructure, Changes to the Current Planning System, Planning for the Future – White Paper, Revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Model Design Code.



Somerset Levels and Moors Nutrient Strategy has been commissioned (joint Somerset and Dorset project with Natural England).

Continued to pay everyone!

Secured further 12 months core funding to Citizens Advice South Somerset and Spark Somerset.



Launched a successful wellbeing offer to employees.

Launched new employment policies and associated management training modules.

Processed over 100 employees being on furlough and recruited to many vacancies.



The Development Consent Order for the dualling of the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester has been granted – SSDC played a significant role in the process.



170+

news stories released to keep residents informed about vital services and support during the Covid-19 pandemic.



33%

audience increase on our social media channels and our messages are reaching, on average, more than 100,000 people every day across Twitter and Facebook.

Supported every service internally and externally across the council with clear communications including how to access vital grants and more.

Helped create new websites to support our regeneration programmes, Yeovil Innovation Centre and more.



To assist businesses to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic whilst supporting growth within the South Somerset economy, we will:

- Align projects so that economic growth is sustainable and inclusive for all, working with key external organisations and communities to deliver shared visions and ambitions
- Continue to deliver South Somerset District Council's Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan
- Deliver with other stakeholders a coherent programme to make South Somerset a hub of enterprise and innovation, to enhance key sectors including aerospace, advanced engineering / manufacturing, tourism, food & drink and agriculture, and improve productivity.
- Implement new learning programmes to deliver better local career opportunities and better satisfy digital, aerospace and advanced engineering business needs by working with major employers, learning institutions, business and public agencies.
- Work with commercial providers and public sector programmes to increase the broadband speed and availability plus mobile connectivity throughout the district.
- Explore and implement innovative transport technology solutions (including Digital Demand Responsive Transport) to make rural transport more accessible and affordable.



Yeovil Refresh

Established a Framework for public realm construction across the district. Contractors on board.

£9.75M secured for the Yeovil Refresh through the Future High Street Fund.

Secured funding for Cycleways and pedestrian links in the Town Centre and Lyde Road areas of Yeovil.



Chard Regeneration

Established a Framework for public realm construction across the district. Contractors on board.

Employed a Chard Heritage Action Zone Project Manager, which is jointly funded by Heritage England.

Continued to build the new Leisure Centre in Chard despite Covid-19.

Chard Leisure Centre is halfway through completion and is expected to open between January and March 2022.



Wincanton Regeneration

Established a Framework for public realm construction across the district. Contractors on board.

Established an Events and Activities Grant Scheme for Wincanton Town Centre.

Started work on the designs for the Public Realm in Wincanton.



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Over £55m
worth of grants sent to support local businesses since the start of the pandemic.



4,000+
business support grant applications received by 26 March 2021.

Produced a Recovery and Growth Plan in partnership with other Somerset Councils.



Ensuring the safe re-opening of high streets in partnership with Town Councils, the County Council, Police, and other key stakeholders.

Continued with the Somerset Catalyst Programme for innovative high growth businesses.

Our response to an increasing number of redundancies:

Formed and lead a Multi-Agency Redundancy Task Force with 28 support organisations.

Co-ordinated a programme of support from various support agencies including Yeovil College, Somerset Skills and Learning, Department for Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice South Somerset and Bridgwater and Taunton College.

Our response to a large scale redundancy (in addition to the above):

Created an excellent working relationship with the business to provide high levels of support for individuals involved and are currently:

Leading a skills assessment for all employees enabling National Careers Service to streamline their process of transitioning people into training or employment.

Facilitating job matches and providing guaranteed interviews for employees for local jobs.

Identifying individuals who may be at risk of becoming homeless, having financial issues and other wellbeing issues, and putting in place interventions to support them.

£439,000
investment from Market Town Investment Group & Town Councils towards our market towns.

Finalising funding bid for an employment hub in Chard & Yeovil to provide employment & mental health support.

Produced a Broadband Directory, outlining local broadband suppliers within South Somerset.

Coronavirus Food and Drink Suppliers



100+
local businesses have signed up to be part of our online food and drink directory.

This promoted local businesses who were open and providing essential services during Covid-19.

£6,738,176
additional Social Value has been contractualized over the whole contract period.

Social Value is looking beyond price and quality to broader benefits to the community and the wider world that can be supported by a particular contract. Such benefits can be economic, social or environmental. Eg, well-being, inclusion and employment.



To keep South Somerset clean, green and attractive and respond to the climate and ecological emergency we will work in partnership to:

- Continue the delivery of the Environment Strategy action plan, reducing our carbon emissions by 10% every year, to reach carbon neutrality by 2030
- Adopt and commence delivery of an Open Spaces Strategy promoting green infrastructure across the district
- Enhance the quality of the environment and its resilience and ability to adapt to climate change in partnership with our communities and businesses
- To protect South Somerset’s landscape and to seek to increase tree cover within our communities and the wider environment
- Support the delivery of the County wide Climate Emergency Strategy
- Initiate and support actions and infrastructure to encourage a shift to low carbon transport options including walking, cycling and electric mobility
- Promote and improve recycling and minimise waste through the roll out of ‘Recycle More’ across South Somerset from June 2021 through the Somerset Waste Partnership
- Support the development of environmental and ecological aspects within local, parish and neighbourhood plans.
- Promote Nature Recovery Networks across the district, with a focus on delivery via the Ham Hill project.
- Work with external partners to benefit the wider national cause in developing and generating clean energy storage to reduce renewable energy wastage in turn reducing use of fossil fuels in UK energy production

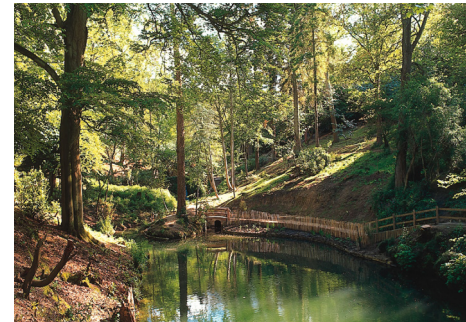


Ham Hill National Heritage Lottery Fund Development Phase funding secured and project progressed throughout the year.

£50K funding from the **Cultural Recovery Fund** to support extra staffing and management at Ham Hill through the Covid response and recovery phases.

100 trees planted at Ham Hill as part of the **Countryfile** campaign.

£90,500 of grant income secured to support projects across sites and a further £6,430 community group grant income to support agreed projects.



570 trees planted at Yeovil Country Park as part of the **Countryfile** campaign.

Family woodland sessions delivered in October half term and craft packs developed for purchase from the Ninesprings café themed around nature and heritage to support home learning.



Safe and successful takeaway service delivered from the Ninesprings Cafe, encouraging outdoor recreation and activity.

Chard reservoir, Ham Hill and Yeovil Country Park win green flag awards.

Ensuring that natural greenspaces are safe to access and attractive for unprecedented levels of use in summer 2020.

Staff re-deployments to the Crematorium, vaccination centres, wellbeing hub, vaccination appointment calls and grants since March 2020 and on-going.

New online activities developed across the countryside sites with films, dog shows and competitions.

Heritage calendar was created as a free downloadable resource to reach wider audiences.

GOLD award for Cartgate TIC as best Visitor Information Centre at the Bristol, Bath and Somerset Tourism Awards.

Adoption of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy.



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3
rapid electric vehicle (EV) chargers have been installed since April 2020 in Wincanton, Ilchester & Ilminster.

EV chargers have been used 545 times! 77 EV's have been charged saving 5.5 tons of CO₂e.

27
SSDC car parks were identified for EV charging with the procurement process completed. EV Charging network project across Devon and South Somerset in partnership with DELETTI.

Draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Yeovil completed

Environmental news on a weekly & seasonal basis, via social media and press including radio interviews with BBC radio Somerset.



Innovative Battery Energy Storage Site (BESS) investment project has been expanded to 30MW to maximise the capability of the site.



330 users have taken part in the Department for Transport e-scooter trial in Yeovil. Making 8,452 journeys across Yeovil, reducing fossil fuel usage as the e-scooters are charged using a renewable energy.

At the end of March 2021, the trial has started its second phase in Crewkerne and Chard.



During 2019-2020, SSDC achieved over 10% carbon reduction on baseline data from 2018-2019. 2020-2021 data being collated after end of year has been completed. Due to reduced travel and use of SSDC buildings it is hoped we will beat last year's figure significantly.

Public Sector Decarbonisation Bid was successful. Worked with Engie to conduct an energy audit on our top 10 highest use buildings and develop a net zero carbon roadmap to set out actions and goals for achieving optimum carbon savings in the most efficient and cost-effective ways.

773
recipients to 'Get SuSSed' our monthly environment newsletter. Showcasing SSDC Eco projects, local information, grants, good practice, and national and local campaigns to promote and inspire a sustainable South Somerset.



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£3,993,847

awarded by the Public Sector

Decarbonisation Scheme to retrofit energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies across Council owned buildings.

£803K

of funding awarded from Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to support communities in hard to heat homes, get insulation and energy improvements to improve the energy efficiency.



Recycling improvements

A consultation has been started with Somerset Waste Partnership on the recycling opportunities for all council buildings via a shared scheme across the county.

Promotion of community energy projects such as Solar Streets

SSDC has been promoting the Solar Streets community discount scheme for solar installation with IDDEA Renewable Energy Systems.



5570

trees in total planted across South Somerset

900

trees were secured through urban tree challenge grants. Planted to reduce impacts of future flooding and develop more connected canopy cover in urban settings.

The SSDC annual tree planting scheme planted 670 trees across our parks, of which 570 were planted at Wyndham Hill in Yeovil.

Great Parish Tree Giveaway

We supplied 3000 appropriate trees to local communities to plant in their parishes.

1,000

oaks rescued from being mulched are now planted in South Somerset.

£98k

of funding from the National Lottery Heritage fund to progress habitat and species management across Ham Hill.

57

Parish Environment Champions.

Two virtual Parish Environment events in 2020 with four more planned for 2021.

£29,434

has been awarded to help towards the realisation of 7 local community environment projects.

Development of a wider Green Directory for local eco-friendly businesses

to provide a one stop shop for residents to find eco-friendly businesses.



To enable Communities which are cohesive, sustainable and enjoy a high quality of life, we will:

- Embed social value into all processes and activities to ensure we maximise the support we give to our communities
- Work with partners to keep, and help our residents feel safe in their homes and communities
- Work with partners to reduce the impact of social isolation and create a feeling of community
- Work with partners to support people in improving their physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Enable quality cultural, leisure and sport activities
- Proactively support residents facing hardship
- Help tackle the causes of economic & social exclusion, poverty and low social mobility
- Support older people to live and age well by increasing their independence, reducing loneliness, and improving financial security



More than 1,000 food parcels and essential supplies provided to those who were shielded, facing financial hardship, or supporting children entitled to free school meals.

SSDC staff redeployed to work at the Wellbeing Hub, Street Scene, customer connect, grants, housing and more recently the testing and vaccine rollout.



2,000 children benefit from our free fun summer PlayBoxes.



Government funding secured for the redevelopment at Yeovil's Octagon Theatre. Boosting capacity to 900 and improvements to cafe and studios.

Our catering team provided hot meals and food parcels for homeless people.

Online performances, classes, and activities to help people feel connected.

£379K worth of national funding from the **Cultural Recovery Fund** during this time to protect our venues, support online activities and reopening and protect jobs and retain skills.

Freedom Leisure to commence operations in South Somerset from 1st April.



New purpose-built community facility set to open this summer at the Yeovil recreation Ground. Despite the pandemic improvement works on the pavilion are in full flight thanks to a range of support from funders.

£40,000 of **Viridor Credits grant income** to finalise the package for enhancements at Yeovil Recreation Centre, with project works starting in February 2021 and community room and café due to open in June 2021.



Provided grants to support people required to self-isolate who were facing financial hardship



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Supported day of reflection on anniversary of first national lockdown on 23rd March 2021.

Marking Victory in Europe day safely.

Providing around 40 activities for children during the first lockdown.

Superstars delivering in the face of adversity

When the pandemic hit, South Somerset DC quickly decided to redeploy staff in changed or closed services to carry out duties related to the local coronavirus response. Kirsty Larkins explains the approach



Council's response to Covid-19 featured in national magazine.

1,000+
visits to local businesses to help them stay Covid-safe in addition to the high visibility patrols carried out by Covid wardens.

Implemented a new pavement licence scheme and dealt with events still wanting to take place during the Pandemic.

To enable housing and communities to meet the existing and future needs of residents and employers, we will work to:

- Enable the delivery of good quality housing in appropriate places across all tenures, to meet community needs
- Maximise the provision of affordable housing
- Support rural communities and economies through delivery of affordable housing
- Prevent people losing their home and supporting people who are homeless to have a place they can call home
- Support communities to identify any housing need in their parish and support them to meet this demand, including supporting Community Land Trusts
- Support provision of housing for Life long independent living
- To deliver sustainable communities where people want to live and thrive
- Proactively identify adaptable housing and community solutions responding to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Promote and encourage environmentally sustainable housing, including to protect the Somerset Levels and Moors when determining planning submissions following advice from Natural England



Our teams have sourced food to provide items for rough sleeper food packs including 100 cereal bars, 50 two litre water bottles, 100 bananas, 50 apples and more.

Provided safe accommodation and hot meals for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in local hotels and other sites.

128
prevented individuals from becoming homeless.

An accessible phone line within Petters House for our homeless and vulnerable community. This has included supporting some very difficult and sensitive situations.

The Queen Camel and Martock Neighbourhood Plans have been successfully examined and are progressing to referendum on May 6th.

Publication of updated Five-year Housing Land Supply Report in November 2020 – demonstrating a supply equivalent to 6 years.

Looking ahead to 2021 - 22 we are focusing on recovery and renewal. We are committed to continuing to support our Communities and Businesses.

Our Recovery and Renewal Strategy 2021/23 describes our commitment to be a thriving, productive and inclusive Council in 2030 and beyond; a vital part of Somerset and the South West where local businesses, communities and the public sector collectively shape the new normal to promote shared prosperity, happiness, and wellbeing.

The themes for our Recovery and Renewal Strategy are:



**Organisational
change & workforce
development**



**Economic
recovery**



**Place making,
regeneration &
infrastructure**



**Community
recovery**

Our Objectives have been assessed to ensure they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Promote decarbonisation and nature recovery
- Good work for all (including job creation)
- Rebuilding more inclusive communities and economy
- SSDC: improving customer access and service
- Robust economic safety net for all
- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Addressing the causes of inequality
- Increasing digital access
- Support the development and enhance the future prospects of our young people
- Health food, health activities
- High streets for all

The recovery and renewal strategy and associated actions align with our agreed Council Plan for 2020-24. The Annual Action Plan for 2021-22 includes 39 areas of focus across our five Council Plan themes: Protecting Core Services, Economy, Environment, Places where we live and Healthy, Self-Reliant Communities.

Within South Somerset District Council, the five areas of focus are accountable to Communities of Practice (CoP). The 5 CoPs will engage with our communities to find, design, and develop local solutions and set up a 'grass roots' approach to community recovery.

We will learn the lessons from Covid 19 and how our communities have adapted, grown, and come together to provide sustainable, supportive approaches that we can retain and build on.