

Reports from Members Appointed to Outside Bodies

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Purpose of the Report

To present the reports of Members appointed to various outside bodies by Full Council at its Annual meeting each year.

Public Interest

SSDC has a long history of partnership working. By appointing Councillors to represent SSDC at these organisations, we maintain that partnership and interest in the wider community of which the Council is a part.

Recommendation

The Council is recommended to note and comment on the reports from Members on the outside organisations to which they are appointed each year.

Report

In May 2017, Full Council made the following appointments to outside organisations:-

Organisation	Councillor appointed for 2017/18
Board of Governors for Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	David Recardo
Board of Governors for Musgrove Park Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Sue Steele
South West Provincial Employers	Colin Winder
South West Councils	Sylvia Seal
Somerset Rivers Authority	Ric Pallister Nick Weeks (Sub)
Parrett Drainage Board	Nick Weeks Mike Lewis Gerard Tucker
Somerset Water Management Partnership	Nick Weeks
Health & Well-Being Board	Sylvia Seal
Police and Crime Panel	Martin Wale
Somerset Building Preservation Trust	Nick Weeks

Organisation	Councillor appointed for 2017/18
Access for All	Sarah Dyke
Armed Forces Community Covenant	Carol Goodall

The annual reports from each of these Councillors are attached for your information.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications in the presentation of this report. Members are entitled to claim a mileage allowance to attend the meetings and this is within their allocated Travelling Allowance budget.

Corporate Priority Implications

Working with partners to improve services, efficiencies, resilience and influence.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

No implications at the current time.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The appointment of Members to outside organisations demonstrates the Council's commitment to working in partnership with other organisations to achieve common aims.

Background Papers

Appointment of Member Level Bodies Report 2017/18 presented to Full Council in May 2017.

Board of Governors for Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Appointed Member: Councillor David Recardo

The year of 2017/18 has been an interesting one with a number of developments and achievements to report.

The long awaited car park was opened in 2017 and has been operational for about a year now, addressing the problem of parking capacity that has long been a challenge for the hospital and its visitors.

Boots the chemist also opened an outpatients pharmacy facility within the hospital itself to allow all patients to fill their prescriptions before leaving the hospital.

Despite a very busy winter period, YDH has been in the admirable position of frequently achieving ambulance turn-around figures (the time it take for paramedics to safely handover patients from ambulances to the emergency department) which are amongst the best in the country. It has also managed to repeatedly meet the key waiting times targets for cancer care, emergency department attendances, and for GP-referral to hospital-treatment.

Having established a specialist, day surgery provider called Daycase UK, the hospital has continued to explore plans for developing a bespoke unit for these services. This would enable the staff to provide world-class treatment, waiting times and recovery for local people, making this a very exciting project and investment in our hospital and community.

The hospital has enjoyed a high profile in the media this year with BBC Breakfast, ITV News and the One Show all showcasing its positive performance, promoting its reputation as a trust, its partnerships with other organisations, and some of the new models of care being developed.

YDH's Cost Improvement Plan (CIP), is producing good results with additional savings of approximately £8m achieved through efforts across the entire hospital, ensuring efficiency whilst maintaining the safety and quality of services. This saving equates to about 6% of annual turnover which is above the 4% national anticipated figure.

The hospital has an important role in the county's Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP), through which our health and social care organisations are collaborating to find ways of ensuring a long-term healthy future for local services. This includes work underway within the nationally-endorsed Symphony Programme – a South Somerset approach to improving the way GPs, the hospital, community services and social care work together.

Lastly, the hospital has, along with the entire NHS in the south west, just dealt with one of the most severe spells of weather in recent history. Throughout, hospital staff worked exceptionally hard – often supported by the generosity of local people – to ensure they could continue providing essential services and look after the health of South Somerset.

Board of Governors for Musgrove Park Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Appointed Member: Councillor Sue Steele

Alliance with Somerset Partnership

Following the approval by the Somerset Partnership (the mental and community health services provider) and Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (Musgrove Park Hospital) boards in 2017 to enter into a formal alliance arrangement, a joint executive team has been appointed and is working across both organisations. The trusts are working together to identify opportunities to align and integrate service pathways. On 6 February, the boards of both trusts agreed to start the development of a strategic case for merger. This will enable us to explore the option of a merger in more detail, but does not represent approval of a merger at this stage. Any such merger would need to be supported across the system and be approved by the boards and councils of governors of both trusts as well as the regulators. Absolutely central to the development of this strategic case for merger would be demonstrating the intended benefits for patients.

Operational Pressures

The NHS has been experiencing significant levels of operational pressure over the winter period, exacerbated by high incidences of 'flu and norovirus. Musgrove Park Hospital has been very busy with significant increases in the numbers of emergency attendances and admissions compared with the same period last year. Managing demand within the capacity available has therefore been challenging. Teams from the community and social care remain active in the hospital, and are helping us to minimise delays for patients fit to go home. Despite these challenges, the alliance with Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is really proving its worth and helping us to continue to give the best possible care to our patients in the face of unprecedented demand in the system.

Operational Performance

The operational pressures have made it harder for us to deliver our key performance targets, but colleagues in the hospital continue to do all they can and go the extra mile to provide the very best care to patients in difficult circumstances. Please see below the most recently published key operational performance figures (relates to the month of December):

- Performance against the A&E 4-hour wait standard was 86.7% in December (target is 95%).
- A&E attendances were 11.0% higher in December 2017 than in December 2016.
- Emergency admissions were 15.1% higher in December 2017 than in December 2016.
- Over the year (to December) 4,732 more patients waited under 4 hours in A&E compared with the same period last year.
- Ambulance conveyances were 16.2% higher in December 2017 than in December 2016.
- There were 241 breaches of ambulance handovers within 30 minutes in December.
- Referral to treatment within 18 weeks – in December performance against this target was 82.5%.
- Work is ongoing to improve performance of cancer treatment within 62 days of GP referral (84.6% in December). Some of this is due to patient choice.
- Despite the operational and financial pressures facing the NHS, we are on track to meet our year-end plan to deliver a small financial surplus. There are risks to this, which we are trying to mitigate where we can.

Surgical Centre

The Trust has published an outline planning application (application number 38/18/0046) to Taunton Deane Borough Council to build a new surgical centre. A business case has been developed for the plans and we are now waiting for the opportunity to submit a bid nationally for funding. An overview and illustrations were published by Somerset County Gazette.

South West Provincial Employers

Appointed Member: Councillor Colin Winder

The South West Employers Panel meets twice a year in spring and autumn at Devon County Council, County Hall, Exeter.

There are two meetings, one for employers, and one for the unions in the first half, then a joint meeting of both sides.

The functions of the Provincial Council are:

- To exchange ideas with the view of increasing the understanding of the two Sides.
- To promote good industrial relations practice and training, including the development of good personnel practice.
- To undertake tasks as required by the National Joint Council.
- To establish and give legitimacy to dispute and conciliation machinery.
- To facilitate, should the need arise, the negotiation of collective agreements.
- To issue advice, as appropriate, to Local Authorities and Unions.
- To provide a forum for discussion on key strategic issues affecting Local Government industrial relations/training/personnel.

The spring 2017 employers meeting dealt with the National Pay Spine and its restructuring in relation to legislation such as the national living wage proposals, and the equalities act. There were also presentations on the changes to IR35 legislation, Public Sector Exit Payments, and the Apprenticeship Levy.

At the joint meeting the union group presented the joint pay claim being proposed at national level. This was noted by the employers.

There was then a presentation on their transformation plans by the NHS England South. In particular the Exeter and Bristol areas. Most of the discussion and criticism of the proposals from both employers and union representatives, was on the lack of consultation by the NHS with the relevant local bodies.

The autumn meeting was particularly concerned with the problem of care in the community. The employers meeting discussed the financial implications.

The joint meeting had a very frank and open discussion on the problems faced by all sides in a growing problem.

The Spring meeting for 2018 will be held at the end of March, and I am awaiting the Agenda arriving probably this week.

South West Councils

Appointed Member: Councillor Sylvia Seal

South West Councils is a member led organisation, owned and working for all 41 local authorities in the South West.

They provide a range of core services to all local authorities and are available, as an extension of local authorities' own resources, to provide additional specialist services. Their team bring a wide range of specialist skills, depth of experience and sector insight as part of the south west "local government family".

They also work with a range of Associate member organisations including Police, Fire, National Parks, Town and Parish Councils, Housing Associations and Schools.

They provide:

Human Resources Services

- Local Authorities advised on comprehensive employment and human resource issues including employment conditions and rights
- Recruitment support and advice on senior appointments
- Ability, psychometric and scenario testing
- Members advised on sensitive and confidential employment issues including disciplinary investigations and restructuring
- Supported Members with Chief Executive and senior staff appraisal
- Supported Members and Chief Executives with organisational reviews
- Surveys on items of key concern to members

Learning and Development Services

- Supported ongoing Councillor Development
- Provided high quality learning and development opportunities which met the needs of member organisations in delivering ongoing "core" training services

Advocacy, best practice sharing, policy and partnership working

They bring together authorities to share information and influence policy development such as pay and pensions and undertake lobbying on issues of concern across local authority boundaries. There are opportunities for effective co-ordination and sharing of expertise, ideas and effort maximised with the national Local Government Association, other regions and partner organisations within the South West.

They facilitate collaboration, the spread of best practice and information sharing through support for meetings and networks with both face to face meetings and virtually through provision of confidential web based/electronic discussion group for Members and Officers

Communications and Marketing

Supported member organisations through information gathering and sharing including

- regular production of e-bulletin SW News for all organisations
- Introduction of quarterly production of Associate newsletters

Spreading of information about core and not for profit services was more effective through:

- better use of electronic communications including development of social media marketing tools
- use of targeted material including case studies to demonstrate benefits
- use of Members and other customers to “spread the word”

South West Councils are funded through subscriptions from its 41 member authorities. SSDC contributed £6,813 in 2017/18. They also receive £220,000 funding from the Home Office and receive income from their learning and development activity, employment support services and interest on reserves.

South West Councils meet twice per year and also hold regular South West Chief Executive meetings and South West Employers Panel meetings.

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)

Appointed Member: Councillor Ric Pallister

The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) was established on 31 January 2015 as a response to the floods of winter 2013/14 which caused such misery and devastation to Somerset's people and communities.

Establishing the SRA was a key Action of the Somerset Levels and Moors Flood Action Plan, which was developed at the Government's request, and signed off by the Secretary of State in March 2014.

Now the SRA's remit includes the whole of Somerset, not just the flooded areas of the Levels and Moors.

In January 2016, SSDC and other Somerset Councils agreed that the equivalent of 1.25% increase in council tax is passported to the Somerset Rivers Authority in 2016/17. This funding will continue until the Authority is a precepting body in its own right.

The Board of the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) meets quarterly to make decisions and review progress on the SRA's programme of work. Meetings are open to the public and members of the press.

During the last 12 months, the SRA has been involved in the following projects to alleviate flooding in Somerset:-

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier Scheme - The Environment Agency and Sedgemoor District Council continue to work in Partnership to deliver the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier Scheme in 2024 subject to funding and statutory approvals. The SRA note the progress made on the scheme appraisal and development.

Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme - This is an essential scheme to enable future growth in Taunton and benefit thousands of business and residential properties from the many impacts (economic, social and environmental) that flooding would bring. The scheme seeks to carry out the project development and delivery phases of the Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements urgently needed for Taunton.

Dredging Strategy Update – progress with preparation of the Dredging Strategy (rivers Parrett, Tone and Brue).

Sow / Kings Sedgemoor Drain Enhancement Scheme - the proposed comprehensive scheme to increase capacity of the Sow-Kings Sedgemoor Drain corridor. Any enhancement could have impacts on landowners, environmental management, water level management and operational procedures.

River Brue Enhanced Programme - Considerable effort has been expended to promote actions aimed at reducing flooding from the River Brue. However across all "Brue" projects a lack of consensus over the extent and impacts of reduced flooding that can be achieved along with

environmental concerns and in some cases costs have caused none of these projects to proceed to delivery.

Additional funding Support for Environment Agency Enhanced Maintenance and Improvements programme 17/18 – this includes Pumping Station Improvements at North Drain Pumping Station, further planned de-silting on watercourses in Bridgwater (Hamp Brook and Stockmoor Rhyne) and channel improvements to 10 flood risk management tasks.

Flood Alert Systems - for the installation of 3 fully automated detection systems designed to be activated when carriageway flooding reaches a predetermined level, triggering advanced warning road signs advising travelling motorists that the road ahead is flooded. This system would significantly reduce the risk of personal injury or vehicle damage particularly during hours of darkness.

Somerset River Authority Strategic Approach to Mitigation - to achieve both better management of water in high order rainfall events and better management of the natural environment - in particular the maintenance of water levels necessary to protect the wetland environment.

Full information on the Board's meetings, papers and minutes can be found at:
<http://www.somersetriverauthority.org.uk/about-us/board-meetings-and-papers/>

Parrett Drainage Board

Appointed Member: Councillor Nick Weeks

The reconstitution of the Parrett and the Brue Boards is going ahead, 12 elected seats will be available on a reconstituted board with 13 appointed members from the local charging authorities.

Concern over the age of members has been expressed the recruitment of younger members to the board becomes more crucial.

The relationship between the IDBs and other consultees are good.

Parrett and Tone Maintenance Dredge

Building on the success of last years trials, the positive findings and support for the scientific monitoring undertaken and in response to the substantial amounts of re-deposited sediment detected from the monitoring surveys, a larger scale water injection dredge has been completed this year.

The work was carried out in the first week of December 2017 to remove 30,000 cubic metres of sediment from the bed of the Parrett over a 5.5km between Burrowbridge and North Moor pumping station.

Dredging between Burrowbridge and Oath

It was agreed by all parties that dredging the river Parrett between Oath and Burrowbridge as soon as a legally compliant and affordable scheme can be found. The earliest this dredge can happen is October 2018.

There is a shortage of Drainage Officers, recruitment is on going but failure to recruit Officers in the future could affect the Boards ability to get schemes done.

Chilton Cantelo

An important section of rhyne by the old Chilton Cantelo School has been restored following a change in ownership and cooperation with other landowners. This provides useful flood capacity to take flows past Chilton Cantello to the River Yeo.

The IDB is working with Highways England on the A303 North of Ilminster to control water levels passing under the road.

Somerset Water Management Partnership

Appointed Member: Councillor Nick Weeks

The Somerset Water Management Partnership (SWMP) provides an opportunity for a group of stakeholders to meet together to consider water matters of significance affecting, or with the potential to affect, the communities, landscape, economy and ecology in the catchment areas of the Parrett, Brue, Axe and their tributaries.

The Partnership provides a forum in which consultation can take place, debate issues and test whether a consensus can be achieved and if so to then communicate it.

The partnership was officially launched in April 2007. The full membership is; Somerset County Council, the Environment Agency, Taunton Deane District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, National Farmers Union (NFU), Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Somerset Consortium of Drainage Boards, South West Association of Drainage Authorities, Somerset Waterways Development Trust, Wessex Water, Natural England and 'catchment reps' representing local communities.

The partnership meets quarterly. Members of the public can attend as observers, and ask questions.

SWMP's current vision, aims and objectives were agreed at its meeting on April 28, 2009, as follows:

'Vision' Statement:

A sustainable approach to water and land use management that, wherever possible:

- benefits the social, economic and cultural life of the catchments
- conserves and enhances the natural environment

Aims and Objectives:

1. To work in partnership to develop solutions to the problems faced by Somerset's distinct water environment.
2. To increase awareness and understanding of water issues within partner organisations and the community.
3. To work in partnership to promote integrated, sustainable land use planning and resource management.
4. To promote a whole-catchment approach to water management and flood prevention, and specifically input to the preparation of Environment Agency Plans and Strategies.
5. To work in partnership to promote wetland wildlife and archaeological interests, including 'favourable condition' status, taking into account the needs of farming and other industries.
6. To identify and promote potential partnership projects.

Topics for discussion over the last 24 months have included:

- EA's Catchment Flood Management Plans for Somerset
- SCC Flood and Water Management Strategic Plan
- Strategic Flood Management Partnership - feedback and scrutiny
- Flood Risk Modelling, Somerset
- Catchment Management for Protection of Water
- Water Framework Directive: Draft River Basin Management Plan, South West River Basin District; Catchment Management: including Upper Tone catchment pilot
- Defra Multi-Objective Flood Management Demonstration Project - Holnicote Estate, Somerset

- Somerset Levels and Moors - proposed Nature Improvement Area (NIA)
- Ecosystem Services: Trade-off in ecosystem services of the Somerset Levels and Moors wetlands; Payments for Ecosystem Services; Brue Valley Ecosystem Services study
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- Severn Tidal Power - Flooding Implications
- Severn Estuary Flood Risk Management Strategy
- North Devon and Somerset Shoreline Management Plan 2
- Farming Floodplains for the Future (Staffordshire Washlands Partnership)
- Bridgwater to Burnham-On-Sea (Parrett Estuary) Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Norton Fitzwarren flood alleviation Dam
- Defra grant bid (Multi-objective flood management demonstration project) - Halse Water Catchment, Expression of Interest
- MAP: Multi-agency Project to Achieve Favourable Condition on the Somerset Levels and Moors
- Overview of Wetland Vision / RSPB Wetland Vision Work / SWT Wetland Vision Work
- WAVE project - update
- Joining It All Together - Overview of EA plans / policies
- Steart Peninsula managed realignment
- Pathfinder project - supporting communities in planning for and adapting to coastal change
- Water Level Management Plans
- Somerset Water Festival
- Somerset Levels and Moors Local Action for Rural Communities Programme
- Parrett Surge Barrier
- Parc naturel regional des Marais du Contentin et du Bessin, Normandy - project ideas for collaborative work
- Catchment Sensitive farming - Somerset update
- Dredging Trials, Somerset
- Demonstration Test Catchments - a case study for integrated catchment management
- Discussions on plastics in our rivers.
- Review of Vision, Aims and Objectives of the Partnership

We have a lot of very detailed information about the areas of Somerset that are at risk of flooding, but we welcome information from the public who have experienced flooding in Somerset, and have information, pictures or video footage that they are happy to share with us, We use the information to form a detailed picture of flood risk across Somerset. This helps us understand the communities that are at greatest risk and allow measures to be put in place to prevent the risks were possible. It will also help the communities involved to consider necessary precautions to safeguard their land and properties.

Unfortunately, we will never be able to stop flooding from happening, but we can try to better understand the risks in an attempt to reduce the danger to people and property. We have started detailed surface water studies in Taunton and Minehead so that we can gain a greater understanding which will help us plan for major flood risk. We have also started a countywide review of flooding 'hotspots' because if we can improve our understanding of the causes of flooding, we can try to limit it where possible in the future.

Somerset Health & Wellbeing Board

Appointed Member: Councillor Sylvia Seal

The board brings together people who plan and commission (buy) services from health and social care, children services, locally elected councillors and draws in the views of patients and the public via a local organisation called Healthwatch.

With increasing pressures on public finances, it is the job of the board to work together to plan services that meet the needs of local people, while achieving best value for money.

They look at the evidence of what works best to help target plans and resources. They look at people's health and social care needs together, as well as taking into account the bigger picture - things like transport, housing, jobs and leisure - so that services truly help people stay healthy and independent.

The Somerset Health & Wellbeing Board has developed a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Somerset, which has been agreed by both Somerset County Council and the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Board meet approximately 5 times per year and during the past year, they have considered reports on:-

- Children's Safeguarding report
- Safer Somerset Partnership Report
- National Probation Service
- Adults safeguarding report
- Director of Public Health report
- Health Protection Assurance Report
- Carers Strategy Update
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment
- Healthwatch Report
- Health and Care Integration and new models of care
- Motorneurone Disease Charter
- Mental Health Champions

At their next meeting on 1st March, they will be considering reports on:-

- Positive Mental Health
 - Integrated Personal Commissioning – update from CCG
 - Discharge to Assess
 - Annual Report on the progress of Autism Strategy
 - Mental Health Annual Report and Mental Health Champions
 - Health and Care Integration and New Models of Care
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Police and Crime Commissioners Panel

Appointed Member: Councillor Martin Wale

Background

The Police and Crime Commissioners were first elected in 2012 and was a new role created by an Act of Parliament.

The Commissioners roles, under the Act are-

- To secure an effective and efficient police force for their area.
- Appoint the chief constable, hold them to account for running the force, and if necessary dismiss them. Set the police and crime objectives for their area by producing a 5 year plan.
- Set the force annual budget and police precept.
- Produce an annual report setting out the progress against objectives in the police and crime plan.
- Contribute to the national and international policing capabilities set out by the Home Office.
- Cooperate with the criminal justice system in their area.
- Work with partners and fund community activity to tackle crime and disorder.

The Panels Role is defined under current legislation as-

- Making provision about procedure for scrutiny of the appointment of chief constables and the precept. Power is conferred on the panel to veto a proposed precept or appointment.
- Deal with complaints or conduct matters about the commissioner.
- Confers power to appoint 'independent' members to the panel.

Funding

The Commissioner has no control over every day operational police matters. She also has a separate budget, currently about £2 million, but this is part of the overall police budget. Certain funding is available from the Home Office for specific projects, victim support for example. They also have a staff which is paid for out of the budget.

The current budget setting process has now finalized by the Panel at its meeting on February 1st. Rather like setting our own budget this process is reliant on grants from the Home Office and set by a much disputed formula, which appears to favour certain area!

As you will be aware the Government has announce an increase in police funding across England and Wales of £450 million which is 'part of a comprehensive settlement for forces and counter terrorism policing'. This enabled the budget to be balanced for this year.

The Commissioner has been given the ability to raise the precept above the 2% percent should she think it is necessary. She has taken the decision to raise the Police Precept by the maximum allowed by Government and this equates to £12 a year extra for band D household, on the Police part of our Council Tax for 2018/19.

The Commissioner conducted various public surveys on this increase, one of which was in Chard. When asked would they agree to £1 a month increase, apparently 82% of the 610 people questioned in January said they would pay extra!

I questioned the Commissioner on what the question was the public were asked and did it refer to keeping or increasing visible policing in South Somerset. Her answer was that neighbourhood policing teams would not be reduced but a review was in progress on neighbourhood policing.

Last 12 Months

Over the last year I have tried to represent South Somerset on the Panel, particularly when it comes to closure of Police Stations, rural crime, unlawful/unauthorized encampments and retention of neighborhood/response policing.

Neighborhood policing strengths are a perennial problem as when other priorities are identified, terrorism for example, the main call on strength will come from the local teams.

Another problem, in my view, is the necessity in dealing with Bristol and its many urban difficulties and cultures. This can marginalize our area which could be considered a 'quiet police area' compared with other parts of the Force area.

To give you a flavour of the reports the Panel receives from the Commissioner I have listed below some of the headings from our December meeting:

- Police and Crime update
- Commissioning and partnership work
- Avon and Somerset reducing reoffending Board
- Victim Service recommissioning.
- SARCS services (Sexual Assaults Referral Centre's)
- Custody and Courts Referral Service Consultation (PCC working with NHS)
- Mental Health review of use of S136
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Commissioner's community action fund
- Government Inspection of Avon and Somerset
- Scrutiny of Police Powers
- Independent Residents Panel Independent Custody visiting scheme
- National Update

As you can see these are wide ranging and varied. I have some concern over a number of these involvements which I think go outside the remit of the Commissioner, under the current legislation, and I will continue to question and research these matters.

We also received a presentation from the Chief Constable emphasizing the many and varied calls on Police. One statistic was that about 80% of calls to the Control Room are not directly or solely calling for the use of Police Powers.

Avon and Somerset was one of the first Forces to equip all officers with the Body Worn Video and this should be as great help in evidence gathering, officer protection, dealing with complaints, etc.

I will try to answer any of your questions on the above or any other matters connect with the Panel at the meeting.

Cllr Martin Wale

Vice Chairman Somerset and Avon Police and Crime Commissioners Panel

The Somerset Building Preservation Trust

Appointed Member: Councillor Nick Weeks

The Somerset Building Preservation Trust works to preserve the architectural heritage of Somerset for local people and the nation as a whole. Historic buildings that would otherwise be lost through dilapidation and neglect are restored. They are then converted into a variety of uses - a tithe barn into a community hall, 16th century almshouses into social housing, an 18th century Congregational Chapel into an area for the local community to enjoy exhibitions. The last completed project was the restoration of Castle House (Grade 1 listed), which comes within the curtilage of Taunton Castle. The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund giving us in total some £600,000 for both the development and delivery periods of this major £1m+ project. Other generous awards were made by Viridor Credits Environmental Co, English Heritage, the Garfield Weston Foundation, Somerset County Council and anonymous and private donations.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Somerset Rural Life Museum

Just completed is the refurbishment of the Somerset Rural Life Museum at Glastonbury. In December 2013 the SBPT took an 80 year lease on the Rural Life Museum at Glastonbury.

The new look Museum has been completely re-modelled with a lift installed to provide wheelchair access to all areas and a new multi-purpose centre created in the old farm courtyard that can be used by visiting schools and for conferences, meetings and community events. New kitchens were designed and installed so The Abbey Tea Rooms can now offer refreshments. The museum re-opened in summer 2017 and is run by the newly formed South West Heritage Trust.

MEMBER VISITS

In 2017 three member visits took place to important and unique places:

Barford Park, Somerset, April 2017

This Georgian Country House, which dates back to 1710, was among the prize winners in the William Stansell Awards last year, following the repair and conservation project by new owners into a comfortable and imaginative family home surrounded by gardens.

Barley Wood, Wrington, July 2017

This 18th century property, which has recently undergone substantial repairs by the YMCA and can now be hired as a wedding venue, was the home of Hannah More, (1745-1833) the writer, philanthropist and social reformer.

Croydon House Farm, Timberscombe , September 2017

This is probably the earliest brick building in West Somerset and it has been repaired and sympathetically extended, over a period of ten years, by one of our Trustees. The group were given a tour of the conserved interior and some of the 15 traditional farm outbuildings, one of which gained an SBPT William Stansell Award in 2004.

Access for All

Appointed Member: Councillor Sarah Dyke

Access for All works to improve access to services and facilities for the benefit of all members of the community. Their aim is to increase the social inclusion of disabled people with limited mobility and other impairments, so as to enjoy equality of opportunity.

In pursuit of their charitable objectives, Access for All seeks to meet the needs of the community by:

- Improving access to public buildings, public services, education, shops, leisure facilities and the countryside
- Working for accessible public transport, dropped kerbs, improved road crossings, appropriate parking spaces and ShopMobility services
- Checking planning applications to ensure buildings are designed for inclusive living
- Providing Disability Awareness and Equalities training
- Acting as a consultee on issues of disability and access to District and Town Councils, NHS, Police, retail sector, businesses and other publicly funded charities
- Providing support, advice, guidance and a signposting service to individuals, groups and partner organisations in relation to welfare reform, disability and issues of access

SSDC funds Access for All at the level of £9,000 per annum. Funding for two years, 2018-20, was agreed at District Executive at their February 2018 meeting.

Key activity in the period April to December 2017

- **20** detailed access reports, with recommendations, produced for a range of community buildings and spaces.
 - Provided ongoing assistance and advice on disabled access compliance to five organisations/groups. (Support can include the provision of drawings illustrating potential access improvements, specialist advice e.g. on the installation of accessible toilets, and sourcing technical literature e.g. hearing loops.
 - Reviewed approximately **5** planning applications per week for public building compliance with BS8300. Where required, feedback is provided directly through the planning portal on the SSDC website.
 - Conducted **20** Disability Awareness training sessions for taxi drivers.
 - Ongoing work with SSDC Tourism on the 'Guide for Visitors with Disabilities'
 - Worked with Brympton Parish Council to achieve improved access to their public meetings. Met with Abbey Manor Community Centre committee regarding possible access improvements. Full survey of exterior pathways to community parking areas.
 - Review of SSDC recommended health walks, with the outcome that the walks will be produced in a guide provided by SSDC for the general public.
 - Survey of the Westlands Entertainment Centre with constructive marketing advice and subsequent amendments to promotional website.
 - Ongoing work with the Octagon regarding their hearing loop system.
 - Ongoing training with Citizens Advice South Somerset to offer people with disabilities help with PIP benefit form filling. Working with one disabled client per week.
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Somerset Armed Forces Covenant

Appointed Member: Councillor Carol Goodall

The Somerset Armed Forces Covenant (SAFC) brings together charities, local authorities, other public sector organisations, businesses, communities, individuals and the military in a pledge of support between local residents and the armed forces community in Somerset. The pledge was signed on 20 February 2012.

The armed forces covenant:-

- encourages local communities to support their local armed forces community and vice versa
- promotes public understanding and awareness of issues that affect the armed forces community
- recognises and remembers the sacrifices made by the armed forces community
- encourages activities that help to integrate the armed forces community into local life

The Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve. It says we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. This includes offering injured servicemen and women and bereaved families extra support where appropriate. For more information about the national covenant visit www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/

Somerset has a long history of Armed Forces being based within our county such as RNAS Yeovilton and Norton Manor Camp. Local organisations, including councils, already have good relationships with these bases and the charities that support in-service and ex-service personnel and their families.

The Somerset Armed Forces Covenant seeks to build on these relationships and local support, and provide a more consistent and complete approach. We work with the Armed Forces community on a range of priority areas within Somerset including: building communities; education, skills and employment; housing, benefits, health and welfare.

The Somerset Armed Forces Covenant is co-ordinated by Somerset County Council. More details and all the related documents can be found on their website: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/schemes-and-initiatives/somerset-armed-forces-community-covenant/>

Who is part of the Armed Forces community?

You are part of the armed forces community if you are serving, or have served, in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army or Royal Air Force. The armed forces community also includes families and dependents, reservists, and veterans. A veteran is anyone who has served in the armed forces.

Serving Personnel

South Somerset has a significant population of serving personnel, not least due to the presence of RNAS Yeovilton. According to the last Census (2011) South Somerset had 1,745 residents who were employed in the Armed Forces.

MOD figures as of April 2016 show that South Somerset has 2,860 MOD personnel; 2,320 who are military and a further 540 civilians.

Veterans

There are no definitive figures for the number of veterans or their dependents nationally or living in Somerset. However, the Royal British Legion estimates there are 15,395 ex-Service personnel living in Somerset.

Armed Forces Pension & Compensation Recipient figures as of March 2015 indicate that there may be in the region of 3,300 veterans living in the District.

How SSDC supports the Armed Forces Community:

Housing Options/Homelessness

The current Homefinder Somerset policy gives priority to Armed Forces or ex Armed Forces in two main ways:

1. Main or joint applicants that fall within the following categories will be deemed to have a local connection to Somerset.
 - a) Serving or former members of the Armed Forces that have left the services in the last 5 years
 - b) Serving members of the Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
 - c) Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where
 - i. the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and
 - ii. the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
 - d) Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their serviceIn addition, the above groups are given further priority treatment in that the effective date will be backdated two years from the date of application.
2. Homeless applications - we do not wait for the notice to expire or require that the landlord obtains a court order before we accept a homeless duty to a member of the armed forces who are leaving and moving out of service accommodation.

Council Tax and Housing Benefit

- 100% exemption from Council Tax for properties owned by the MOD and used as armed forces accommodation.
- In Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support the full sum of War Widows/Widower Pension and War Disablement are disregarded in full.

Other sources of help:

Veteran's Gateway

Veteran's Gateway aims to be the first point off contact for veterans or families seeking information, advice and support.

- [Twitter.com/VeteransGateway](https://twitter.com/VeteransGateway)
- [Facebook.com/VeteransGateway](https://facebook.com/VeteransGateway)

Securing a Mortgage

Skipton Building Society will consider those working overseas but will accept only sterling income. The society will require two years' income history - evidenced by HMRC documentation - and will want to see that you and your dependants living in the property retain residency rights.

Digital Mortgages, from the app-only Atom Bank, will consider members of the Armed Forces not resident in Britain if they have three years of BFPO or UK history.

NatWest also considers applications from those with only a BFPO address and treats members of the armed forces as being UK residents even when they are posted overseas.

Nationwide Building Society also takes a more flexible approach. It allows forces personnel with only a BFPO address to use another address on their application. Such an address could be, for example, the address of a relative where their bank statements or other correspondence is sent when they are over seas.

Nationwide holds the gold award under the Armed Forces Covenant. For armed forces personnel applying for a mortgage, they have bespoke approaches in place: for example, where an applicant is declined on credit score, it can be manually checked by their under-writing team.

They have been working on improvements to the applications process for personnel with a BFPO address history and have a full-system solution due this year, which will allow personnel to apply through a branch, directly or via an intermediary.

Equalities

Yeovilton's Royal Navy and Royal Marine Welfare Service staff sit on the Council's Equalities Working Group to ensure that members of the Armed Forces' Community do not experience undue discrimination or disadvantage as recipients of council services.

Funding to support the Armed Forces Community - Armed Forces Covenant Grant Scheme

The Government has replaced the original scheme. The new scheme launched in August 2015 has a different focus and the process accessing grant funding has changed.

The Fund's annual 10 million pounds is available in perpetuity. The Government plans to keep the operation of the Fund under review to ensure its aims are delivered through a process of continual improvement.

Funding Themes

The intention is that the new Fund will be more strategic and will more closely target the areas of need than the previous scheme. The new Fund has four broad funding themes:

- Removing barriers to family life
- Extra support after service for those who need help
- Measures to integrate military and civilian communities and allow the Armed Force's community to participate as citizens
- Non-core healthcare for service veterans

Information about priorities for the 2017/2018 fund have now been updated at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covenant-fund>

Small grants have been renamed Local Grants and a rolling programme has been introduced which is open from 13 February 2017 to 5 January 2018. The dates of the application rounds are as follows:

- 13 February to 3 April (National Panel 18 May 2017)
- 4 April to 7 July (National Panel 17 August 2017)
- 8 July to 6 October (National Panel 16 November 2017)
- 7 October to 5 January 2018 (National Panel 15 February 2018)

If you have specific queries about the fund or are unsure whether your organisation or your project is likely to be funded please contact:

covenantgrantteammailbox@mod.uk

South Somerset District Council is part of a consortium of councils in the South West who have successfully bid for Armed Forces Covenant Funding. The money will fund a South West Armed Forces Covenant Training and Awareness Project.

It is a two-year project that aims to improve the experience of service personnel, their families and veterans to understand, navigate and access public services, as well as receive support in their transition on leaving the services.

The project will work to six outcomes, which are:

- a. Increase awareness of the covenant.
- b. Improve understanding of the military community.
- c. Develop a web portal to facilitate access to services.
- d. Produce a film that demonstrates the ideal journey a veteran / family might experience in seeking and receiving support from a local authority and military charity.
- e. Secure a commitment to better collaboration between all authorities and agencies that provide services;
- f. Establish a basis for an accredited forces friendly National Network of Champions (Quality Mark).

One of the first tasks is a strategic needs assessment of the South West to identify our armed forces communities, particularly veterans, gaps in provision and to review the relationships of service providers (statutory and Voluntary Sector) to enable more efficient collaboration. This assessment is being carried out by 'Shared Intelligence' - a third party Research Company.

South Somerset has been selected as one of the pilot areas for that research.
