

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT SEPT. 2021

FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOMERSET

DIARY DATE – 7TH October – Somerset conference for parish/town clerks and Chairs, to consider the principles on which Local Community Networks may be developed, and to include discussion around asset and service devolution as required.

This will take place between 12pm and 5pm at Junction 24. Capacity is limited, and it is not possible to make this a hybrid meeting. A max. of two places per council can be reserved o <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/somerset-unitary-tpc-conference-tickets-169975492273>

Contact Rachael rrobertson@somerset.gov.uk or Steve sxmarsh@somerset.gov.uk

I have asked whether or not there are plans for further meetings closer to this area but have yet to receive a response.

The Local Government Review Advisory Board had been convened. Leaders and CEOs of all councils have met several times, and I am informed that good progress is being made. Anyone wishing to receive the programme implementation timetable please contact me.

Earlier this month, Michael Gove was appointed Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (formerly the MHCLG), replacing Robert Jenrick.

In the wake of the decision for Somerset to become a unitary authority, a direction was received for consideration of a boundary review. In addition to the very short timescale given, misgivings over this request were strongly expressed by the leaders of all five authorities. The final decision is awaited.

Somerset Youth Parliament: Nominations are being sought from young people aged 11 to 18, who live in or attend school or college in Somerset, wishing to become a Member of Youth Parliament (MYP). Nationally, over 300 elected representatives work with government to make sure young people's voices are heard. Supported by SCC, Somerset MYPs campaign on a range of issues, advise, represent, give grants and are consulted by decision makers. This short online form www.somerset.gov.uk/myp should be completed by Fri. 5 Nov. Elections will take place in Dec. 2021 with newly elected MYPs taking up office on 1 Mar. 2022 and serving a two-year term.

COVID UPDATE

The Somerset Growth and Recovery Plan has been developed in four stages: Lockdown; Recovery; Revitalise; Grow, and linked to these themes:

- employment skills and economic inclusion
- helping businesses and sectors to grow
- providing the infrastructure to enable growth
- creating attractive places and homes

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (DSFRS)

The service is currently being inspected, and this will continue until the end of Oct.

Some of the many areas of progress since the last inspection includes:

Public focus – change to Service Delivery Operating Model consulted on and implemented.

Improved emergency response standard performance has increased

Prevention - established a Community Safety Strategy system to better identify levels of vulnerability and required interventions. Introduction of multiple resources to deliver prevention activity in different ways, with increased partnership and collaborative working.

SW EMPLOYERS PANEL

I once have again been appointed as Vice Chair of this panel. Pay agreement for council workers, schools, health workers etc. remains under consideration.

In The Municipal Journal Excellence in People Achievement Awards 2021, SCC was the winner of the Delivering Better Outcomes Award, in addition to being winner of the Best Talent Programme for their joint initiative with Yeovil College to 'grow your own Social Workers', and being Highly Commended for the Best Creative Concept Recruitment Campaign and Public Sector Team of the Year.

HEALTH SERVICES

Local residents are encouraged to engage with the team working on changing the way that health and care services are delivered across the county. Part of this initiative is to consider a new model of community care and same day urgent care, with a view to providing services closer to home, whilst also supporting personal independence and maintaining your own health.

The views expressed during 2020 have been independently analysed and reported upon and you can read the findings here: [Community settings findings report 2020](#).

To find out more contact Simon Pritchard at simon@somerset-alc.org.uk

The government has launched a six-week consultation seeking views on plans for staff in health and care settings in England to be required to have COVID-19 and flu vaccines to protect vulnerable people. It would mean only those who are fully vaccinated, unless medically exempt, could be deployed to deliver health and care services. The consultation will also seek views on whether flu vaccines should be a requirement for health and care workers, with a final decision expected this winter. The consultation closes on 22 Oct. 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-on-mandatory-vaccination-for-frontline-health-and-care-staff>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-vaccination-a-condition-of-deployment-in-the-health-and-wider-social-care-sector>

SSDC OFFICER CONTACT & AREA MEETINGS

Concern continues to be raised over the difficulties faced by local communities in making contact and receiving timely responses from officers when issues are raised. One of the key challenges in raising matters via online forms is that they frequently fail to offer the options required. I have made the CEO aware of this, particularly in relation to some areas of service provision.

SSDC FULL COUNCIL

Following this month's meeting, the criteria for energy grants being made available were agreed. The current scheme is the Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 (LAD2), being delivered through the SW Energy Hub by Happy energy and EON. The main criteria are

- Grants are a maximum of £10,000 for owner occupied properties or £5,000 per rented property to improve energy efficiency.
- For rented properties there is a requirement for the landlord to pay at least a 1/3 of the total cost of works.
- The property must have an EPC rating of D or below (50% cap on D rated).
- Owners/tenants must be on a low income (below £30K per annum)

Questions/queries should be directed to SSDCEnvironment@southsomerset.gov.uk

More information can be obtained from <https://www.southsomersetenvironment.co.uk/>

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) on Home Energy Team at the Centre for Sustainable Energy can be contacted for assessment and advise on eligibility.

Tel. 0800 082 2234 <https://www.cse.org.uk/advice/contact-us>

Ilminster Division County/District Councillor Monthly Report – Sept. 2021

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PLANNING

Concern has been raised by several parishes in relation to the shift to online notification of planning applications, rather than to provide paper copies. A number of village halls and other venues where PC meetings are held do not have internet access, which makes it impossible for applications to be discussed in full at their meetings. I have raised this and received the following response.

'Unfortunately, we are not going to revert to sending out paper copies of applications for several reasons firstly the officer time and cost involved with printing and posting all applications. Secondly the environmental impact and thirdly it was an agreed action from the Members Planning Reimagined Group. However, we are very keen to support parish councils in becoming more digitally enabled, whether this is by supporting with Wi-Fi, hardware or training. It is important to us that all parishes can access planning information to make an informed consultee statement.'

I have pointed out that not all venues will be willing or able to install Wi-Fi and have suggested that SSDC might consider financial contributions in support.

ENFORCEMENT

Reporting breaches of planning conditions to enforcement, and the lack of response, remains of concern to several parishes. I am informed that one of the reasons for this is the significant rise in the number of cases compared with 2-3 years ago. If action is not being seen in a particular parish it does not mean a case is not being pursued. This response was received.

'Cases should be logged via the website, which will then provide update emails from a no – reply@ssdc email. The team are keen to avoid more than one point of contact which will result in a loss of the ability to control the route of communication; something that has deluged officers with chasers rather than trying to do the job at hand.'

SSDC ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

There are now 68 champions across the district but greater representation in some areas would be welcome (in this area they are at Ilminster, Broadway, Donyatt, Ashill and Chaffcombe). You do not need to be a parish councillor to become a champion, and communities can have multiple champions covering different areas of expertise.

Champions have been active in a variety of ways - accepting tree packs, nominating no mow spaces, participating in sharing events or providing content for Get Sussed.

Those interested can contact the team at ssdcenvironment@southsomerset.gov.uk

DEFRA has opened a consultation on plans for new Local Nature Recovery Strategies, to provide a new tool for local areas to agree priorities and map proposals for nature's recovery and identify nature-based solutions to help address wider environmental issues.

The deadline for responses is 2 Nov. Contact localnaturerecoverystrategies@defra.gov.uk or go to <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/local-nature-recovery-strategies>

MHCLG has published a new landing page for local government on climate change and the environment, giving key guidance and information on topics related to climate change, net zero and the environment. Councils are encouraged to check back regularly for updates.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-climate-changeand-the-environment>

Plastics Challenge - pledge to pick up one piece of litter every time you visit our canals, rivers and wildlife to protect it from plastic pollution. If everyone picked up and disposed of just one piece of plastic each time they visited our waterways, within a year there would be no plastic left. [#PlasticsChallenge](#). Everyone that picks up at least five pieces of plastic and tags the group in their picture on social media, will receive a free Teemill t-shirt.

Young People's views on climate change: 11 to 18-year-olds in Somerset are invited to attend two virtual events in Oct. to help shape SCC's Climate Emergency Strategy. Somerset Youth Parliament is running two free sessions via Zoom on Mon. 11th and Mon. 18 Oct. from 6.15pm to 8pm, to learn more about the county's plans, listen to key speakers and have the opportunity to ask questions and contribute their own thoughts and ideas. To book a place at one of the events email Kate Darlington at: kdarlington@somerset.gov.uk

BUSES

As a result of a successful bid by SCC to the Dept. for Transport for one off funding to improve/restore some local bus services in Somerset, a new bus service (no. 18) began on Tues. 21st Sept. operating between Ilminster and South Petherton.

The service will operate two days per week, Tues. and Fri., providing three return journeys each day with the first departure from Ilminster and the last return journey from South Petherton connecting with service 81 to/from South Petherton Hospital at 0945 and 1245 for onward travel to/from Yeovil allowing a 1 hour 40 min. stay in Yeovil for shopping etc. The funding will support the service for at least 18 months (dependent on passenger uptake). SCC are planning to include all service improvements made with this funding in their National Bus Strategy, Bus Service Improvement plan, with a view to securing more long-term funding. If successful, days of operation will be increased over time. Timetable of the new service have been posted on the relevant bus stops.

The Somerset Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) group had over 80 Councils and interested parties attend their virtual meetings this month. <https://youtu.be/4H0700KIV4g> BSIP are waiting to hear back from SCC as to the date of their next meeting.

You can also view their website: <https://www.somersetbuspartnership.co.uk/>

Residents are urged to

1. write to their MP and emphasise how the Somerset BSIP deserves to be seen as a priority by the Dept. of Transport.
2. contact your County Councillor (me!) to ensure the Somerset BSIP your issues.
3. feed your thoughts to SCC about your bus issues, via transport@somerset.gov.uk and copy in BSIP somersetbuspartnership@gmail.com.
4. address concerns about the state of bus stops and bus shelters across the County.
 - a) if there are local bus stops and bus shelters needing some care and attention please email somersetbuspartnership@gmail.com providing the name of the bus stop (on the bus flag at the bus stop or obtained via Google Maps), location of bus stop (e.g. Tesco) and the bus stop code.
 - b) let BSIP know if timetables are out of date, providing bus stop name, location, bus stop code and date of timetable.
 - c) town and parish councils are urged to send BSIP of bus stops owned or maintained by them.
5. local people are encouraged to come forward to represent their area or their bus route.

GRIT BINS

Parishes are asked to check the contents of their roadside salt bins to see if they need refilling. Replies were due in this last week, but the information will enable the grit bin filling operation to go ahead more efficiently.

- Bin location
- Bin reference number (if known)
- Current salt level (i.e., $\frac{1}{4}$ full, $\frac{1}{2}$ full, $\frac{3}{4}$ full)

FLOODING

There is to be a Somerset Prepared Community Resilience Day on Mon., 4th Oct., with free, interactive online training, organised by the Somerset Prepared Partnership.

To register, and book training sessions, visit www.somersetprepared.org.uk

A list of contact details is being compiled to help support Flood Wardens and Community Emergency Volunteers and enable the Flood Warning Duty Officer to make contact.

Email floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk with details of named volunteers, the community's name, and contact number.

WASTE COLLECTION/RECYCLING

Recent issues with regard to missed collection appear to have been largely resolved.

BROADBAND

I have now received an update to previous enquiries from Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS), specifically relating to coverage in Dowlish Wake, and the ownership of a non-completed Gigaclear installation.

My contact at CDS, Matt Barrow, has so far been unsuccessful in receiving further information from Gigaclear.

CDS had terminated their contract with Gigaclear in Sept. 2019 due to their continued failure to meet contractual obligations. In the case of Dowlish Wake, Gigaclear did not complete the promised network build in the area, resulted in them not receiving any funding from CDS, and any equipment, including ducting, cables, and other assets remain the property of Gigaclear, meaning that CDS has no say in how these are managed.

In order to extend superfast broadband networks across the region, CDS has since signed contracts, in Dec. 2020, with three providers Airband, Wessex Internet and Truespeed. The Wessex Internet contract covers areas within rural South Somerset, but this does not extend to Dowlish Wake. Premises without superfast broadband that cannot be connected under this contract, may be eligible for the BDUK Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme. More information can be found on the BDUK website at [Gigabit Vouchers \(culture.gov.uk\)](https://www.culture.gov.uk/guidance/vouchers/gigabit-vouchers)

Some residents did apply for Mobile Boost vouchers earlier this year, but due to the high level of demand, the project was paused in June. Additional technology options and suppliers have now been added to the project, to allow for more choice for applicants.

I continue to wait for a response from Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) in relation to enquiries made by local residents who have concerns about

There have also been complaints about lids missing from Gigaclear Points Of Termination (POTs), that may cause an accident. Gigaclear contractors "installed" the POTs in the most convenient places, often with the tops raised above ground level. As a result, a number of lids are missing or have been damaged. Questions are being raised as to liability should an injury result.

CREWKERNE/ILMINSTER SCHOOLS

Wadham School is keen to attract new governors to support the school in moving forward.

A358 UPDATE

This month's meeting was well attended and affected parishes along the route are now in the process of signing off the latest proposals from the joint parish working group. One key area of concern that remains is the impact on traffic flow at the Southfields Roundabout and suggested actions which could improve this. At present it is felt that the level of importance to this area of the project is not receiving the consideration it deserves.

PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS

Given recent changes to appointed councillors in several parishes, please could parish clerks provide me with updated details of their councillors.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/9	Winsham PC
2/9	SSDC district executive
3/9	Fire service forum
3/9	Cudworth church concert
4/9	Whitelackington show
4/9	Chard museum event
5/9	Dowlish Wake show
5/9	Somerset Visually Impaired Cricket match
6/9	Sweet Surprise support
6/9	Ilminster Lit Fest. meeting
6/9	Ashill PC
7/9	Community service meeting
7/9	Broadway PC
9/9	SCC Children's scrutiny
12/9	Gemini Carnival b'fast Donyatt VH
13/9	The Minster
13/9	Sweet Surprise support
13/9	Neroche school governor meeting
13/9	Donyatt PC
14/9 – 16/9	LGA fire service leadership (3 days)
16/9	SSDC full council
17/9	SW Employers Panel
17/9	Warehouse Theatre
18/9	Green Week Fairtrade bake off
18/9	Town Crier Comp. Ilminster
18/9	Whitelackington tabletop sale
19/9	Cricket Malherbie Harvest Service
20/9	Horton PC
21/9	Ilminster TC
22/9	Police IAG
22/9	SSDC Area North
22/9	A358 Highways briefing
23/9	BHMC Macmillan coffee
23/9	Winsham Macmillan coffee
23/9	Wadham School prize giving
24/9	The Minster
24/9	Ilminster MacMillan coffee
24/9	Horton MacMillan coffee
24/9	LGA fire commission
25/9	MacMillan coffee Ilminster
26/9	BHMC church lunch
26/9	Big Green in the Rec Ilminster
27/9	SCC Health & Wellbeing Board
27/9	CCG Community Health & Care update
27/9	Fire service training
27/9	Safeguarding in schools training
28/9	Meeting with SSDC CEO
28/9	Resident social services meeting
29/9	Ilminster Carnival Quiz
30/9	SSDC Audit Committee
30/9	Charity Commission APM