

# Full Council Meeting – 29 September 2020

## Report of Councillor Chris Booth - Community

Things are slowly returning to some sense of normality and I was delighted to be able to go on my first post-Lockdown portfolio-trip to Minehead, firstly to meet with the YMCA Dulverton Group-run Beach Hotel to see how they support rough sleepers in the West Somerset community, as well as the Minehead Eye and the fantastic work they do not just in supporting young people but many people from new mothers to an OAP choir!

Before Covid, I did always try to nominate a group, organisation or person who had made an outstanding contribution to the community. I still feel now that this would be remiss of me when so many people are doing so much to help the district recover from the impacts of Covid.

I would also like to thank our staff for producing the Voluntary and Community Sector Newsletter which I know members and the wider readership appreciate.

### Community Chest

As I write this, the Community Chest is still on the democratic path but having gone through Scrutiny I am very much hopeful that the Council will pass the unique opportunity to support our local community groups, organisations, and charities, many of whom require urgent financial support due to the impacts of Covid in order to continue the fantastic work they do, with access to a total grant pot of £250,000.

The key criteria include a maximum of £7,500 per applicant to bid for which should make up a maximum of 75% of their needed amount. We are also ideally looking for organisations that have an income of £10,000 or less but we will be flexible where possible.

We hope that the process will go live via our website from the beginning of October. If members come across anybody interested without internet access, please contact myself or Scott Weetch.

A further note to members is that our partners at Somerset Community Foundation are also offering applications of up to £10,000 - more can be found on their website.

### Safer Somerset Partnership

I recently attended a quarterly meeting of the Safer Somerset Partnership, a meeting of all relevant stakeholders to discuss matters ranging from health to crime.

I am happy to share more details about what was debated but two subjects for me were the most prominent:

### Family Safeguarding Model

This is an upcoming reform by Children's Services at Somerset County Council. This model is about creating a more holistic approach to helping children such as employing adult social workers and to train staff further on understanding child mental health concerns. One of the aspects that initially concerned me was the desire to have less children in the system (though I welcome this in principle as currently there are 550 children in the system in Somerset and another 300 subject to a child protection plan) as part of a model which is to bring about savings mostly as a result of this. I did raise this as an issue as it must be made very clear when this model comes forward next year that the wellbeing of vulnerable children must always come before savings and children won't be put at risk. I hope to have more information on this as currently there is no set target for how many children are to be cut out of the system.

### Domestic Abuse

The Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (SIDAs) has been operated by *You Trust* since April, having previously been operated by *LiveWest*. *You Trust* is a charity who specialise in areas from domestic abuse to homelessness. There seems to be progress now being made here as a worker has been recruited to tackle those who may be suffering who have disabilities as well as those in rural communities who may not be normally picked up. There is also training being offered to local community leaders to recognise the signs and there will be a campaign called the *Dragonfly Project* to help encourage local businesses to also spot the signs as well as offering safe spaces where stickers will be placed on their shop/business windows to indicate to victims that this is a place to seek help and shelter.

Members will be relieved to know that cases actually haven't been that much different to last year despite what we all probably suspected but at the same time, the severity of the cases has been worse and there has also been an increase in the older members of the population reporting domestic abuse, including an 86 year old! There is also a huge concern of the backlog of court cases with many not getting a hearing until next year which leaves many victims in limbo until then.

### **West Somerset**

#### West Coast 360

West Coast 360 is a website for the hospitality/catering and leisure industry - a platform to inspire, enthuse and engage individuals into this sector. Our West Somerset team help administer this website and are currently revamping the

website to better suit the audience and be more user friendly with improved content.

### Community Hubs

The community employment hubs are part of the Somerset growth and recovery plan. The hubs will be a place to go in a relaxed non-judgmental environment for individuals to gain bespoke support towards work, life and wellbeing. They will encompass Citizens advice, national careers and positive people for added value and a more rounded provision.

Hub update:

Williton: The children's centre is run by SCC the centre we are in negotiations to reopen the Williton hub late Oct; SCC will inform when it is possible to access the premises

Watchet: The Sanctuary remains closed for all activity due to the small space and difficulties in social distancing. This will be reviewed late September in the hope of opening in late October

Stogursey: The Greyhound pub closed down prior lockdown therefore St Audries rooms located in a managed residential home was to be the new location but alas Covid19 prevented the move. Due to the nature of the venue we are unable to open in St Audries rooms but the hub lead is currently looking into another potential venue in Stogursey In the hope of opening late October.

Minehead: The hub lead and team of volunteers are looking into the measures and systems to be put into place to re-open late October.

Dulverton: The hub is usually held in the Library again social distancing is difficult due to the size of the venue. We are looking into an alternative location to enable the hub to re-open late October

New hubs:

There will be 5 in the most deprived areas of Taunton- Priorswood, Albemarle, High street presence (TBC), Wellington in the W.H.E.R.E centre & Minehead the youth hub at Minehead Eye. We will also be linking 'Young Somerset' youth project to all existing and new hubs to encourage support of 16-24. We are awaiting confirmation of a bid to DWP to support the cost implications of supporting this initiative as part of our recovery plan.

### **One Teams**

#### North Taunton

Priorswood Coronavirus Community Help Group volunteers will continue to support the community as the renamed 'Priorswood Good Neighbours' now part of the Community Centre.

North Taunton provided some activities for children and families over the Summer (pictured below) with Taunton North Youth Club running socially distanced outdoor football and rollerblading, Youth Unlimited had youth workers out and about in local parks to chat to young people twice a week.

Priorswood Library and the One Team held weekly Story Time in Lyngford Park with free picnics (provided by Fair Share and distributed by Brook Green Nursery) during August. Neroche Woodlanders joined the final story time and provided free Activity Packs linked to that week's story 'Stickman'. A great example of everyone working together!

Priorswood Community Centre has had a very positive response to its Just Giving Page, donations and offers of help which has enabled work to get underway to repair the damage from a recent arson attack and is busy making necessary arrangements to enable it to open safely very soon. Much loved and missed by many in the community.

A Community Litter pick will take place supporting the Keep Britain Tidy The Big September Clean campaign.

North Taunton also got positive coverage on the BBC 3 programme *Gotten Gains* which is currently on BBC Iplayer.



[Halcon](#)

**Halcon One Team** – Continues to meet weekly via Microsoft teams. There has been a noticeable increase in requests for support from statutory agencies for families in need. ASB, neighbour disputes have placed significant strain on resources.

**Halcon Link Centre** – Foodbank and essential supplies (prescriptions, utilities) continue to be provided to hundreds of homes across not only East Taunton wards but across the town. We have supported trustees to run the project and allow much needed holiday breaks for the manager and volunteers.

**Green relief** - A collaboration with the National Citizen Service, Exmoor National Park and the Link Centre Halcon. 8 young People volunteered to refurbish some planters in Valley Road Halcon and replant trees and shrubs that we sourced from Exmoor National Park, with the help of Exmoor Ranger Dave Gurnett.

**Women's walking group** – In collaboration with SASP and the Link Centre we have started a women's walking group to help with isolation, health and wellbeing and domestic abuse. We have focused on local women who previously attended the chill and chat group. After a slow start, (mainly weather related), interest is increasing.

## Wellington

Wellington continues to do well post-Covid with lots of enthusiasm to strengthen the resolve of the One Team going forward in partnership with the many stakeholders and volunteers that make Wellington a shining example. I will attend the monthly meeting just after I submit this report to see how things are going and happy to provide more information on community efforts.

## **Eat Festivals**

A big thank you to staff and councillors that attended both Eat Festivals in Minehead and Wellington to give a variety of support and advice.

Beccy Brown and Coleen Blake both attended the East festival in Wellington and will be at the next Minehead one in October to promote the soon to be; reopening of the WS Community Employment hubs and the opening of the new hubs across Taunton Deane. This promotion is also in partnership with Skill Up Somerset re: impartial advice on apprenticeships, skills and training for individuals and businesses. Please see more at: <https://www.skillupsomerset.org.uk/>