

# Full Council Meeting – 7 July 2020

## Report of Councillor Chris Booth - Community

It would be remiss of me to start my community report without simply saying a huge thank you to so many people across Somerset West & Taunton. From volunteers to officers, community organisations to key workers, so many people have come together during this crisis to ensure the most vulnerable are able to get what they need as well as providing essentials to the wider communities across the SWT area.

From these perverse circumstances, positive shoots of growth have formulated, from improvement of information on vulnerable people, to the incredible work at Canonsgrove. Long may we take the lessons we've learnt to build a better district going forward.

I apologise for where there is delay in my report but under the circumstances, I hope members can understand.

### Covid

During the Coronavirus pandemic response, the Community Engagement and Resilience team realigned to support our voluntary and community sector. A huge number of new neighbourhood support groups established themselves via Facebook to provide help to their neighbours during lockdown. The team worked alongside these groups and supported with advice, signposting and links with SWT services. In particular, the team established a weekly Voluntary and Community Sector newsletter to provide up to date announcements from SWT. The team also established a weekly member newsletter to ensure Members were kept up to date with changes to services and news on how the Council was supporting its communities.

The Food Distribution Hub has supported many families and individuals during the lockdown with emergency food parcels and has strengthened working relationships with the foodbanks, providing redeployed staff to help with deliveries to the most vulnerable in our communities. Officers are now looking how SWT can support and enable long-term sustainability of food provision for those who find themselves financially impacted or in need of more support as a result of Covid 19.

The strength, adaptability and resilience of the voluntary sector has been apparent during the pandemic, however the sector will continue to need the Council's support to ensure those helping the most vulnerable in our communities can continue to do so. SWT is working alongside other districts and the County Council to identify ways that we can work collaboratively to support and enable while still responding to the covid 19 pandemic and into the recovery phase and 'new normal'. Consideration is being given to collaborative funding, Somerset VCS networks and ways to attract national and regional funding into Somerset. The Councils are working with VCS partners to find ways to harness the community spirit and volunteering effort and to help community based groups to continue their support into the future.

June included Volunteers Week, so it was timely that our officers were able to distribute a pallet load of donated Easter Eggs to the Foodbank volunteers and other groups and individuals from across the district. Sadly, numbers and Covid-19 logistics meant we couldn't give them to everyone who deserved them, but they were appreciated by those who received them.



Lastly, a big congratulations to all those involved in the successful temporary store at Wilton. It was a fantastic achievement by the community and although they have now decided it is no longer needed, it was a lifeline for some when running. The infographic below gives more details, but you will also be pleased to know it made use of one of our halls, Middleway, and saw a huge effort by several officers from across the whole council, including; environmental health, health and safety, facilities, business support and others, seeking to support this community effort. It felt like a truly collaborative project.

# WILTON & Sherford Community Shop



**1,634**

TILL TRANSACTIONS

**£12,509.85**

TOTAL TURNOVER



**29**

VOLUNTEERS

**81**

DELIVERIES



**2**



**SOCIALLY  
DISTANCED  
BBQ'S**



**84**

CARD  
PAYMENT  
COLLECTIONS  
FOR THE LOCAL  
SUPPORT  
GROUPS

**40**

DAYS OPEN



## THANK YOU!

*To everyone who's been involved. No matter how big or small your involvement, this shop has been a welcome lifeline for many people.*

## **Spark Somerset**

At the end of March, Engage West Somerset and Taunton decided to close the Voluntary and Community Sector support arm of the organisation, after providing community groups with valuable support, advice and a volunteer matching service funded by SWT. SWT has engaged with Spark to provide these services across our district and to employ an officer specifically to support groups with direct help and advice. Spark have also provided an update on the state of the (VCS) sector report: [www.sparksomerset.org.uk/news/StateoftheSector](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/news/StateoftheSector).

## **Somerset West Lottery**

The lottery currently has 85 live good causes and 518 players with 2 tickets being purchased on average and £52,884.00 projected revenue for this year.

The Lottery is also running a 'bolt-on' prize draw where everyone signed up by 27th June has a chance to win one of five organic fruit and veg box subscriptions. Every ticket bought up to the same date will also automatically be entered into a prize draw of up to £25,000.

## **Locality Updates**

During the Covid 19 response, the importance of One Team working in our most deprived areas of the District has become even more apparent. The One Teams have adapted their ways of working to virtual meetings and online focus, and this has achieved significant new attendance and collaboration with other statutory agencies bringing those that had disengaged back on board. Focus on supporting individuals and families in these key areas continues to be a focus as more families are finding themselves more or newly vulnerable.

## **North Taunton**

Three community groups have been doing a fantastic job of supporting the community during Covid with all group coordinators in touch with our team.

A good news story is the huge benefit of the £10K Small Business Grant which was awarded to Taunton North Youth Club which provides a huge amount of good in the community.

Examples of good innovation in delivering a 'service' on-line has been demonstrated by Somerset Activity Sports Partnership, Jump Start Programme, St Peters Church and Priorswood Library to name but a few.

## **West Somerset**

One of the impacts of COVID has been on the projects being funded by CIM funding. These are spread across Sedgemoor and West Somerset including the likes of Williton Shooting Club and Stogursey Victory Hall. Watchet Bowling Club has also been allocated more time to find the necessary match funding towards its project.

There have been some incredible efforts led by multiple agencies, community groups, local charities and volunteers across West Somerset to deal with the rurality of vulnerable people during Covid.

## **Taunton East**



A big thank you to the Link Centre who have been the beating heart of the community even more than they normally are during Covid with organising distribution of food packages and providing support to vulnerable residents.

## **Wellington**

Wellington has really come together as a community through a mixture of the local Facebook Group which has linked up with SWT, Wellington Town Council, Village Agents, Schools and the Foodbank to support people. The Wellington One Team will look into how it can continue these links going forward.

## **Equality Group**

Towards the end of last year, it was suggested to me that a group was needed within the Council to measure equality impacts.

With the other significant pieces of work currently being undertaken by our governance team, we shall pursue the creation of Corporate Equalities Group consisting of members and officers to raise awareness across the organisation.

Obviously this is at an early stage and is yet to go through formal discussions or the democratic process but I just thought you'd like to know this has not been forgotten. It's also likely this group would be linked to the AGS Committee but again, this will all be discussed.

## **Citizens Advice**

Hopefully you all saw my member update email regarding the government funding of CAs and what that means for our local CAs. If not, please let me know and I will forward the email to you.

Obviously both our local CAs always provide amazing services and have especially risen to challenges presented during Covid as they saw a huge increase in demand for a wide-range of services. All Somerset CAs took the opportunity to bid to the Somerset Community Foundation for funding to set up a new central point of contact. The new Citizens Advice Somerset partnership offers anyone a quick way into advice.

The work due to be undertaken county-wide to explore priorities and sustainability as part of the condition for SWT providing funding has been delayed due to Covid pending further dialogue on the impact on both local authority and CA services.

## **CCTV**

I hope to be able to provide more information soon on this but I can tell you is that we have instructed a company to undertake the works to get Watchet back up and running. They are in touch with the Town Council Working Group rep and are making arrangements. Just a reminder that is a complicated piece of work as we seek to resolve:

- Fixing non-operating cameras across West Somerset
- Updating cameras across Taunton Deane (with potential cost-saving in doing so)
- Bring both West Somerset and Taunton Deane under one operating body

## **Public Space Protection Order**

Due to Covid, the live consultation has been put on hold. We shall review when to bring this back on the agenda as we may have to look into a different kind of order in a Covid world.

## **Social Value Strategy**

Delayed until the autumn due to Covid. Happy to provide more information if councillors so wish.

## **District Health and Wellbeing Board**

Working with the CCG, we are looking at the possibility of developing our own SWT district health and wellbeing board which would sit in with the CCG's Neighbourhoods Programme. Obviously this has been delayed because of Covid but we are currently looking to put a questionnaire out to our prospective partners who may wish to participate about the viability of such a board.

## **Charter for Compassion**

This will be in a separate report.

## **West Somerset Opportunity Area Panel (WSOA)**

The welcome news as we move into the last year of the WSOA is there is an underspend of £1,071,620 as part of £5,400,000 the WSOA has received gradually since it commenced in 2017 to help improve the social mobility of children, young people and job-seeking adults across West Somerset.

It was discussed how to use this remaining funding and naturally numerous projects and needs have been found, ranging from maths improvement apps and providing ensuring all school age children have digital access, to contribution to a community project to encourage apprenticeships in Dulverton and further funding to Skills Up West Somerset. If anybody will like a larger list, please email me.

## **Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board**

When we met in May naturally the conversation was about Covid, from how the multi-agency cells had formulated to deal with the crisis.

It was reported that there had been no major changes in terms of figures for domestic violence compared to the same time last year.

Interestingly, there has been a drop in children involved in or at risk of being exploited to participate in serious organised crime but there has been a rise in sex offences against children, both compared to figures from the same time last year.

One of the biggest concerns arising during the Covid crisis was the impact on care homes. Somerset County Council took a number of actions including reopening Hendforth Court Care Home in Yeovil to help with demand as well as setting up a temporary staffing solution for the care provider market to help find staff quickly.

The Government provided £8.3m towards infection control with 75% going directly to care homes in two payments in May and July. The additional 25% is going towards home care and supported living providers.

As of 24th May, there were 53 homes reporting outbreaks with 19 of those coming in Somerset West & Taunton.

### **Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel**

The last panel met on 23rd April and I hope to give you a further update as I will attend another panel after I have submitted this report.

The main discussion on 23rd April revolved around the appointment of a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner in the form of John Smith, the former Chief Constable for Avon and Somerset. The appointment of a deputy was understood as the current Police and Crime Commissioner had agreed to stay on another year after the postponement of the elections in May but felt she needed support. What was controversial was the nature of the appointment; there had been an expression to appoint John Smith straight away before the Panel insisted on a standard interview process. Nine applicants applied and John Smith was deemed to be the best candidate from an interview panel consisting of the current Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable and the Leader of Somerset County Council (as an independent person). A number of panel members were dissatisfied by this process, exacerbated by Mr Smith's public candidature to replace Sue Mountstevens before the elections were postponed in May.

I can inform members of some useful pieces of information at present such as that as of 3rd June, there were 133 Covid fixed penalty across Somerset and 356 across the constabulary area. A total of 26,155 breaches were reported.

Members may also be interested to know that the full disposal of the former Taunton Police Station is expected by the end of this summer, while more information will be announced as part of Minehead's relocation to the High Street and the disposal of the old station. More information on Williton will be provided soon.