

Sedgemoor Disability Forum

Notes from the meeting held on 22nd Oct 2008

Princess Hall Burnham on Sea

Arranged by Compass Disability Services – SAIN Project.

Welcome and introductions

Chris Avanti and Mandy Seaman welcomed everyone in attendance and introduced the purpose of the forum, the agenda and encourage questions and input throughout the day.

Item 1: Alison Turner the Group Finance Manager from Sedgemoor District Council

Sedgemoor District Council are currently in the process of inviting tax-payers in Sedgemoor to have their say on how Sedgemoor District Council should spend their proportion of the Council Tax collected. As part of this a series of public meetings have been arranged. In addition, 4000 questionnaires have been sent to a random sample of Sedgemoor residents on the edited Register of Electors.

As part of this consultation, Alison Turner provided a presentation to the Forum on how SDC receives income and where money is allocated to Council services. A copy of the presentation is enclosed. There also followed an outline of issues showing future challenges for council spending. A question and answer session followed, after which members were invited to complete a budget questionnaire.

Questions raised

1. What is the influence of Central Government on local services and budgets

Answer: Naturally Central Government scrutinise both the performance of the Council and how we spend 'YOUR' money. The Council has a lot of flexibility but has to take on board any issues raised by Central Government and its inspectors

2. Have SDC investments in Icelandic banks or other high level risks

Answer: No. The Council follows strict rules on investing public monies in.

3. Financial support for recycling of cardboard and plastic

Answer: The recycling trial appears to be working very well and improvements to waste management help the Council spend money more wisely. It is now currently known if this will be implemented longer term.

4. Would the Council be looking to reduce discretionary payments (discretionary services were mentioned in the presentation)?

Answer: No, discretionary payments are an additional payment made to housing benefit. These will not change. As part of the options for the closing of the funding gap they will be looking at discretionary services such as Swimming Pools, Museums etc.

5. Does 10% of SDC Budget for Environmental Health services include budget for Disabled Facilities Grants?

Answer: No. DFG would come under the category known as 'other spend'

6. Costings for job evaluation

Answer: Some costs incurred are deferred over more than one financial year.

7. Cost of consultants should be more transparent in budget figures

Answer: Consultants fees used throughout the District Council would not appear as a central budget item and can be available via minutes of the relevant committees where such services were bought.

8. How are consultation results being used?

Answer: Consultation will help influence budget priorities.

Item 2: Jackie Marsh from Somerset Direct for Adults and Older People.

Jackie provided an informal presentation about Somerset Direct and took questions throughout the presentation. Notes below are structured around some key questions

9. What is Somerset Direct?

Answer:

- Somerset Direct is a phone advice and information service about all council services in Somerset, previously known as Care Direct for Adults and older people, carers, relatives and other adults with care needs.
- They receives about 4500 calls per month
- Telephone local rate 0845 345 9133 or Freephone 0800 317220.
- People can contact them directly (minicom and text phone numbers are available).

10. What services are available?

Answer: Somerset Direct is a contact point for

- Support from Adult Social Care
- Provide a list of registered cleaning agencies
- Help arrange for meals to be delivered to your home through Wiltshire Farm Foods.
- Oakhouse Foods are another organisation that can be used, they are based in Tavistock and be contacted on 0845 257 1132 and offer a wide range of over 270 frozen complete meals and desserts. Also offers large range of everyday essential groceries.
- Contact point for Supporting People to help vulnerable live independently at home.
- Arrange for benefit take up advice, particularly attendance allowance and disability living allowance.
- Blue badge applications and reminders.
- Occupational Therapy equipment, mobility aids (including spare rubbers for the end of walking sticks).
- Home Care Services, Help and support for carers, a booklet called "If only I'd known that" is available with contacts.

Item 3: Jackie Churchill & Diane Morris from A4E

11. What is A4E?

Answer: A4E is an independent organisation that work in partnership with Somerset County Council and offer free advice and support services across Somerset.

12. How can people be referred?

Answer:

- Self referral
- From a health and/or social care professional
- By a Carer

13. What services are available and who are they available for?

Answer:

- Disability Advocacy service – This is for people living in Somerset aged 18-65 years old with a physical and/or sensory loss.

An advocate can provide support to help you with;

Representation when your health and social care needs are assessed.

Employment issues

Support with benefit appeals and tribunals

Housing issues and Making complaints against public bodies like the NHS or County Council

- Short breaks

This service supports people to arrange and manage their own short break and help overcome barriers experienced in organising it, to give them more choice about where and when they take their break and the type of break they have.

This service is for people with physical disabilities and/or sensory loss who are older than 18, and their carers. It's available for people who qualify for services under Somerset's Fair Access to Care (FACS) rules and for people that don't qualify for services (FACS) and are able to fund their own break.

- Direct Payment Advice and Support Service

Direct Payments are money paid to people with assessed care needs so that they can choose, arrange and pay for their own care services. This includes older people, people with physical or sensory disabilities, people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems and parents who care for disabled children and young people. Money is paid into a separate bank account, the money can be used to buy the help their assessment has shown they need. The Direct Payment Advisory Scheme in Somerset is provided for the County Council by A4E. Referrals are sent to them from Social Services.

Item 4: Andrew Turner Area the Highways Manager from Somerset County Council

14. To begin with Andrew gathered topics from members of the Forum to ensure his presentation would include items relevant to people present. Andrew offered advice to the issues raised:

Advice about dropped kerbs

- Requests for new dropped kerbs and crossings should come via Somerset Direct- that means each request gets a unique identifier. Tel : 0845 345 9155 The same contact number should be used if there are problems with particular dropped kerbs – one member explained that some dropped kerbs have a 'lip' to them which creates problems for wheelchair users.

- Obstructions to dropped kerbs should be reported to either Police or Police Community Support Officers.

Advice about Pedestrian crossings

- Requests to alter the available crossing time (also known as phasing) should be made either by SCC email address – sedgemoor@somerset.gov.uk or be calling Somerset Direct (numbers as above). A traffic engineer will come back to you via Somerset Direct.

Maintenance of a particular path adjacent to Church

- A member raised an issue that the pathway at St Marys in Berrow is very shingly and not accessible for wheelchair users. This path is not adopted by the Highways Authority and would be a local responsibility, likely in this case to be the Church. The individual would need to contact the church directly.

Other General Highways Points

- For Highway defects Somerset Highways can only intervene where a pothole is greater than 40mm on a carriageway and 20mm on a footway.
- Hedges – Usually the responsibility of the landowner. Highways work with local councils re grass cutting.
- Street Lighting – there is no wholesale intention to switch of street lights.

Specific Locations with problems were raised:

- Bristol Road crossing in Bridgwater – one member has asked for this to be moved.
- Stoddens Road, Burnham on sea – a need for traffic calming
- Penel Orliou crossing near the old market in Bridgwater (has been raised with Andy Clements)
- East Huntspill – Traffic calming has created congestion problems outside the church
- Bath Road – Bridgwater, no dropped kerb across to British Cellophane foot path and out to the garage.

Item 5: Angela Farmer from Sedgemoor District Council

Update from Disability Consultation Meeting

Angela advised that a letter will shortly be issued with an update from last years Disability Equality Duty consultation.

Wheelchair provision for Victoria Community Centre

In response to requests by Sedgemoor Disability Forum a wheelchair has now being provided at Victoria Community Centre.

Presentation by Sedgemoor District Council Planning Service

A current routine inspection of the Planning Service means no-one is available to make a presentation but it is hoped this presentation will be made at the Sedgemoor Disability Forum in Spring 09.

Any Other Business

Future presentation topics

A list of proposed topics for future Forum meetings comprise:

Police Representatives

Plans for the Princess Hall and Regeneration for the area

Social Worker – Social Care

3 speakers with more time – possibly finish at 3pm

Age Concern

Community Transport

Homes In Sedgemoor

GP Surgeries – PCT, PALS (Patient, Advice and Liaison Service).

FAB Teams (Financial Assessment and Benefit Advice)

Improved use of Hearing Loop / Microphone for members as well as speakers. It was requested to investigate the use of an electronic notetaker.