

Area West Committee – 18th September 2013

9. Ilminster Forum

Strategic Director: Rina Singh (Place and Performance)
Assistant Director: Helen Rutter & Kim Close (Communities)
Service Manager: Andrew Gillespie, Area Development Manager (West)
Lead Officer: Zoë Harris, Neighbourhood Development Officer
Contact Details: zoe.harris@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01460) 260423

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update to Members on the work of the Ilminster Forum.

Public Interest

Ilminster Forum is a not-for profit community regeneration group, which operates in Ilminster. Since 2006 the group has developed a number of projects in their town that have helped improve the lives of residents. Those projects were identified through extensive consultation carried out for their community plan. Ilminster now needs to update their community plan to establish what residents want for their town.

Recommendations

To note the content of the report.

Background

Community Plans are unlike spatial plans because they do not focus on entirely bricks and mortar but instead look at the town as a whole taking into account issues such as health, work, education, culture, getting about and activities. Community Plans set out a vision for how a town or parish wants to develop and identifies the actions needed to achieve that vision.

Community Led Plans are developed in conjunction with a town or parish council but are generally led by a group of people made up of representatives from various organisations/sectors in the area e.g. local government, schools, church, businesses and voluntary groups.

There are numerous benefits to community led planning both to the town as a whole and to the individuals concerned. Community led planning:

- Encourages participation in local democracy;
- Helps with evidence for funders when you want to develop a new project;
- Enables the whole community to contribute;
- Identifies opportunities for new projects;
- Gives people the opportunity to get involved with new activities and learn new skills;
- Can be used to influence decision makers;
- Identifies where new services are needed or existing services can be improved;
- Gives policy makers a local perspective;
- Highlights issues of concern.

Iminster Forum and the Community Plan

Iminster Forum is a not-for-profit organisation made up of volunteers who live and work in the town. In 2004 Iminster Forum carried out extensive consultation via public workshops, focus groups and a household survey. The consultation highlighted what issues residents felt were important and needed focusing on, in order to help make Iminster an even better place to live. The consultation results were written up into a Community Plan which was launched to the public in 2005. Since then the Iminster Forum in partnership with other organisations and with the support of the SSDC Neighbourhood Development Officer has developed a number of projects that have had a social and or economic benefit to the town. Those projects include:

- Visit Iminster – tourism promotion for the town;
- An improved library garden;
- Iminster web – the community web site;
- Traders board with map located in Tesco's car park;
- Visitors boards;
- Walks leaflets;
- Annual green awareness event;
- Stop Line Way cycle path;
- New permissive footpath;
- Heritage trail booklet;
- Swimming pool survey;
- Community buildings survey;
- Transport booklet;
- Community speed-watch;
- Setting up the Iminster Community Safety Partnership;
- Audit of street furniture & signage;
- Holiday activities for children in 2006.

New Community Plan for Iminster

The evidence collected for the original community plan is now 9 years old. If Iminster Forum want to continue influencing decision makers and use the evidence to convince funders to provide grants for new projects then they need to have updated and robust evidence. In addition the Forum has developed a large number of the projects identified in the original Community Plan and they need to know from the residents what projects they would like them to focus on in the future.

Work has recently started on activities to establish what issues are important to people in the town. Once the issues of concern are identified the information will be used to inform the design of a household survey. That survey will be delivered to every household in the town to complete. The results of that survey will be used to write the next community plan and establish an action plan of new projects for the Iminster Forum to work on in future years.

Corporate Priority implications

Supporting the development of a new community plan fits in with Focus Four of the Council Plan which is to ensure South Somerset has healthy and self-reliant communities where people are willing to help each other.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity Implications

A variety of methods are used to ensure that the views of as many people as possible are gained from the residents of Ilminster. The evidence gathered will be used by a number of voluntary and public sector organisations to develop their projects and services which will benefit a wide range of people from all sectors of the community.

Background papers: *AWC reports on the progress of the Ilminster Community Plan – October 2010, November 2007, April 2007, December 2006 & October 2006.
The Ilminster Community Plan – April 2005.*
