

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Minehead and Watchet

Date: Tuesday, 30 April 2024

Time: 6.30 pm - 7.41 pm

Location: EMN Hall, Combecross Hill, Monksilver, Taunton TA4 4JE

Chaired by: Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker (Vice Chair)

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:

Cllr Christine Lawrence
Cllr Rosemary Woods
Cllr Tony Brooks
Cllr Mervyn Orchard-Lisle
Cllr Ian Duncan
Cllr Jan Swan
Cllr John Irven
Cllr Maggie Forkes
Cllr Mark Philipson
Cllr Peter Payne
Loretta Whetlor
John Richards

Representing

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Crowcombe PC
Monksilver PC
Old Cleeve PC
Sampford Brett
Watchet Town Council
West Bagborough PC
West Quantoxhead PC
Williton PC
Somerset Association Local Councils
Watchet Chamber of Trade (WACET)

Officer attendance:

Name:

Bel Deering
Emma Plummer
Sam Murrell
Tom Parkinson

Representing

Community Engagement (SRA)
Interim LCN Lead
LCN Link Officer
ICT Specialist

Other attendees:

Name:

Cllr Sue Smith
 Chris Ellis
 T Skinner
 Michelle Francis (Clerk)
 Karen Scott (Clerk)
 Geoff Williams
 Wendy Philipson

Representing

Carhampton PC
 Carhampton PC
 Sampford Brett PC
 Williton PC
 Holford / Kilve PC
 Blue Anchor Toilets CIC
 West Quantoxhead PC

Virtual attendees:**Name:**

Cllr Marcus Kravis
 Jeff Brown

Representing

Somerset Council
 Somerset Council LCN Interim Lead

Summary of discussion:**Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome: Action by: item:****Item 38: Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Somerset Councillors, Andy Sully (Chair), Mandy Chilcott, Hugh Davies and Marcus Kravis (who attended virtually). Bernard Maitland Smith and Ray Tew (MCDT), Fiona Toms (MPP), Ellie Bishop (Village Agent), Pippa Hughes (Somerset Council), Paul Elliston (Somerset Council), Kevin Francis (WDBA), John Passingham (Combe Florey PC), Maureen Smith (WSCLT), Cllr Craig Palmer (Minehead TC), Mary Jacobs (Monksilver PC), Martin Stevens (WCCT).

Bel Deering, Community Engagement Officer from Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) was welcomed to the meeting.

In the absence of Cllr Andy Sully, the Vice Chair., Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker was in the Chair for this meeting.

Item 39: Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

Item 40: Notes from the Previous Meeting

Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker requested a change to the wording on Closure of the Williton Recycling Centre. The sentence now to read “If that happened, the Commissioners would automatically cut the discretionary services”.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes were unanimously approved by those present.

Item 41: Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting

There was concern that there was no further news on the financial crisis and progress on devolution of services . It was requested that an update was provided at the next meeting especially around:-

- Filling of grit bins – whose responsibility will this be going forward?
- Grass cutting – Accurate information on assets and land to be transferred
- Better communications generally. No information was forthcoming between meetings.
- Mark Philipson (West Quantoxhead PC) advised that he wasn't receiving meeting notifications and or agenda/minute information. *Emma Plummer agreed to check this out and update the contact information as required.*

Was there clarity yet on whether parishes would have to bear the legal costs in the event of asset transfers? *Cllr Whetlor advised that SALC were currently working through proposals on how to assist parishes with legal fees should this be necessary.*

Item 42: Public Question Time

The Chair wanted clarity on the possible devolution of services in the event of the Idverde contract (Street sweeping) and SUEZ (Waste collection) finishing and what this would mean for the parishes?

The Idverde contract in the former West Somerset area is due to end in November 2024, (unless an extension is granted) and the service would be reviewed. If parishes decided to take this on, (litter bins etc), they would need to undertake a proper

procurement process which would include tendering and this would take time. They need adequate notice if this is to happen so that they can prepare.

The Chair was also aware that the SUEZ contract was due to go to Executive on Wednesday 8 May, and there were implications for the waste management contract. This too would have an impact on the parishes.

Item 43: **Minehead & Watchet LCN Highways Subgroup**

Attendees who had been present at the subgroup agreed that it had been a very informative inaugural meeting.

- The Terms of Reference were agreed by those present. (Cllr Whetlor proposed, Cllr Duncan seconded) .
- It would be useful to have someone from the Road Sweeping service in attendance at a future meeting. Better communications were required between the parishes and the contractor, to enable a more efficient service.(Not least if parishes knew when they were coming, they could ensure residents cars were moved to enable better access for the road sweeper).
- It was agreed that it would be useful to have officer attendance from the Somerset Council Bridges and Structure Team to provide an update on the progress of the B3191 Road Closure at Cleeve Hill, Watchet.
- Work was progressing to complete the actions that had been raised in the subgroup, and these would be reported back at the next meeting. This included the winter maintenance schedules and grit bin maps. Highways officers were preparing this information. Email addresses and contact list had been shared.
- A lot of apologies were submitted in advance for the proposed highway subgroup meeting due to be held on Wednesday 15 May. Subsequently it was decided to postpone this meeting to a more convenient date and time. (To be advised at some point in June).

Item 44: **Flooding and Emergency Planning Workshop**

Due to a conflicting appointment this item was brought forward on the agenda. Bel Deering outlined how the Community Resilience Team were facilitating Emergency Planning workshops across the county via the LCNs.

The Workshop for the Minehead and Watchet LCN will be on the evening of Wednesday 19 June at West Somerset House between 6-9pm.

Paul Elliston had tendered his apologies prior to the meeting, but had prepared a statement:

Based on Somerset Prepared's template, a new workshop for Parish Councils and communities has been developed to help with the creation of Community Emergency Plans. At the time of writing, this has been delivered three times by Somerset Rivers Authority and Somerset Council's Civil Contingencies Unit staff, each time through Local Community Networks (LCNs).

Beginning in Castle Cary to cover the Southeast Somerset LCN area, we saw a good number of local Parishes come together to be guided through the process of creating a plan. The second occasion was in West Monkton, working with Hestercombe LCN. This event was more poorly attended, but enriched by the addition of Rotary EVAG, who were able to speak about their work and showcase some of the Property Flood Resilience products they supply to households. The third time was a return to Southeast Somerset and Bruton to run the session with those who had been unable to attend the first time.

The workshops deliver some presentation of information but, with a little guidance from the front, the primary focus of the workshop is to allow participants to discuss together and bounce around ideas which ultimately serve to enrich their own plans. We've also seen real value in organising this with multiple, neighbouring parishes, as it allows for increased awareness of what assets, skills and places each parish has that could be brought to bear in a time of need and where the opportunities for mutual aid between parishes lie.

As a new initiative, feedback from the events has been intentionally captured and it's clear that they have been a resounding success. Using the worked example of responding to flooding, parishes leave the workshop with a partially completed plan and the knowledge required and confidence needed to continue developing it. One recent participant, for example, commented that the workshop was *"very professional and informative...I feel confident that I will now be able to enthuse my council colleagues about the value and importance of setting up a plan"*. In general, those attending have thoroughly enjoyed both the format of the workshop and the opportunity to have their questions answered. Recognising the assets and skills they have available to them to be able to respond to emergencies was particularly revelatory, but discussions around disseminating, resourcing and operationalising their plan were also particularly appreciated.

The workshop has been considered so valuable that there's already been requests to repeat it elsewhere, to hold it every year and also run a subsequent 'Exercise in a Box' session, where the parishes' newly written plans are tested in various tabletop scenarios. This is something the team will be hoping to deliver in the near future but, in the meantime, we welcome hearing from any LCN, parish or community flood/emergency action group that would like to participate in any future Community Emergency Plan development workshops.

Parish representatives and the voluntary sector are invited to attend. A request was made to include Devon and Somerset Fire Rescue Service, so an invitation will be sent advising them of the date and time of the event.

Item 45: **Date of next LCN meeting.**

Minehead and Watchet LCN will next meet at the Annual General Meeting. (AGM) This will take place on Wednesday 17 July at the West Somerset House Council Chamber.

The business of the AGM will be to vote for the Chair and Vice Chair, review the Annual Report and agree the schedule of meetings for the coming year.

There will also be an opportunity to set the themes and priorities for the forthcoming year. Some topics which have already been requested include:-

- **Development Control** – to give communities a better understanding on how Highway decisions are made, especially regarding major infrastructure. This would be especially helpful around large-scale development and planning of essential services. [An information booklet on Standing Advice for Planning Applications v 26/22 is available to view here.](#)
- **Magna Housing Association** – A chance for the largest social housing provider in the area to consult on their annual report and listen to local concerns. They have become very “remote” since COVID which has been exacerbated since the closure of their local office in Williton.
- **Active Travel** - An update on the A39 Dunster to Carhampton cycle path. Completion of this Active Travel school access route. There was speculation that the money which had been earmarked for this project was being diverted elsewhere. [A press release on the scheme was released in December 2023.](#)

Post minute Note: Sam Murrell checked with the Active Travel Team and received the following response: *Having completed the work between Dunster and Carhampton to understand the state of the existing path (the work that removed the encroaching grass from the verges) we are now looking at what still needs to be done to improve the facilities in the area. We will keep local Members updated on the progress of this work.*

Contact officer for meeting: LCN Team lcn@somerset.gov.uk