

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Chard and Blackdowns

Date: Wednesday, 13 March 2024

Time: 7.00 pm - 8.51 pm

Location: Corfe Village Hall, Newton Road, Corfe, Taunton TA3 7AQ

Chaired by: Keith Read (West Hatch Parish Council) (Chair)

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:	Representing
Sarah Wakefield (Vice-Chair)	Somerset Council
Martin Wale	Somerset Council
Ian Firth	Churchstanton Parish Council
Ken Pearson	Churchstanton Parish Council
Julie Wardle (Clerk)	Churchstanton Parish Council
John Harrison	Corfe Parish Council
Andy Grant	Hatch Beauchamp Parish Council
Mark Palmer	Neroche Parish Council
Peter Cordier	Pitminster Parish Council
RichardTyzack	Pitminster Parish Council
Richard Harper	Ruishton & Thornfalcon Parish Council
Colin Fisher	Stoke St Mary Parish Council
David Peake	Tatworth & Forton Parish Council
Keith Read (Chair)	West Hatch Parish Council
Paul Elliston	Somerset Rivers Authority

Officer attendance:

Name:	Representing
Tim Cook	Somerset Council / LCN
Emily Window	Somerset Council / LCN
Sam Crossman	Somerset Council / ICT

Virtual attendees:

Name:	Representing
Kate Hellard	Somerset Council / LCN
Becky Sanders	Somerset Council / LCN
Heather Bryant (Clerk)	Ruishton & Thornfalcon Parish Council

Summary of discussion:

Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome: Action by: item:

Item 26: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mike Canham (Otterford PC), and Councillors Jason Baker, Ross Henley and Jenny Kenton.

Item 27: **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests from Somerset Council Councillors present at the meeting.

Item 28: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 17 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record by those present.

Item 29: **Public Question Time**

There were no questions raised at Public Question Time.

The Chairman suggested that the LCN meetings could be more

widely promoted to parishioners, and he encouraged parishes to spread the word within their communities.

Item 30: **Working Group Feedback**

The Chair of the Roads & Transport working group provided some feedback on work and progress of the group, including:

- The Terms of Reference for the group had been agreed.
- Focussing on matters important to parishes such as rural transport, drainage, speeding etc.
- Agreed to initially meet monthly with some interim meetings if needed. They had met a couple of times, but unfortunately, the last meeting on 28 February had been poorly attended.
- Regarding gullies, hedges and road maintenance – there had been some discussions about if any possibility to offset some costs.
- Speeding in rural areas – some discussion about SIDs and looking at the costs and possible ways to share some of the costs.
- Also been discussions about a possible cycle path route from Ilminster to Taunton, and also how to try and reduce HGVs using country routes as cut throughs.
- More people are needed to be involved with the working group as there are only three people at the moment. Any one welcome to attend the working group meetings.

During discussion several comments and sharing of experiences about SIDs were raised, including costs, effectiveness and knowledge regarding possible sources of funding. Other points raised included:

- were any further details available of what the Highways Steward scheme will cover and if there was any appetite with local parishes.
- There is much bureaucracy regarding pot hole repairs e.g criteria for repairs to be dealt with urgently, and how to report the pot holes etc, and then the inspection process etc.
- A number of highway issues were often difficult or slow to get resolved.

Someone suggested an alternative quick and easy way to log some highway defects was to use www.fixmystreet.com – using this website also enabled anyone else viewing the site to see if something had already been reported and when.

Tim Cook responded to some of the comments raised, including:

- Some more information was available regarding the Highway Steward scheme, Some parishes felt the scheme was expensive on an individual parish basis. The scheme was something that could be discussed in more detail at a working group with an officer from Highways present to explain the options etc. If necessary a steward working group could be set up.
- The urgent / non-urgent response regarding highway defects had been discussed, and an action had been noted to see if parishes could be involved or have a role regarding the initial inspection process.
- Local highway issues that are difficult or slow to resolve could be directed to the working group for discussion.

The Chair noted that several points made during discussion were things to be raised with the Roads & Transport working group. He advised that when the LCN link worker was in place within the LCN team, a key role for them would be the sharing and co-ordinating of information among members of the LCN, including feedback from the working groups.

The Chair of the Environment and Conservation working group then provided some feedback on work and progress of the group, including:

- Terms of Reference had been agreed.
- A Nature Recovery Plan had been discussed – would like to focus on local nature recovery and involve local farmers, landowners and FWAG to help make areas nature friendly. There had also been mention about responsibilities for water run off from fields onto roads, and noting this was not usually Highways responsibility but was the landowners.
- The topic of wood burners and the effects of smoke had been raised, and also touched on topic of water quality however the LCN does not have the information or evidence base about quality of rivers and what runs into

them.

- Litter, fly tipping and dog fouling issues had also been raised.
- Need to communicate the work of the group and involve other contacts.

During discussion it was suggested that the group liaise with the Blackdown Hills National Landscape (formerly known as the AONB) as they do a lot of work in the topic areas discussed by the working group. A question was also asked Biodiversity Net Gain and if it was known when information on the call for sites would be coming forward. It was also asked if there was any official update regarding the dualling of the A358.

Kate Hellard, Tim Cook and Sarah Wakefield responded to some points raised in discussion including:

- Currently recruiting to the LCN link officer roles and confirmation it would be their role to help with communication and share information between the working groups, parishes and the LCN. The team and capacity was slowly coming together.
- The LCN team held mailing lists and so were able to support the working groups.
- There are other organisations and individuals who can help in the working groups.
- For information regarding the Biodiversity Net Gain call for sites, Cllr Dixie Darch (Lead Member for Climate Change and Environment) was suggested as a point of contact.
- Somerset Council are writing a new strategy for biodiversity, and this could be something to be discussed further by the Environment Working Group.
- Not aware of an official update on the A358.

The Chair asked everyone to feedback to their parishes or towns the work and discussions of the LCN and to say that more people are needed on the working groups, and to please support. Ideally 6 people are needed for each working group. One of the working group Chairs suggested alternating between day and evening meetings for the working groups to try and encourage more participation.

The Chair then provided an update on a recent meeting of all the LCN Chairs, where they had spent a day discussing what was and wasn't being done, and what could be improved etc. A number of changes are being proposed about how the LCNs will operate. They had heard about what each LCN is doing and their working groups. He acknowledged communication was a weak link and the LCN link workers would be key to helping with that. He noted Policy Officers needed to be involved more with the LCNs.

Kate Hellard provided a brief summary of what some of the other LCN meetings were doing. She noted it was hoped some new data sets would be available to the LCNs in time for the AGM meetings. She clarified that some suggestions had been put forward for tweaks to the Terms of Reference for the LCNs.

Item 31: **Discussion**

There was a short breakout session. The Chair explained that on each breakout table there were print outs of the current agreed priorities for the Chard and Blackdowns LCN. He asked each table/group to discuss the priorities and consider if any changes were required.

Following the breakout session, each group was asked to summarise their points, and comments raised included:

- Up to date information on areas of deprivation or areas in most need would be useful.
- Access to NHS dental services is very poor in this area and we to try and influence.
- Need a factual update on the A358 dualling.
- Rural and social isolation aren't on the priority lists
- Wider goals of the LCN – are we realistic about what we are able to influence and achieve? We won't be able to take all the priorities forward.
- What is the output of the LCN?
- Roadside litter is becoming an issue.
- Do we know how many parishes have Neighbourhood Plans?
- Devolution issues – how can it be done? Parishes need help with this – training and empowerment.
- There is a disconnect between planning policy and access to medical services.

- We are heading towards the end of the South Somerset Local Plan – when will parishes be approached by Policy about the new plan?

Tim Cook advised that Neighbourhood Plans were viewable on the Somerset Council website, however obtaining a figure for the number of community plans would be more difficult.

Kate Hellard noted the comments made regarding the Local Plan. She advised she would discuss the comments with officers as she was due to have a meeting soon regarding LCN involvement with the future formation of a new Somerset wide Local Plan.

The Chair commented there was a need for the LCN to focus on deliverables. He also noted that several of the existing priorities would fall under a single working group rather than needing a working group for each individual priority.

Item 32: **Forward Plan - Agree items for future meetings**

The Chair summarised some key points from the meeting:

- Possibly a need for a third working group.
- Communications in general – acknowledge there are currently some issues, hopefully will be resolved when LCN link worker in post. Individuals in own parish can help spread the word and information. In general more publicity is needed about the LCNs.

There were no specific items suggested for next agenda.

Paul Elliston (Somerset Rivers Authority) highlighted an event that may be of interest to some communities - Flood cafes – free drop in events being held at the Somerset Rural Life Museum on 26 March and 4 May – more details at:

<https://swheritage.org.uk/events/>

Item 33: **Dates of future meetings**

The dates for future meetings of the Chard and Blackdowns LCN were noted, with venues to be confirmed:

- Wednesday 1 May

- Wednesday 3 July

Contact officer for the meeting – LCN team:

lcn@somerset.gov.uk