

Part E - Local Community Networks

Terms of Reference

The Council will establish 18 Local Community Networks to promote the development of stronger and more resilient communities across Somerset.

For the purposes of the Constitution, the Local Community Networks will be classed as Area Boards.

1.0 Purpose, Role and Function of the Local Community Networks

1.1 The purpose of the Local Community Networks are to be the focus for community development, engagement and partnership working at a local level; improving outcomes for residents and establishing strong connections between the Council, our communities and our partners.

1.2 The Local Community Networks will have the following roles and functions:

- Establishing effective local community engagement and influence;
- Promote enhanced participation in democracy, active community decision making and scrutiny;
- Enhance collaboration by bringing together at a local level representatives from partner organisations, town, City and parish councils, community groups and others
- Ensure local influence over the Council and wider public service activity;
- Share information, ideas and solutions to enable services to be delivered to help meet local need;
- To inspire more responsibility for local place shaping;
- To identify evidence-based community priorities; across Economic, Social and Environmental issues;
- To create plans to reflect how the priorities will be addressed; and
- To identify and secure resource opportunities for local projects

2.0 Local Community Networks Approach

2.1 The Local Community Networks will:

- a) Agree priorities and areas of focus for the local area on an annual basis
- b) Agree a tailored communication and engagement plan for actively involving residents and other local stakeholders
- c) Allocate any funding obtained by the Local Community Network as appropriate, and in accordance with rules and guidance set out by the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders
- d) Provide opportunities to ensure that the local community is able to respond to consultations in a timely manner.
- e) Provide opportunities to ensure good communications and information from Somerset Council, and partners, on local issues.
- f) Make recommendations to Somerset Council and/or other partners on funding local projects.

- g) Make recommendations to Somerset Council, and partners, on key local issues.
- h) Produce an annual report with a self-assessment of success in relation to delivery against the agreed priorities and areas of focus for the local area for the past 12 months.
- i) Hold an annual meeting to enable residents and local stakeholders to input into setting area priorities for the next 12 months and highlight local issues.

3.0 Composition

- 3.1 The Local Community Networks will be constituted as Area Boards. The minutes of the meetings of all Local Community Networks, along with any recommendations, will be considered by the Executive.
- 3.2 In the event of a Somerset Council Councillor being elected following a by-election, the Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to appoint the Councillor to the relevant Local Community Network and Council will be asked to ratify the appointment at its next available ordinary meeting.
- 3.3 Local Community Networks are established for 18 areas covering the county. Any changes to the names of the LCNs or their boundaries will need to be recommended to the Executive Lead Member for Local Government Reorganisation and Prosperity for approval.

4.0 Policy and Constitution

- 4.1 Local Community Networks must operate within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework and in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution.
- 4.2 Each Local Community Network may receive funding as determined from time to time by the Council, partners or through successful funding bids. Local Community Networks will allocate any funds in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules.
- 4.3 Local Community Networks will be consulted on the development of strategic policies to make sure that local priorities and concerns are taken into account. The Local Community Networks will also be consulted where significant changes, reductions or closures of a service are planned in their local area.
- 4.4 Any key decision or policy proposal of the Council that has, or is likely to have, a significant impact in the local area will be discussed with the Local Community Network.
- 4.5 Where appropriate, Local Community Networks are able to set up Working Groups to cover particular topics. The results and outcomes from the Working Group will need to be fed back to the main meeting of the Local Community Network.

4.6 In the event of the topic spanning more than one Local Community Network area, the Working Group will be set up to include representatives from all appropriate Local Area Networks.

5.0 Membership & Representation

5.1 Each Local Community Network will comprise of the following core membership:

- 1) The elected Somerset Council Councillors representing the electoral divisions covered by the Local Community Network;
- 2) A member from each City, Town or Parish Council within the area covered by the Local Community Network;
- 3) Representatives from the following groups or organisations:
 - a) Local Neighbourhood policing team;
 - b) Somerset National Health Service
 - c) Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service;
 - d) Education
 - e) Representatives from Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Organisations
 - f) Representatives from Businesses or Trade Groups

5.2 The Executive Lead Member for Local Government Reorganisation & Prosperity will approve the core membership of each LCN. Each LCN will review their core membership at least annually and make any recommendations for changes to the Executive Lead Member for Local Government Reorganisation & Prosperity. The core membership list will be classed as the voting members of the Local Community Network.

5.3 Each Local Community Network will support and encourage wider participation and engagement from additional attendees. This could include, for example:

- Local Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations
- Local Businesses or Trade Groups
- Housing Associations or Housing Officers
- Any other relevant local groups which could include youth groups, cultural organisations, environmental groups, older people's groups, disability groups, etc.

6.0 Other representation

6.1 Local Community Networks can invite any Executive Member to attend their meeting to discuss matters relating to their remit, if appropriate.

6.2 Invited Executive Members attending the Local Community Network as a guest will not have voting rights.

6.3 For the avoidance of doubt an Executive Member is entitled to vote as a standing Member of the Local Community Network in which their electoral division is located.

7.0 Officer Support

- 7.1 Each Local Community Network will be supported by a dedicated Officer from the Unitary Council and Democratic Services Officer(s).
- 7.2 Local Community Networks can ask other officers (including external partners officers) to attend their meetings to discuss items of business on their agenda.
- 7.3 Somerset Council Directors will provide an oversight role for the Local Community Networks, ensuring that officers in their directorates attend and engage with the LCNs as and when appropriate.

8.0 Order of business for the Annual Meeting of the Local Community Networks

- 8.1 The date and meeting arrangements for the first Annual Meeting for each Local Community Network shall be agreed by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Lead Member for Local Government Reorganisation & Prosperity. The Annual Meeting of the Local Community Networks will take place annually based on the commencement date of the Local Community Network.
- 8.2 Items of business for the Local Community Network Annual Meeting will be:
 - a) To elect the Chair of the Local Community Network
 - b) To appoint the Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network
 - c) To receive any apologies for absence
 - d) Declarations of Interest
 - e) Public Question Time
 - f) Approve the minutes from the previous meeting
 - g) To consider the Annual Report on the Local Community Network's work in the last 12 months
 - h) To determine the priorities and areas of focus for the Local Community Network for the next 12 months
 - i) To consider any other business set out in the agenda
 - j) To agree the frequency of meetings
 - k) To agree the schedule of meetings for the next 12 months

9.0 Order of business for Ordinary meetings of the Local Community Networks

- 9.1 Items of business for the ordinary meetings of the Local Community Networks will be:
 - a) To receive any apologies for absence
 - b) Declarations of Interest
 - c) Public Question Time
 - d) To approve the minutes from the previous meeting
 - e) To receive updates on any action points from previous meeting(s)
 - f) To consider any other business set out in the agenda

10.0 Process for electing the Chair of the Local Community Networks

- 10.1 Either the Chair / or Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network shall be a Somerset Council Councillor. The other position is to be filled by a suitably trained and experienced chair nominated from the core membership (section 5.1).
- 10.2 Election will take place annually at the Annual Meeting of the Local Community Network.
- 10.3 The Democratic Services Officer will call for nominations for the position of Chair of the Local Community Network.
- 10.4 Only voting members can make nominations. The nomination must be seconded to be valid.
- 10.5 An individual shall not be nominated in his/her absence without their written consent.
- 10.6 In the event of only one valid nomination being received, the person presiding will declare the nominated member elected.
- 10.7 In the event of two valid nominations, the Democratic Services Officer will ask for a show of hands for those members in favour of each nominated candidate and declare the candidate receiving the majority of votes (of the core membership present and voting) to be the winner.
- 10.8 In the case of an equal number of votes for the two candidates, a random electronic generator will be used by the Democratic Services Officer to determine the winner of the election and then declare the result.
- 10.9 In the case of three or more valid nominations being made, the Democratic Services Officer will call for a show of hands for each of the candidates. The Democratic Services Officer will then announce the candidate with the least number of votes and that candidate will be eliminated (in the event of a tie for the least number of votes, the Democratic Services Officer will use a random electronic generator to determine which candidate will be eliminated). A further vote shall be taken for the remaining candidates and after each vote the candidate with the least number of votes shall be eliminated until only two candidates remain and a final vote can be taken (following section 10.7 and 10.8 above).
- 10.10 The Chair and Vice Chair will hold office until the next Annual Meeting unless they resign from the position. In the event of a resignation, an election for the Chair and/or Vice-Chair will take place at the next available meeting.

11.0 Chairing arrangements

- 11.1 The Vice-Chair will preside in the absence of the Chair and if neither is present, the Local Community Network will appoint a Chair from among its core membership (section 5.1) for that respective meeting.
- 11.2 The role of the Chair will include:
- a) Providing leadership to ensure that the objectives of the Local Community Networks are met.
 - b) Ensuring that the voices of the local community are at the heart of the work of the Local Community Networks.
 - c) Working with Officers to set the agendas and to ensure that any action points are picked up and dealt with
 - d) Chair the meetings effectively to ensure that its business can be carried out efficiently and that all parties have an opportunity to input
 - e) Ensure that the meeting is a forum for debate of matters of interest and/or concern to the local community
 - f) Represent the Local Community Network at the quarterly meetings with the Executive Member and Scrutiny Chair(s)
 - g) Produce an annual report on behalf of the Local Community Network which will be considered by the Executive

12.0 Local Community Network links to the democratic process

This section will set out how the Local Community Networks will link to the democratic process within Somerset Council.

Council

- 12.1 Somerset Council will review the Terms of Reference for the Local Community Networks at its Annual Meeting each year.

Executive

- 12.3 Local Community Networks can escalate issues of concern to the Executive and/or the relevant Executive Member.
- 12.4 There will be a standing item on Executive agendas to consider and note any minutes from Local Community Network meetings that have taken place. This will include any recommendations that the Local Community Network wish the Executive to consider.
- 12.5 The Executive will also consider the Local Community Network annual report.
- 12.6 The Executive Member with remit for Local Community Networks will meet on a quarterly basis with the Local Community Network Chairs so that common themes and issues can be discussed. The Scrutiny Committee(s) Chairs are also included in this meeting.

Scrutiny Committee(s)

- 12.7 Wherever possible the Scrutiny Committee(s) will avoid duplicating the work of the Local Community Networks.
- 12.8 However, issues of local concern may be identified and added to the Scrutiny workplan via the quarterly meetings with the Executive Member and Local Community Network Chairs.

Planning

- 12.9 Planning matters that fall under the remit of the Planning Committee or Planning Sub-Committees will be out of scope of the Local Community Networks to avoid duplication.

Licensing and Regulatory

- 12.10 Licensing and Regulatory matters that fall under the remit of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, Licensing Sub-Committee and Regulatory Sub-Committee will be out of scope of the Local Community Networks to avoid duplication.

13.0 Voting

- 13.1 Local Community Networks will seek to reach decisions by consensus where possible, involving the core membership (listed in section 5.1). Prior to such a vote, the Chair may upon his/her discretion take an indicative vote of the representatives set out in section 5.3.
- 13.2 However, on the occasions where a formal decision needs to be made this will be recommended to the Somerset Council Executive for consideration.
- 13.3 Where a vote is required then this will be by a show of hands of the voting membership present.
- 13.4 Where the vote is tied, the Chair of the Local Community Network shall have a second or casting vote.

14.0 Quorum

- 14.1 Quorum will be 50% of the core membership (section 5.1) in attendance at the Local Community Network.

15.0 Meeting frequency and location

- 15.1 Local Community Networks will meet 6-8 times a year, however this is at the discretion of each individual LCN.
- 15.2 Local Community Network meetings will be held in accessible venues and will be held in various locations within the local area (dependent on the numbers likely to attend the meeting).

16.0 Access to Information

16.1 Local Community Networks are subject to the Access to Information Rules set out in section X of this Constitution.

16.2 For example:

- a) Agendas will be published on the Council website 5 clear days before the meeting
- b) Meetings will be open to members of the public and press
- c) Draft minutes will be published on the Council website within 5 working days following the meeting

17.0 Standards of Behaviour and Conduct

17.1 Somerset Council Councillors are subject to the Members Code of Conduct set out in section Y of this Constitution.

17.2 City, Town and Parish Councillors are reminded that they have been elected to the Local Community Network as a representative of their Council, and therefore should follow their Code of Conduct.

17.3 Local Community Network meeting attendees will at all times follow the Protocol on meeting etiquette.

18.0 Review of the Terms of Reference

18.1 The Terms of Reference for the Local Community Networks will be reviewed on an annual basis and agreed at the Somerset Council Annual Meeting. This is to ensure that the Terms of Reference appropriately reflect the role of the Local Community Networks as they evolve over time.