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Communities, Customers & Partnerships Workstream

Local Community Networks [LCN's]
29th July 2022

MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL

Sedgemoor Creating Opportunity

SOMERSET County Council

Somerset West and Taunton

South Somerset District Council

Local Community Networks [LCN's]

29th July 2022

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Key points for discussion:

- Milestones and phasing of LCN development and implementation

- Approach to engagement & consultation

- Timetable for delivery

- Consider establishing a small Member/Officer LCN Task & Finish Group

Ask of Implementation Board:

- Endorse the emerging Phases to creation of LCN's

- Endorse the proposed approach to engagement & consultation

- Approval for setting up an LCN Working Group

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LCN's (One Somerset Business Case)

Local Community Networks (LCNs) will give communities power to influence decisions about their local area. They will be an important part of how our new Somerset Council works – making sure that local areas will have an ongoing voice to shape their new council to suit their local needs.

Key points

- LCNs to cover every part of the county
- Flexibility to set their own priorities
- Formal power as 'Committees of the Council'
- Dedicated council officer support
- Ability to influence Council priority and spend
- 6 to 8 meetings a year

Membership

- Unitary Councillors
- City, Town and Parish Councillors
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise
- Local NHS, Police, Schools and other services
- Local Business
- Other engaged residents

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Possible Roles of LCNs – what they might do

- **A forum for local discussion, listening, action, consultation and oversight -** A community forum, a community voice.
- **Achieve local ambitions and improve outcomes** - bringing Council, partners and communities together
- **Tackle local issues and priorities** – Using local data and community driven evidence
- **Act as cabinet committees -** core to how Somerset Council recognise and respond to a variety of needs
- **Promote active community decision making -** provide a focus for local engagement and a way to engage more young people
- **Planning** - decisions and policy
- **Licensing for localities**
- **Access to and administer community grants** (including climate change grants)
- **Support prevention activities** – promote/support local initiatives
- Promote and prioritise **Small Improvement Schemes**
- Instruct Small Highways works carried out by a **Highway Steward**

Additional considerations…..

- There needs to be recognition that the larger the population the more of the suggested powers are realistically possible in financial and governance terms. (for example – delegation of planning decisions to an LCN area is only possible a small number of LCNs).

- Careful consideration to the role, function and powers of LCNs to ensure they make a valuable contribution to local communities.

- LCN boundaries would need to take account of the output from any Community Governance Review and the following Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review – need to consider flexibility and build in time for review.

- Consider workload of a Unitary Councillor – representing several LCNs would result in a significant increase in meetings and workload which would be unsustainable.

LCN Design Principles

- LCNs will "Committees of Council" with powers including spending
- LCN boundaries will be constructed around parish boundaries
- LCNs will convene within their geography or virtually
- A unitary division and parish council to sit within one LCN area (however, clusters of parishes could work together on other shared priorities)
- LCN budgets to include revenue and capital expenditure for agreed local priorities
- Each LCN to be supported by a dedicated LCN manager
- A unitary council Director or Senior Manager to champion each LCN and its community
- Any spending decision by the LCN must carry the support of the majority of unitary councillors
- City, town and parish councils to be represented on the LCN. One representative each. Other representatives from the voluntary sector, business, health, education, police and fire
- LCNs to work with partners and the city, town and parish councils to deliver their vision, objectives and priorities for their places across the community.
- LCNs to work within the agreed policy framework and approved decisions of the new unitary council
- LCNs will need to work collaboratively at the Primary Care Network (PCN) level for some cross-boundary health and social care issues
- LCNs match fund contributions from City, Town and Parish Councils.

LCN Values

- LCN design to be co-produced with communities and partners

- LCNs to reflect the 7 recommendations from Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) and Society of Local Clerks (SLCC)

- LCNs designed around Somerset's natural communities.

- Each LCN to have a detailed Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) identifying the community profile and social, economic, environmental, health challenges communities face.

- LCNs to develop their objectives and work programme from this evidence base and local priorities.

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LCN Development – Current Position

- Three LCN Pilots underway – currently developing evaluation framework

- LCN Geographies options analysis developed and in draft

- Draft Terms of Reference prepared

- Initial financial modelling re number of LCNs and staff resourcing

LCN Governance

- Terms of reference [TOR] have early draft - reflects LCN Principles and learning from other areas

- Include Unitary Members, T&PCs, Police, NHS, VCSE and other partners

- Governance support to develop draft ToRs and links to Constitution

- Role of the Unitary Member, community leadership, advocate, broker

- Pilots developing own ToRs – formality plus flexibility

To be confirmed/Agreed

- Decision making – encourage consensus approach / participative democracy with formal voting kept to minimum

- LCN Chairs – Unitary Members or independent?

- Parish and Town Councils – one representative each, however some parishes are seeing this as each having a formal vote

- Hybrid arrangements and decision making

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LCN Development Approach – By April 2023

Key points

- Define and confirm number & boundaries for LCN's
- Clarity of role for the LCN and members
- Membership and Governance arrangements finalised
- Meetings fully scheduled as part of democratic calendar
- Supporting evidence and information packs in place
- Evaluation framework for Pilots created and learning shared
- Create an initial LCN Data pack/Profile [minimum bespoke]
- Initial ideas on LCN Digital presence
- LCN Communications Plan - engagement & consultation and launch of FAQ's
- Initial financial costing to establish the LCN – eg: LCN Officer & Governance support
- Research and learn from other Unitary authorities to shape our thinking
- Agree a Charter for Somerset
- LCN Reporting Framework and linked to corporate planning
- Recruit and establish an LCN Team

Comment / Benefits / Risks

- Approach is reflected in implementation plan
- Any change will need careful comms
- Depends on geographies consultation starting in August – peak holiday time, Parishes have raised concerns
- Are we running ahead of Corporate Plan, Operating Model and budget setting?
- May miss opportunities to link with ICS/PCN etc
- Requires early investment
- Resourcing implications for other service areas
- **Establish a small Member/Officer LCN Task and Finish Group**

LCN Development Approach – By April 2024 +

Key points

- Evaluate year 1 of operation and implement changes

- Establish LCN sharing network/toolkit/resources to help other LCN's

- Evaluate proposals for the integration of Planning and Licensing into LCN's

- Undertake Financial review and consider devolved/delegated budgets to LCN's

- LCN's become a vehicle for Service and Asset Devolution conversations

- Understand Community Development resources across the new authority and consider revised models of delivery

- Draft a Somerset Guide to Localism – culture and development programme

- Explore further alignments of LCN's to other community-based services

- Training and upskilling of City, Town & Parish Councils

Comment / Benefits / Risk

- Pilots given time to demonstrate results and inform future development

- Incremental approach to ensure full integration and alignment with Operating Model and corporate priorities

- Incremental approach to investment potentially of multiple years

- First meeting of each LCN could be workshop – enable co-design

- Draw on existing skills / expertise of LA staff in forming team (builds on current community development provision)

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Asset and Service Devolution Approach

Key points

- Focus on progression of Bridgwater Pilot
- Initial work on policy framework and prospectus ahead of Vesting Day, with further development after.
- LCN team can develop dialogue with T&PCs and other stakeholders in tandem with working to develop priorities and agenda for each LCNs
- Develop a prioritised and resourced programme of asset and service devolution post vesting day.

Comment / Benefits / Risk

- Complex topic to be co-ordinated across several service areas, requiring careful consideration, strong stakeholder engagement and realistic expectations
- Time to consider relationship with MTFP
- Time to learn from the Pilot
- Capacity constraints and dependencies mean focus for further devolution will be implemented post vesting day as part of service transformation, with further preparatory work undertaken ahead of that
- Challenges of managing expectations – ranging from T&PCs who want to push ahead (precept now) through to those who are concerned about 'burden' – need effective comms on this as a priority

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LCNs – Indicative Timescale for April 23

What	Who	When
Consider role, geographies, governance and funding of LCN	Executive Members	July 22
Refine governance and financial modelling, linked to MTFP	CCP Workstream leads, with Governance & Finance	July – Sept 22
Engagement and Consultation on Geographies	Targeted stakeholder engagement Wider public consultation Analysis and recommendations	July 22 30th Aug – 7 Oct Oct 22
Formal Decision Paper including resourcing plan	Executive	Nove 22
Recruit and establish LCN Team	CCP workstream	Dec 22 – Mar 23
First phase of Pilot evaluation undertaken and learning shared	CCP Workstream	Oct – Nove 22
Charter for Somerset – First draft	Somerset Association of Local Councils	Sept 2022
Research and learning from others	Members & Officers	Ongoing
Develop an LCN Reporting Framework	CCP with Business Intelligence Workstream	Jan 23 – Mar 23
Create an initial LCN Data pack/Profile and initial thoughts on LCN Digital presence	CCP with Business Intelligence Workstream	Dec 22 – Mar 23
LCN Communications Plan	LGR Communications with CCP	Ongoing

Consultation & engagement

- Engagement during July with consultation during August/ September/October [6 weeks]
- Consultation focus on:
  - 2/3 geography options
  - Headlines on role, governance and initial funding
- Using survey, on line offer, targeted letters
- Comms plan to raise profile [including Frequently Asked Questions]
- Item at the City, Town & Parish Councils Conference on 5th October
- Support by Members and Officers to raise profile of consultation with key stakeholders
- Conversation with the Pilots

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