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# New Somerset Council

## LGR Implementation Board Monday 14 November 2022 2.00 pm

To: The Members of the LGR Implementation Board

Cllr D Fothergill, Cllr V Keitch, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr McGinty, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr B Revans, Cllr F Smith-Roberts and Cllr R Wyke

All Somerset County Council and District Council Members are invited to attend meetings of the Somerset Local Government Reorganisation Joint Committee.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Strategic Manager - Monitoring Officer, Somerset County Council – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022

For further information about the meeting, please contact Andrew Melhuish on [Andrew.melhuish@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.melhuish@somerset.gov.uk) or Laura Woon on [Laura.woon@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.woon@somerset.gov.uk)

Guidance about procedures at the meeting follows the printed agenda.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on the council's website on [www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers)



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## AGENDA

Item LGR Implementation Board - 2.00 pm Monday 14 November 2022

1 **Local Community Network (LCN's)** (Pages 3 - 54)

To receive a presentation.

Somerset County Council  
LGR Implementation Board  
– 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022

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## **Local Community Network (LCN) Consultation Review**

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Executive Lead Member: Cllr Val Keitch

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** The Unitary business case sets out a vision for a *'new authority which will provide seamless and accessible local governance to the people of Somerset, with services redesigned to be delivered within communities at a local level'*. The establishment of Local Community Networks is a key commitment for the Council. Their creation presents an opportunity to put community influence and more local decision making at the heart of the new Council's operating model. The views of LGR Implementation Board are sought on the report to Executive which summarises reflects the work undertaken towards the establishment of LCNs by 1 April 2023.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1.** The recommendations to the LGR Implementation Board are –
- Note the findings described in the Executive Decision report - Local Community Network (LCN) Consultation Review.
  - To provide comments and views on the findings of the Executive Decision report and the proposed recommendations.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1.** The Executive Decision report - Local Community Network (LCN) Consultation Review report summarises the work undertaken towards the establishment of LCNs by 1 April 2023. In particular it reflects the research, consultation and engagement undertaken in recent months to consider in more detail the scope of the role of LCNs, and potential geographic boundaries. The report includes:
- Consultation feedback from public and stakeholder engagement about potential roles, responsibilities and boundaries for LCNs (considering the interrelated aspects of Function, Form and Name). It also reflects feedback from online briefings, pop up events and the City, Town and Parish conference on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022.
  - Comparison with other unitary councils who have been operating locality arrangements.
  - Reflection on learning to date from the three LCN pilot areas in

Somerset which have been carrying out work over the past year.

The report draws this information together into themes, draws out conclusions and identifies areas for further enquiry.

#### **4. Implications**

- 4.1.** The commitment to establishing LCNs has been the subject of much engagement and communication with communities, stakeholders and partners. A move to a single Unitary council introduces a risk of lack of local voice and community representation at a strategic level, resulting in a disconnect from localities. LCNs are key to mitigating this risk. Failure to define, support or adequately resource them will impact negatively on their chances of success, and potentially on the reputation of the new Council, and on trust between it and its communities. There is also an association with the LGR Programme risk: *Loss of opportunity to align public and VCSE services to new operating model and outcomes as defined in the business case.*

#### **5. Background papers**

Local Community Network Consultation Review paper for Executive Board 16 November 2022.

## Local Community Network (LCN) Consultation Review

Executive Member(s): Cllr Val Keitch - Lead Member for Local Government

Reorganisation & Prosperity

Local Member(s) and Division: N/A

Lead Officer: Jan Stafford and Sara Skirton

Author: Jan Stafford and Sara Skirton, LGR Customers, Communities and Partnerships  
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### 1. Summary / Background

- 1.1** The Unitary business case sets out a vision for a *'new authority which will provide seamless and accessible local governance to the people of Somerset, with services redesigned to be delivered within communities at a local level'*.

Fundamental to this vision is a commitment to give local residents a voice and more influence over decisions that impact them and their communities.

The Administration's Manifesto pledge *to 'Deliver Local Community Networks (LCNs) that genuinely listen to the views of local people'* consolidates this commitment.

This report reflects the work undertaken towards the establishment of LCNs by 1 April 2023. In particular it reflects the research, consultation and engagement undertaken in recent months to consider in more detail the scope of the role of LCNs, and potential geographic boundaries.

The report includes:

- Consultation feedback from public and stakeholder engagement about potential roles, responsibilities and boundaries for LCNs (considering the interrelated aspects of Function, Form and Name). It also reflects feedback from online briefings, pop up events and the City, Town and Parish conference on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022.
- Comparison with other unitary councils who have been operating locality arrangements.
- Reflection on learning to date from the three LCN pilot areas in Somerset which have been carrying out work over the past year.

The report draws this information together into themes, draws out conclusions and identifies areas for further enquiry.

In brief, the paper concludes that the feedback does not demonstrate a clear case for recommending any particular one of the three geographical proposals presented in the consultation. However, the many and often detailed narrative responses provide further valuable information to be used to inform a recommended geographical solution.

A set of principles, derived from the feedback, are proposed, in order to inform next steps.

Alongside the engagement activities, officers have considered the resourcing requirements to implement LCN arrangements. This report includes a request for the Executive to support a financial envelope to enable this.

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1.** The Executive is asked to:

1. Note the key findings from the recent LCN consultation and engagement activities, alongside the learning from the LCN Pilots and other Unitary areas ' locality arrangements.
2. Consider and comment on the conclusions, proposals and further lines of enquiry arising.
3. Endorse the establishment of LCNs as a vehicle for bringing together and focussing the community development and engagement activity in the new Council.
4. Note and support the rationale for further work and dialogue to be undertaken before a recommendation is made on LCN geographical boundaries.
5. Agree a specific set of principles that will inform this work:
  - a. *Respect the rurality of Somerset and find ways to work with differences between rural / urban priorities within an LCN area, and across LCN boundaries*
  - b. *Respect the diversity of Somerset's landscape character*
  - c. *Ensure alignment with the Integrated Care System and establish the benefits that this could bring*
  - d. *Observe town and parish boundaries*
  - e. *Consider unitary division boundaries*
  - f. *Consider equalities implications.*
6. Agree to receive a further paper in January 2023 on the outcomes of the further work, including reasoned recommendations for LCN roles and geographies.
7. Note that an additional funding request of up to £900,000 has been submitted for consideration through the MTFP process, to enable the resourcing of LCN arrangements from Vesting Day.

### **3. Reasons for recommendations**

To progress the development and establishment of LCN arrangements across Somerset for Vesting Day, that will provide a firm foundation for convening partners and engaging communities to establish priorities and goals for the local areas.

The aim is to create LCNs that will over time have the ability to join the strategic policies of the Unitary Council with local delivery, alongside community and partner priorities.

LCNs will be central to evolving how the councils currently deliver community development functions to ensure they are fit for purpose. Noting that the development and evolution of LCNs will happen in phases over a number of years.

### **4. Other options considered**

- 4.1.** The Council has confirmed its commitment to creating LCNs in Somerset. However, the external landscape and drivers have changed significantly since the business case was developed, and there is a range of options for how LCNs might be configured. Hence the decision to consult with residents, communities and stakeholders, to inform decisions on LCN role, function and form.

With regard to LCN geographies, three proposals were presented for consideration in the consultation period, based on a range of criteria including:

- Population – relative balance of population numbers across LCNs
- Geographies – how similar in size might LCNs be and are they distributed
- Electoral Divisions – how these align with potential LCN boundaries, how many divisions would there be within LCNs
- Local Plan Areas – alignment to LCN areas
- Deprivation – using indices of multiple deprivation, how are the most and least deprived areas distributed
- Libraries – how are these situated in relation to LCNs
- Primary Care Networks – fit of PCN boundaries to potential LCN boundaries
- Secondary School Catchment Areas – how these are split in relation to LCNs
- Travel to Work Area – alignment to LCN areas

One option would be to make a recommendation at this point to agree one of these proposals, potentially with some modifications. However, the recent consultation confirms a diverse range of stakeholder views on how the geographies could be configured, that should be explored further before recommendations are made.

There is also ongoing dialogue with colleagues about how LCNs can support the delivery of the Council's emerging priorities and those of its partners, in particular Health. It is important that these discussions are taken into consideration before conclusions are reached, and therefore this report does not ask Executive to endorse a particular proposal at this point, but rather to consider the emerging themes and lines of enquiry, and agree to receive a further paper 22 which will include reasoned recommendations for LCN roles and geographies.

## **5. Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

- 5.1.** The establishment of LCNs is a commitment in the 'One Somerset: Business case for a new single unitary council for Somerset' Version 1.3 December 2020, para 6.3 page 68.
- 5.2.** It is expected that LCNs will both influence and work within the policy framework of the new Council and therefore their development over the coming months will be influenced by the emerging corporate priorities for the Council. A growth bid has been submitted to establish LCNs and work has begun to seek alternative methods of funding, acknowledging that it is too soon to be able to depend on these for the first year at least of operation.

## **6. Consultations and co-production**

- 6.1.** The report focusses on consultation and engagement activity to inform the development of LCNs. This has involved a wide range of internal and external stakeholders and elicited a diverse range of views and opinions, some of which potentially conflict or need detailed consideration to reconcile.
- 6.2.** This activity is considered as part of the ongoing dialogue and co-production of LCNs, rather than a one-off event.

## **7. Financial and Risk Implications**

- 7.1.** The establishment and ongoing development of LCNs requires a level of financial investment in their 'infrastructure', primarily in terms of staffing budgets, to ensure that LCNs have the best chance of success. This requirement for appropriate resourcing, particularly in terms of a suitably skilled and experienced team of LCN support officers, reflects experience from other areas with similar working arrangements, and the emerging feedback from the Pilot LCNs. An additional funding request of up to £900,000 has been submitted as part of the MTFP process based on modelling community development and democratic services officer and operational support costs. Noting that there will also be a review of existing community development spend to see where there is potential to repurpose these budgets. It should be noted that fewer LCNs does not necessarily equate to a smaller budgetary requirement. However, currently the MTFP



process has revealed a potential funding gap for the new Somerset Council of £38.2m and as a result, it is unlikely that new initiatives can be funded.

It is intended that the priorities of LCNs will, locally and strategically, influence the spend of the Council and it may be that over time existing funding streams aligned to particular priorities can be directed through these networks. There is also the potential for 'return on investment' with LCNs playing a role in preventing residents reaching crisis.

- 7.2.** The commitment to establishing LCNs has been the subject of much engagement and communication with communities, stakeholders and partners. A move to a single Unitary council introduces a risk of lack of local voice and community representation at a strategic level, resulting in a disconnect from localities. LCNs are key to mitigating this risk. Failure to define, support or adequately resource them will impact negatively on their chances of success, and potentially on the reputation of the new Council, and on trust between it and its communities. There is also an association with the LGR Programme risk:

*Loss of opportunity to align public and VCSE services to new operating model and outcomes as defined in the business case.*

## **8. Legal and HR Implications**

- 8.1.** There are no legal implications arising directly from this report, although there are implications for Governance, in that the governance arrangements for LCNs will need to be reflected in the constitution. The LGR Customers, Communities and Partnerships (CCP) workstream is working with LGR Governance colleagues to ensure that the governance arrangements for LCNs will be appropriate and proportionate to their function.
- 8.2.** As referenced above in Financial Implications, LCNs will need to be supported by a team of officers with a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience, spanning community development, stakeholder and partnership relationship building, the ability to think locally and strategically, manage projects and negotiate solutions and resources. The LGR CCP workstream recognises the need to work with the LGR People workstream, to ensure that the community development team can be drawn together and established ready to support LCNs.

## **9. Other Implications**

### **9.1. Equalities Implications**

There will be consideration of equalities implications as a significant factor in the proposed work to shape a geographical proposal, which will also act as a steer regarding equality in the future development of LCNs: form and function.

Key themes that have come out of the consultation relating to equality

particularly with reference to participation, include transport, travel, distance, voice, lack of understanding, councillor availability, finance (travel and other expenses), ensuring hybrid/online being an option for attendance, timing of meetings being accessible to all including volunteers and residents [work/caring commitments] and scheduling of meetings to avoid conflicts, membership and the process of identifying who attends.

The January report will include full and robust consideration of the Equalities impact of recommendations.

## **9.2. Community Safety Implications**

There are no community safety implications arising directly from this report. However, there is potential for LCNs, once established, to support community safety priorities.

## **9.3. Sustainability Implications**

There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report. However, there is potential for LCNs, once established, to support sustainability priorities of communities and the Council.

## **9.4. Health and Safety Implications**

There are no health and safety implications arising directly from this report.

## **9.5. Health and Wellbeing Implications**

There are no Health and Wellbeing implications arising directly from this report. However, there is potential for LCNs, once established, to support Health and Wellbeing priorities.

## **9.6. Social Value**

There are no Social Value implications arising directly from this report. However, there is potential for LCNs, once established and over time, to contribute to Social Value priorities.

## **10. Scrutiny comments / recommendations:**

- 10.1.** Whilst time constraints between the closing of the consultation and the publication of the Executive report have meant that LGR Joint Scrutiny Board has not considered this report, the latter has received regular reports in relation to the development of LCNs and in particular the recent consultation exercise.

Comments and recommendations from LGR Joint Scrutiny Board have been

very constructive in informing the approach, including range of stakeholders to engage with and introducing flexibility around the closing date to take account of the national mourning period.

## **11. Background**

### **11.1. Vision and Commitment to LCNs**

The Unitary business case sets out a vision for a:

*'new authority which will provide seamless and accessible local governance to the people of Somerset, with services redesigned to be delivered within communities at a local level'.*

The establishment of Local Community Networks is a key commitment for the Council. Their creation presents an opportunity to put community influence and more local decision making at the heart of the new Council's operating model.

The business case states that:

- Every part of the new authority, whether urban or rural, would be in an LCN area.
- Every part of the new authority would have a strong local voice that can stand up for local people.
- Every part of the new authority will help to tackle the inequality that can remain hidden from those not "on the ground".
- Every part of the new authority will have a real say in how to tackle climate change and improve their own environment.

LCNs will bring together local voluntary and community organisations, City, Parish and Town Councils, partners including police, health and education, with the new Somerset Council, to agree local, evidence-based priorities and encourage a more participative democracy.

The design principles for development of LCNs have been informed by the above.

However, it is recognised that since the business case was prepared, there has been significant flux in the external environment that is impacting as we move to the new Unitary council. This includes sharply increased budgetary pressures, policy changes and pressures within service areas. There is also a unique opportunity for aligning how we development mechanisms to work with our communities with other strategic approaches, including the Integrated Care System. This context needs to be taken into account in how LCNs are shaped.

In terms of the LGR Programme, the primary requirement, or minimum viable

product, is to have agreed geographies in place for LCNs by vesting day. It is recognised that the full potential of LCNs, in particular how they can support priorities and service delivery in the new Council, will develop and evolve over a number of years, alongside and aligned to the Council's own transformation programme and other internal and external drivers.

## **11.2. Current Position**

At the time of writing, a period of consultation and engagement about the role, function and form of LCNs has just concluded. This report reflects the emerging findings, themes and perspectives of a range of stakeholders.

The LCN Consultation report is included as an appendix to this report.

This report also reflects what has been learnt to date from the three LCN Pilots, which have brought together Town and Parish Councils, partners, community groups and service providers:

- Frome Area Pilot – with a focus on Children, Young People and Families
- South East Somerset Area Pilot – exploring the themes of Rural Isolation and Wellbeing
- Exmoor Area Pilot – trialling a new approach to delivering local street scene and highways services.

This learning includes some of the successes and also the challenges that have been experienced, which can help inform future development of LCNs.

It also reflects the experiences from other Unitary areas with similar locality working arrangements.

## **12. Consultation and Engagement**

The LGR programme has engaged with stakeholders both pre and post business case approval. During September and October 2022, public and stakeholder engagement in the development of LCNs was intensified with an online questionnaire and supporting communications, briefing and events. The accompanying consultation report provides more detail.

The questions posed in the questionnaire sought views on:

- Aims for LCNs
- Potential roles for LCNs
- Three geographical proposals for LCN boundaries
- Potential barriers to participation in LCNs
- Whether LCNs is the best name or is there a better alternative.

A copy of the questionnaire is appended to this report

549 questionnaire responses were received, and many more views elicited via briefings, meetings and the Town and Parish Conference held on 4 October. The feedback included a wealth of detailed narrative views and perspectives, and we very are grateful to those who took the time to provide such comprehensive and reasoned responses to inform how LCNs will develop.

The following sections of this report set out a high-level summary of the responses by theme, i.e. function - roles and responsibilities, and form – geographies and governance.

### **12.1. Stakeholder support for and commitment to LCNs**

One of the benefits of the consultation and engagement exercise has been the ability to test the assumption that the concept of LCNs is generally supported and indeed needed. The feedback received, particularly the narrative responses, has confirmed this.

VCFSE partners' responses emphasise that they recognise and support the need for *'a model for communities where local voices are heard, partners are brought together, and decisions are taken with the benefit of local knowledge and experience'* and that LCNs have the potential effect positive change in Somerset, if we get it right. Furthermore they are keen to be involved in the co-production of this model, both strategically and at a place level.

Partners see LCNs as a great opportunity for local people to consider and understand system wide challenges. One example being given is a local understanding of the climate and ecological emergency.

Health sector colleagues' response recognises that LCNs provide *'an exciting opportunity to transform the way in which the NHS and new Somerset Council jointly engage, empower and work alongside local communities to improve services and outcomes for the people of Somerset'*.

Avon and Somerset Police have indicated that they would look to focus their engagement at the LCN level.

### **12.2. Function – Roles and Responsibilities**

As evidenced through the consultation and engagement activity, there are many views on the potential roles and responsibilities of LCNs, and these inevitably vary across different stakeholder groups.

Respondents to the online questionnaire were asked to indicate which of four stated aims for LCNs they considered most important. They were asked to select at least one option. Perhaps unsurprisingly, all scored highly. They are listed below in order of numbers of respondents selecting each one:

- Ensuring that the countywide unitary council remains responsive to local needs
- Improving outcomes for residents
- Promoting active community decision making
- Providing a mechanism for local action.

In terms of the most important roles for LCNs now and in the future as they evolve, the top five themes emerging were that they should:

- Have formal influence over what is most important to the local area
- Identify evidence based local issues and priorities
- Bring together service providers, VCFSE and local businesses to work towards shared goals
- Be a forum for community voice, to discuss and promote shared ambitions for the local area
- Support parishes to work together, including across LCN boundaries.

Ranking in the middle were roles including:

- Supporting community resilience to prevent people reaching crisis, in any form
- Exploring supporting Planning and Licensing
- Administering local grants

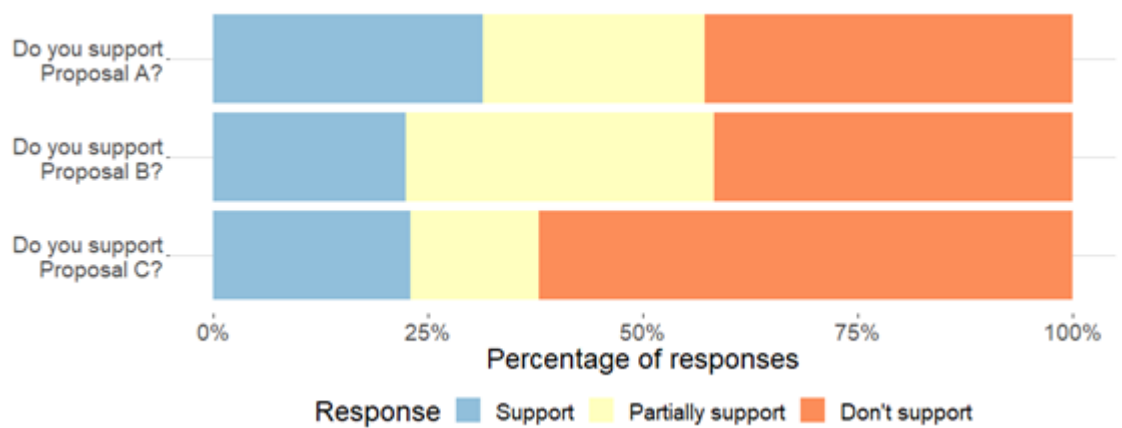
Roles that were less frequently selected as being important or very important for LCNs included:

- Information to support Assets of Community Value Panels
- Supporting new technology to enable more people to engage with local democracy and council services

There was a fairly diverse range of additional or alternative suggestions for LCN roles, with environmental topics appearing frequently.

### **12.3. Form – Geographies**

The table below shows the level of support indicated by respondents for each of the three geographic proposals. It is of note that none of the proposals had more than 32% respondents indicating full support.



Proposals A and B received more indications of support or partial support than proposal C. In general, parishes and local community groups tended to prefer more rather than fewer LCNs.

Proposal C had some level of support from Council and partner colleagues, mainly due to potential to align with other geographical arrangements, such as Primary Care Networks, and facilitate integrated approaches. Other respondents considered proposal C would create LCNs that were too large, where local voices would not be heard.

A significant theme, particularly amongst some parish councils, was a concern about being in the same LCN as a town, on the basis that town issues might dominate the agenda, and / or that rural areas have particular issues and priorities that are different to those of the towns. There was some concern that local identity would be lost if there were fewer, larger LCNs.

Some respondents would prefer to have LCN areas defined by theme, such as landscape character (e.g. coastal, levels and moors, AONB), and local issues such as quarrying.

A number of respondents have suggested alternative geographical proposals, which mostly reflect their local circumstances and existing networks and relationships.

VCFSE colleagues' response supports more rather than fewer LCN areas, in terms of community engagement, on the basis that it would facilitate more local engagement and tailored approaches. There was a preference for Proposal B over Proposal A, (people over geography) in terms of offering the best outcome for a focus on 'improving lives and livelihoods' and they make the point that it offers the most likely alignment to the Integrated Care System, as funding tends to be 'per head' not per acre. The response did however highlight a risk of missed synergies by not aligning geographically with Primary Care Networks.

There was a concern that Proposal C would result in LCN areas that are too big to make a meaningful difference in achieving better outcomes for people and places and that they wouldn't have a truly local focus.

Health colleagues are keen for LCNs to work closely with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to understand local challenges, co-design solutions and commission services which better meet the needs of local people.

The response from the Police indicates a preference for proposal C, although it acknowledges that smaller towns and parishes might consider that their areas won't be so well represented in larger LCN areas.

#### **12.4. Form – Governance and Terms of Reference**

Whilst respondents weren't specifically asked to comment on governance arrangements for LCNs at this stage, views and concerns were expressed in some of the narrative comments, and through feedback from various engagement events.

Comments, particularly from Town and Parish Councils, related to need for clarity on the practical aspects of LCN meetings, for example how will the chair be selected, how many meetings will there be per annum, where will responsibility and accountability and risk of lack of commitment if nothing tangible is secured or agreed in the first few meetings.

VCFSE partners flagged the risk of LCNs as committees being off-putting and the need to develop ambitious mechanisms for engagement to make LCNs different from traditional models. They also raised the need to consider balance of power within LCNs and ensure that they do not become overly political. Linked to role and remit, there was a view that a focus on regulatory services would introduce bureaucracy and risk detracting from collaborative and learning-centric partnership focused on the needs of communities. There was a strong request to ensure that *'space for the VCFSE to participate as an equal voice in strategic decision making is also 'designed in' to new governance and leadership arrangements in the new Council and its partnerships'*.

Health partners also raised concerns about LCNs being seen as formal committees of Somerset Council, in that they could be considered remote structures that risk duplication with Parish and Town Councils and consequently restrict ability to drive local collaboration and integration.

#### **12.5. Participation in LCNs**

Respondents were asked to consider if they could foresee any barriers to participation in LCNs. Options given were time, financial or 'other'.



Time was most frequently selected as a potential barrier, with financial barriers also being selected by a significant number of respondents. Other potential barriers related to transport, travel, distance, voice, lack of understanding, councillor availability, alignment, engagement and participation.

For Town and Parish Councils, the main issues expressed related to capacity of clerks and councillors and current uncertainty about the time and resource commitment expected from local councils. Other potential barriers to engaging mentioned were if geographies do not reflect nature communities or if the topics of discussion are not considered to be of relevance.

Responses from VCFSE colleagues echoed other concerns around capacity, particularly if organisations are expected to cover more than one LCN, accessibility (time, travel) and finance. There was concern that a 'post-code lottery' could occur if larger organisations were forced by capacity constraints or location to choose which LCNs to engage with.

### **13. Learning from LCN Pilots**

In December 2021 at the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Advisory Board endorsed the piloting of three LCNs. The geographic areas were chosen in part for the topic discovery that they indicated a desire to explore and in part due to the willingness of the towns and parishes in the three areas to engage. In the Exmoor area the Exmoor Panel was an established mechanism for addressing community issues across the group of parishes. All three pilots have a focus on a different topic: Children and Young People, Wellbeing and Rural Isolation, and Highways, offering the opportunity to evaluate how LCNs can influence county wide service delivery, develop place-based solutions and best meet the needs of residents in their areas through working together.

The interim evaluation, collated in October 2022, used feedback from SCC and District officers acting as pilots leads, local Councillor leads and LCN Development Leads observations. It highlights the following learning with regard to Function; Roles and Responsibilities, Form; Governance, and Geographies and Resource; Staffing and Finance.

#### **13.1. Function – Roles and Responsibilities:**

Clarity of Role: The pilots would benefit from having a clearly defined remit, an understanding of the structure and more comprehensive strategic oversight from SCC. This would enable them to move passed regular conversations about which parishes are in / out, what the form will look like in the future and when decisions will be made, in order to focus on addressing local issues.

Identifying priorities; The pilots were given agreed areas of focus, within these headlines they have worked together to identify priorities using data, perception, and live experience to inform the development of local actions. In two of the three pilot areas there is ongoing conversation about other areas of need from a parish perspective, often giving rise to the discussion about rural vs town priorities.

All three pilots are ready to move into a more permanent arrangement in their areas allowing them to give wider consideration to the priorities that are important to them outside of the initial themes.

### **13.2. Governance**

Terms of Reference (ToR): All three models are different and are currently working well. They have not been tested in a potentially contentious context, i.e. decision making on a tricky subject area. No one of the three governance models stands out as an exemplar. Headline ToR for all LCNs across Somerset could provide a consistent approach, reflecting the need to have clarity regarding roles and responsibilities with local flexibility.

Chairing: all of the pilots have a locally elected, interim, chair. They are all facilitating conversation, discussion and consensus and are working with local and LCN officers with regard to agenda setting, managing working groups and delivery of actions.

Voting: In all three pilots decisions are made by discussion and consensus. The South East stipulates one parish one vote. ToR could reflect an ambition to reach consensus, whilst also recognising the potential requirement for Unitary Members to retain voting powers for specific unitary actions or financial decision making.

Representation: In all three of the pilot areas participants have been invited to attend to discuss a particular topic and or represent an individual or group of organisations, are self selecting representatives of parish councils, are the local unitary or district member. No individual members of the public have yet attended the pilot LCN meetings, however the voice of residents has been represented in a number of ways.

### **13.3. Geographic Boundaries**

The pilots have built on pre-existing relationships, in their local areas, enabling them to come together around common issues, however they have been hampered by looking at a single topic. The groupings of the pilot areas have largely worked but clarity on who is in and out would enable them to

fully cement relationships and the work of the pilot LCNs.

#### **13.4. Resource – Staffing and Finance.**

All of the pilots have identified capacity issues with regard to servicing the pilots with venue booking, meeting notes and general organisation, communication of the meetings and sharing of successes and actions of the pilots to a wider local and Somerset wide audience.

They particularly note the importance of having a central, locally based, community development lead, type role, with local knowledge to engage parishes not participating, make local and Somerset wide strategic connections and bring together the appropriate VCFSE organisations, businesses and services depending on the topic or priority issues.

All of the pilots have benefited from central support from SCC to inform data

Funding: The pilots have demonstrated actions can be delivered through a range of funding routes:

- Central LGR funding – equivalent to devolved SCC funding
- Grant funding – devolved to the pilots to through SCC from LGA
- Partnership working with Voluntary organisations who are able to draw on national and or local grant funding sources
- Influence over Somerset Council budgets
- Devolved funding from SCC (Children's, Public Health, Highways)
- Local funding through parish precepts

#### **13.5. Progress**

Good progress is being made across all three pilots in terms of delivering actions which have a positive impact for local communities and their residents. On Exmoor the pilot has demonstrated a positive impact on the dissatisfaction rates of the county highways department, the role of local decision making in the delivery of local services with minor highways improvements ongoing.

In the South East Area Pilot work to better understand the needs of young people is influencing the commissioning of local youth services and discussions regarding adult isolation and social care needs and the impact of the cost of living are leading to increased locally coordinated actions.

In the Frome Area the pilot LCN has worked with Somerset Activity and

Sports Partnership (SASP) to recruit a local development worker to increase sporting opportunities for young people. SCC Early Help and Children's Services Leads are working to further develop a local early help offer building on the existing activity delivered by the VCFSE sector to best meet the needs of local families. A local mapping exercises has been undertaken to better understand the issues in parishes, triangulating this information with data provided by SCC, the police and other VCFSE partners and the perception of the parish representatives.

## **14. Learning from other Unitary Areas with Locality Arrangements**

**14.1.** The LGR team has engaged with other Unitary areas to understand and learn from their experiences of locality working and some of this experience has been shared with partners including Town and Parish Councils through conference workshops. A table summarising the different arrangements across a number of Councils accompanies this report.

### **14.2. Cornwall**

Particularly timely for Somerset is the review currently being undertaken by Cornwall Council of their Community Network Panels, which have been in existence for a number of years. The review proposals include changing the name to Community Area Partnerships, reducing the number of partnerships to ensure they are affordable and sustainable, and sharpening the definition of their role and functions.

This review is a key element of a wider programme to transform how the Council works in place. The stated drivers for the review include the Council's ambitious business plan to drive forward the key priorities for Cornwall and its communities. It recognises the need to work more effectively with partners and communities and the role of the partnerships in achieving this.

In governance terms the proposal is for a partnership meeting comprising Cornwall Councillors and Town & Parish Councils, together with other nominated public and VCFSE sector partner groups and organisations, with a view to strengthening partnership working and facilitating how to share expertise and resources in addressing issues together in place. Linked to this, the proposal includes an open public forum.

### **14.3. Wiltshire**

Wiltshire's 18 Area Boards have devolved power to make decisions on a wide range of local issues, where it is within budget, adheres to Wiltshire Council policy and does not affect other community areas. The Area Boards have a strong focus towards delivery in line with the 2022 – 2032 Wiltshire Council business plan

Wiltshire aims to take a long term strategic view through its Boards, investing in prevention and early intervention.

The focus of the Area Board model includes:

- Develop a strong, well established and highly functioning network of local partners, organisations and residents
- Generate an in-depth understanding of local communities, including the demographics and the issues faced by the residents
- Empower and facilitate community led action
- Ensure decisions are taken in consultation with and close to the residents that they affect
- Effectively share data and intelligence at a local level
- Provide a local platform for local engagement and conversation
- Deliver an opportunity for residents to gain an understanding of the way the council works
- Help deliver the Wiltshire Council business plan at a local level with the involvement of communities

Each Area Board comprises the elected unitary councillor representing the electoral divisions within that respective area and is supported by a Community Engagement Manager and a Democratic Services Officer.

The Area Boards provide over £1m of grants each year to non-profit organisations including community groups, charities and Community Interest Companies (CICs).

#### **14.4. Buckinghamshire**

Buckinghamshire's 16 Community Boards aim to:

- Represent the voice of local people
- Capture thoughts, ideas and suggestions to address council and local priorities.
- Bring together key community partners and residents
- Identify local needs and work to produce creative solutions.

There is a focus on how the Community Boards can help achieve and support the Council's corporate priorities at a local level.

Determining the number of Community Boards and their boundaries was an extensive piece of work during preparation for the new unitary council. Having initially proposed 14 areas, this was increased as a result of consultation with members of the five former Buckinghamshire councils, town and parish councils, and conversations with key partners such as our local police and primary care networks. The board areas were developed informed by feedback from Town and Parish Councils and local members on the natural geographies and relationships and -where possible -electoral divisions. Much consideration was given to limit boundary conflicts with the three local police areas and the Primary Care Networks

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of each Community Board are appointed by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio holder for Communities. The Chairman and Vice Chairman must be a member of Buckinghamshire Council and a local councillor in the respective community board area.

Each Board is allocated funding, based on the needs of the population.

### **15. Report Conclusions, Proposals and Further Lines of Enquiry**

#### **15.1. Function: Role and Responsibilities**

The potential scope of roles and responsibilities for LCNs is broad, with the expectation that each LCN will identify its own priorities which could span any number or combination of economic, social and environmental topics.

Whilst this presents opportunities and flexibility, the consultation findings and experience of the Pilots reflected the challenges of an absence of definition of on what the roles of an LCN would or could be.

The feedback confirms support for LCNs as a means of ensuring that the new Unitary council is able to remain engaged with and responsive to local needs and support improved outcomes for local people.

The feedback also endorses the importance of LCNs having genuine voice and influence over what happens in the local area, that LCN priorities are

evidence based, and that LCNs are a vehicle for convening partners and communities to work toward addressing those priorities. It is also considered important that LCNs support parishes working together and that this can be across LCN boundaries.

Whilst there was some support for LCNs having a relationship with planning and licensing functions, there was concern expressed that introducing regulatory roles could stifle collaboration and partnership working. Some responses do, however, recognise the place shaping potential of LCNs, which is something that could be developed over time.

*It is proposed that regulatory functions such as planning and licensing are not part of the scope of the initial LCN development, however the potential for making links is kept under review as these services transition and transform in the new Council.*

There is a strong argument being put forward by partners and colleagues in the VCFSE and Health and Social Care sectors about maximising the potential of LCNs to support the bringing together and integration of multi-agency, multi-disciplinary approaches to create better community outcomes, more efficiently. LGR represents a unique opportunity to look at how this can work, aligned to development of the Target Operating Model and Council Plan. In essence, the LCN model could help draw together all community development activity into 'whole system' locality working, to support the delivery of the Council's strategic aims.

*It is proposed that this is a key area for further discussion and exploration, potentially working through with a particular service area. This will also help inform decisions around LCN geographies.*

## **15.2. Form – Geographies**

The consultation and engagement have demonstrated that geographical boundaries are of fundamental importance to some stakeholders, and less so for others. It is clear that decisions around geographies and the functions of LCNS are inextricably linked.

In agreeing LCN geographies, the narrative feedback provides a compelling need to consider how they can take account of the differences between the priorities and aspirations of rural and urban areas. Whilst there will be a defined number of LCNs, we will create mechanisms to ensure very local characteristics are recognised, supported and prioritised. An LCN can have a number of priorities, some of which will be of more relevance to some of its members than others, and we are committed to accommodating this, regardless of the geographical boundaries, and indeed across boundaries.

The officers who work with and support LCNs will be key to supporting this flexibility. *It is proposed that the experience of how this is managed in Truro, as referenced by some respondents, is explored in more detail.*

A number of respondents have suggested alternative geographical proposals, which mostly reflect their local circumstances and relationships. Work is underway to understand and map these.

The diverse range of views in relation to LCN geographies indicate that it would be premature to recommend a particular solution at this point. Given the range of feedback received on the geographical proposals, and no compelling single solution, the next step is to look at how to best reconcile the different perspectives to create a geographical framework to enable us to convene communities and partners to start the conversation. Recognising that this framework has to be flexible; 'lines not walls'. *It is proposed that a set of principles inform further work to arrive at a recommended geographical solution, that:*

- *Respect the rurality of Somerset and find ways to work with differences between rural / urban priorities within an LCN area, and across LCN boundaries*
- *Respect the diversity of Somerset's landscape character*
- *Look for best fit in aligning with Health and Social Care services*
- *Observe town and parish boundaries*
- *Consider unitary division boundaries*

### **15.3. Form - Governance**

LCNs will need to recognise the 'sovereignty' of each organisation that sits on them. A number of respondents, particularly from town and parish councils, raised concerns about democratic mandates and voting rights. This needs to be balanced with ensuring that communities have a voice and influence and that LCNs are part of the fabric of the governance of the Council.

A number of stakeholders have indicated concerns about LCNs being committees of Council, in as much as the formality may be a barrier to wider community participation and may restrict developmental approaches and solutions. Conversely, other respondents consider that the fact that they are to be committees helps mitigate them being seen as 'talking shops'.

The formality or otherwise of LCNs is an area for further consideration, and the experience in Cornwall, Wiltshire and Buckinghamshire will help with this.

Whilst initial work has been undertaken to develop Terms of Reference for LCNs, there is a direct relationship between function and form. As the former becomes more defined, further work will take place, with Governance



colleagues, on the associated governance and constitutional arrangements.

In terms of how LCNs will operate, it is a working assumption that most decision making will be made through seeking consensus. Whilst one organisation cannot commit another organisation or its resources to a particular action, a collective 'opinion' vote on occasion may be required and its outcome something the Council and its partners can take into account. A robust evidence base will help mitigate any risk of priorities being dominated by 'those who shout loudest'.

To help give an LCN credibility, it will need to develop a plan that sets out priorities and how it intends to work towards them over the short, medium and longer term. These plans could be considered individually and collectively by the new Council and its partners, with a view to securing their endorsement and support for their delivery. This type of approach is being mooted in Cornwall. *It is proposed that a similar approach is considered and developed for Somerset's LCNs.*

#### **15.4. Barriers to participation**

Barriers to participation that were identified during the consultation related to practical issues such as time, finance and access. For smaller parishes in particular, the main concern is capacity and lack of clarity about what will be expected from them. This is a recurring theme in many discussions with the sector. Further dialogue with the section, including with Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) may assist in identifying ways to ensure that all parishes can engage in a way that works best for them.

There is a relationship between the decision on numbers of LCNs and barriers in terms of travel time. This could be mitigated through hybrid LCN meetings.

#### **15.5. Name**

The consultation indicates that Local Community Network is the preferred name of the three options given (noting that respondents had to choose one). *It is therefore proposed that the name Local Community Network is retained.*

#### **15.6. Finance and Resourcing**

Experience from the pilots shows the ability to harness resources from within the community and the existing local authorities. However the experience does demonstrate that limited capacity, in particular around community development skills, is the main barrier to progress.

*This needs to be considered, in consultation with the LGR People workstream, in agreeing the staff resourcing of LCNs, including the role descriptions and skills sets required.*

## 16. Background Papers

16.1. Appendix A - LCN Consultation report

Appendix B - 'Companion' copy of LCN questionnaire

Appendix C - Comparison table of arrangements for locality arrangements in Cornwall, Wiltshire and Buckinghamshire

### **Report Sign-Off**

|   |  | Date completed                |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Legal Implications  | Honor Clarke   | 08/11/22                      |
| Governance  | Scott Wooldridge   | 07/11/22                      |
| Corporate Finance   | Jason Vaughan  | 08/11/22                      |
| Customers, Digital and Workforce                                    | Chris Squire   | 07/11/22                      |
| Property  | Paula Hewitt / Oliver Woodhams   | 07/11/22                      |
| Procurement   | Claire Griffiths   | 07/11/22                      |
| Senior Manager  | Alyn Jones   | 07/11/22                      |
| Commissioning Development   | Sunita Mills / Ryszard Rusinek   | 04/11/22                      |
| Executive Member  | Cllr Val Keitch - Lead Member for Local Government Reorganisation & Prosperity                     | 07/11/22                      |
| <b><u>Sign-off Key Decision / Consulted on Non-Key Decision</u></b> |  |                               |
| Local Member  | N/A  | Click or tap to enter a date. |
| Opposition Spokesperson   | Opposition Spokesperson for LGR – Cllr Faye Purbrick   | Sent 07/11/22                 |
| Scrutiny Chair  | Scrutiny Committee – Joint Scrutiny for Local Government Reorganisation Committee- Cllr Bob Filmer | Sent 07/11/22                 |

## Local Community Networks – Consultation companion

The following pages present the consultation questions as they appear online to assist those who wish to make paper notes before completing the form online at this link: [www.somerset.inconsult.uk/connect.ti/LCNs/consultationHome](http://www.somerset.inconsult.uk/connect.ti/LCNs/consultationHome)

Full paper copies are available by emailing: [LCN@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:LCN@somerset.gov.uk) or by calling Somerset County Council direct on 0300 123 2224.

We recommend you read more about LCNs before sharing your views about the Proposals. You'll find information on our website: [www.newsomersetcouncil.org.uk](http://www.newsomersetcouncil.org.uk)

**PLEASE NOTE:** The LCN Consultation **closes on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 23:59 hrs.** Please ensure your responses are back with us by that date.

### Background

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 a new unitary Somerset Council will replace Somerset County Council and the four district councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, and South Somerset).

Somerset Council will cover a large geographical area. Council Leaders are mindful that we need a model for communities where local voices are heard, partners are brought together, and decisions are taken with the benefit of local knowledge and experience. That's why all the Somerset councils support the development of Local Community Networks (LCNs).

- ✓ LCNs will be established in every part of Somerset.
- ✓ They will be Committees of the unitary Council, supported by dedicated officers and managers.
- ✓ They will have formal decision-making powers and influence.
- ✓ They will enable the Council, partners and communities to work together to address local issues and priorities, support health and wellbeing activities, and improve outcomes for residents.
- ✓ LCNs must be affordable and have the potential to develop their role alongside the new Somerset Council in the years to come.

Throughout the summer we have been working on developing the LCN model. This consultation asks for your involvement in guiding the decisions on the following key aspects:

- **Function** – what roles and responsibilities the LCNs can have in the first and subsequent years of Somerset Council.
- **Form** – development of options for the LCN boundaries, using existing democratic boundaries, Local Plans and community infrastructure
- **Name** – whether ‘Local Community Network’ is the right name.

## What happens next?

### Timeline

The LCN consultation will begin on 5<sup>th</sup> September and close on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022. Following the consultation, a formal decision paper, including a resourcing plan, will be submitted to Somerset County Council’s Executive, scheduled for 16th November 2022.

### In-person engagement sessions

We are holding in-person engagement events where you can join us to discuss the proposals in more detail with a member of our team.

|                  |           |        |   |
|------------------|-----------|--------|---|
| 7 <sup>th</sup>  | September | 10-4pm | Somerset West and Taunton Offices, Taunton        |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> | September | 10-4pm | Mendip Council Offices, Shepton Mallet            |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> | September | 10-4pm | South Somerset District Council Offices, Brympton |
| 7 <sup>th</sup>  | October   | 10-4pm | Sedgemoor Council Offices, Bridgwater             |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> | October   | 10-4pm | West Somerset House, Williton                     |

**Feedback** - We will publish feedback on these proposals once the consultation ends.

## Consultation questionnaire

### 1. The aims for LCNs are listed below. Which do you think are most important?

Circle at least 1 option.

1. Ensure the countywide unitary council remains responsive to local needs
2. Improve outcomes for residents
3. Provide a mechanism for local action
4. Promote active community decision making

#### Other

### 2. Thinking of the ongoing evolution of LCNs, how important do you consider each of the following roles to be? Tick the most applicable option in each row. You must select an option in every row.

|  | Very important           | Important                | Not sure                 | Not very important       | Not at all important     |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Acting as Committees of Somerset Council, with formal influence over services to reflect what's most important to their local area.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bringing together public service providers (councils, NHS, police, education and more) with voluntary organisations, community groups and local businesses to work together to deliver shared goals. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Being a forum for 'community voice', where participants discuss and promote shared ambitions for their local area.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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|  | Very important           | Important                | Not sure                 | Not very important       | Not at all important     |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Identifying local issues and priorities using data and evidence.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Building community resilience through local activities which reduce the number of residents reaching crisis, in any form.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Administering grant funding for local initiatives.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Exploring how best to support Planning and Licensing decision making.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Supporting new technology which enables more people to engage with local democracy and council services.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Providing information to support Asset of Community Value panels, which consider applications to give communities rights to buy or bid for council owned assets, such as buildings or land, should they be offered for sale. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prioritising minor road maintenance and highways services at a local level.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Supporting Parishes to work together including across LCN boundaries.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Are there other roles you want to see LCNs performing?**

## LCN Boundaries Proposals

In developing LCNs, we want to reflect the way in which our communities work and therefore we are keen communities and partners are involved in how they develop.

To help assess the proposals, we looked at a range of factors, to enable comparisons to be drawn. We tried to think about where people live, work, go to school and access services, including health. In all cases we kept to parish outlines as closely as possible.

The things we considered:

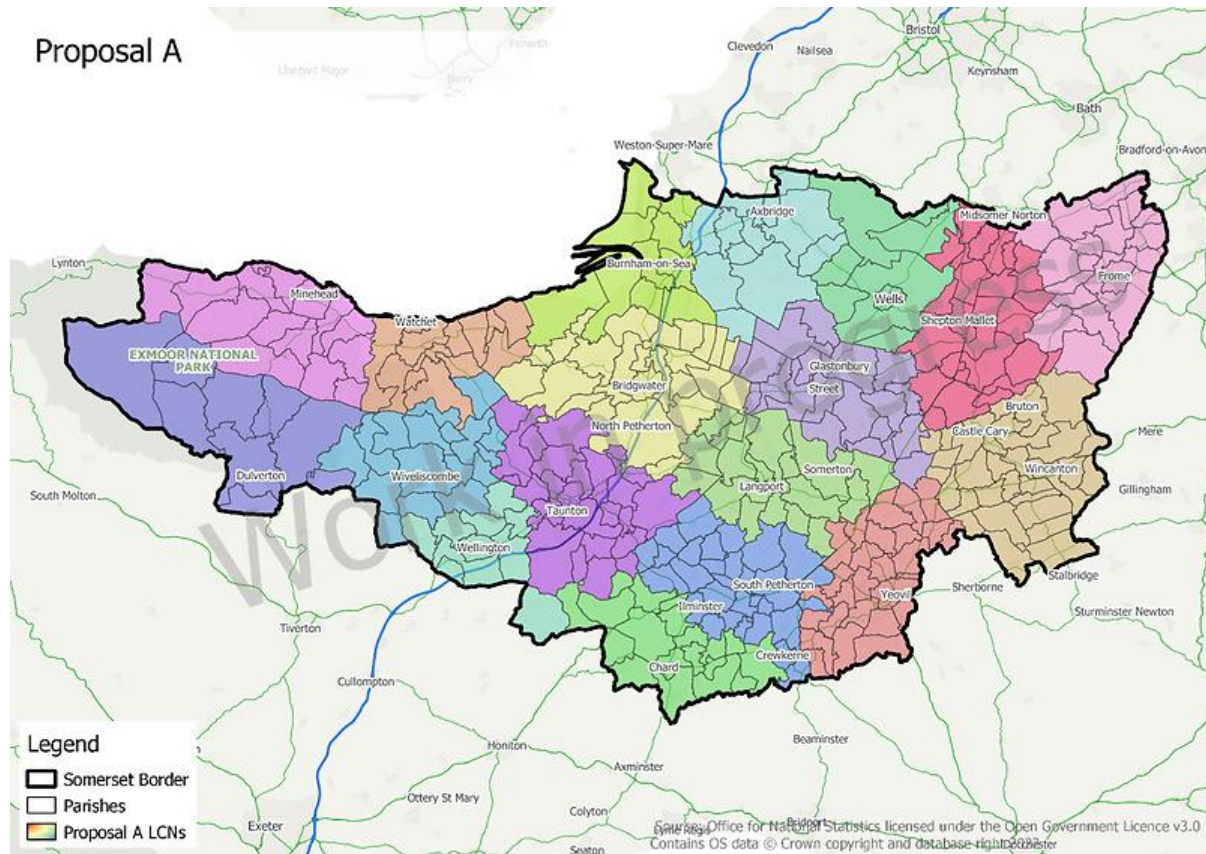
- **Population** – we looked at how balanced the population numbers were in each LCN, how important or not is it that they have similar numbers of residents in each area
- **Geographies** – how similar in size of area they were, and their distribution/spread across Somerset
- **Electoral Divisions** – the number of Unitary Electoral divisions, and how they split within, and across, LCN boundaries
- **Deprivation** – using indices of multiple deprivation, we looked at how the most and least deprived areas were distributed
- **Community Facilities, eg. Libraries** – we looked at where these were situated
- **Health** – we compared the ‘fit’ of Primary Care Network (PCN) boundaries to LCN boundaries
- **Secondary School Catchment Areas** – we checked how these were split in relation to LCNs, recognising schools are often at the heart of communities
- **Travel to Work Area** – we looked at their alignment to LCN areas
- **Current Local Plan Geographies** – we looked at their alignment to LCN areas

Based on analysis of this range of data and intelligence, **THREE** potential boundary proposals were identified – and we would welcome your comments on each of them.

1. Proposal A would have 18 LCNs
2. Proposal B would have 17 LCNs
3. Proposal C would have 10 LCNs



Maps detailing each proposal are included below. You can view an online interactive version by typing this link into your internet browser: <https://tinyurl.com/j7v2skwt>



- In this proposal, there would be 18 LCNs all a similar size in terms of area giving an even coverage across the county
- The population is not spread evenly across the county, and this results in a wide population size spread across the LCNs
- Many electoral divisions sit within one LCN with 15 sitting across 2 LCNs, 6 across 3, and 2 across 4 LCNs
- Most deprived areas sit within major population centres, and these remain similar across all proposals
- All LCNs contain at least one library with several containing 2 or more
- The majority of LCNs overlap between 2 and 4 PCNs
- The majority of LCNs overlap between 3 -5 secondary school catchment areas. 4 LCNs overlap 7 or 8 catchments areas

Matches some existing Local Plan geographies

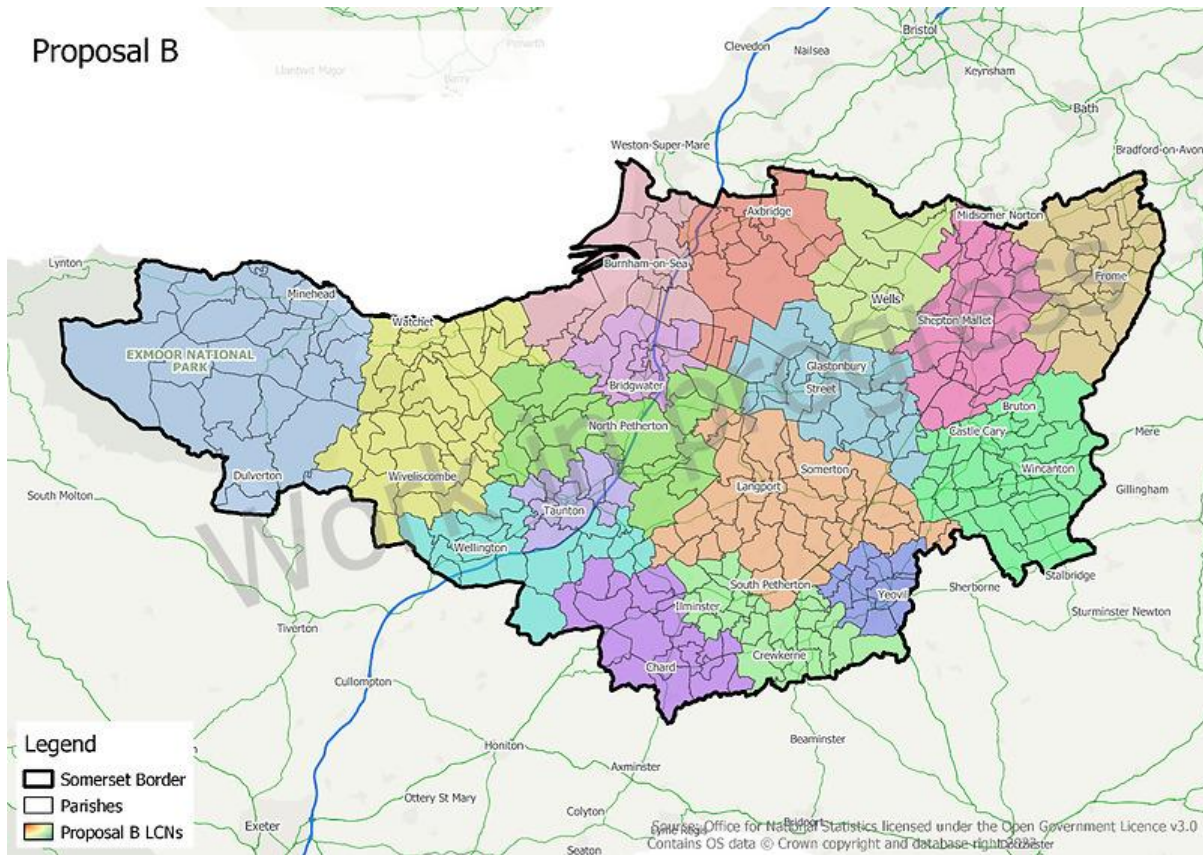
**3. Do you support the proposed boundaries as described in Proposal A?**

You must provide an answer to this question. Please tick.

- Support
- Partially support
- Don't support

Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of this proposal:

Proposal B



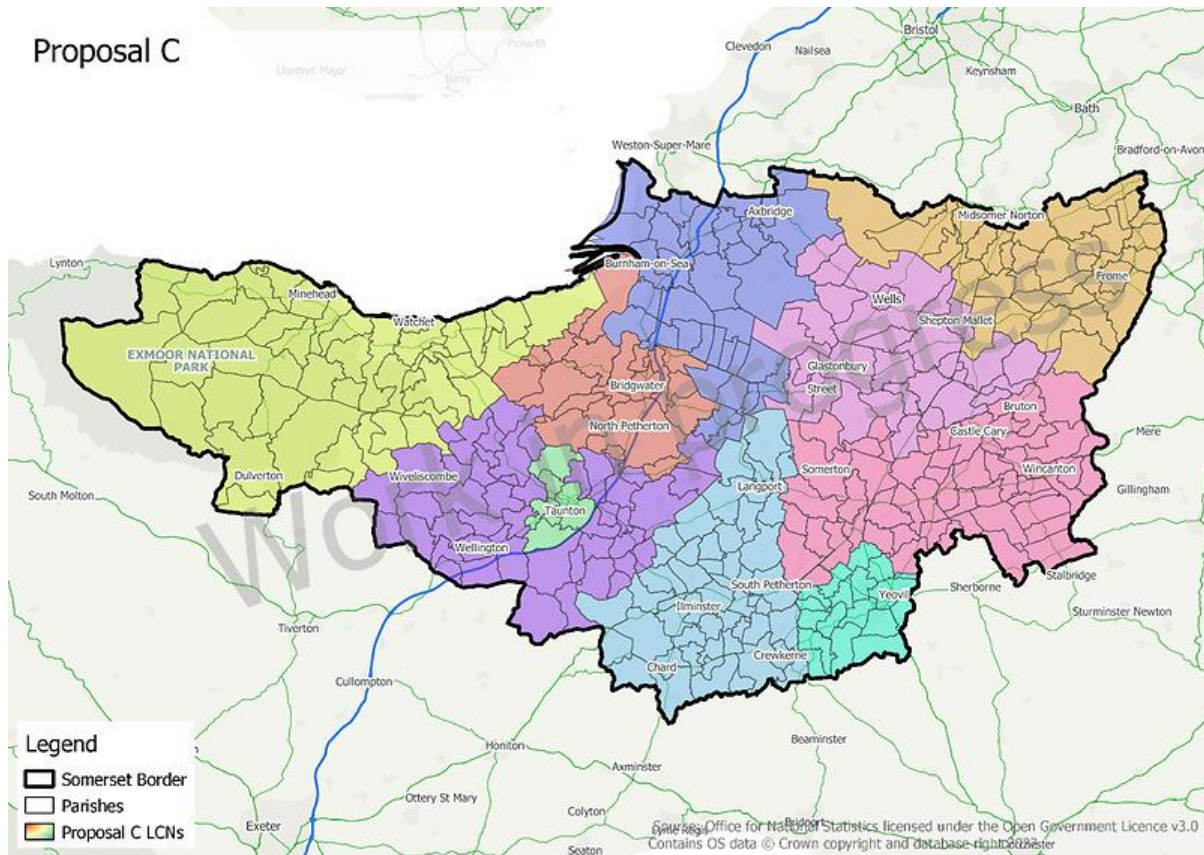
- In this proposal, there would be 17 LCN areas
- This proposal balances the population across LCNs
- The area between Taunton and Bridgwater lacks a natural community identity
- Many electoral divisions sit within one LCN with 16 sitting across 2 LCNs, 5 across 3, and 3 across 4 LCNs
- Most deprived areas sit within major population centres, and these remain similar across all proposals
- All LCNs contain at least one library with several containing 2 or more
- The majority of LCNs overlap between 2 and 4 PCNs
- Many LCNs overlap between 3-5 secondary school catchment areas
- Matches some existing Local Plan geographies

**4. Do you support the proposed boundaries as described in Proposal B?**

You must provide an answer to this question. Please circle.

- Support
- Partially support
- Don't support

Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of this proposal:



- In this proposal, there would be 10 LCNs
- Generally, a good fit maintained with parish boundaries
- Population is well balanced across 9 of the 10 LCNs, where population ranges from 50,000 to 65,000. However, area to the west of Somerset is significantly lower at 35,005
- The LCN around the largest towns of Yeovil and Taunton is smaller in terms of area
- Large single area to the west of Somerset
- Note 'horseshoe' area wrapping the south of Taunton
- Strong fit with electoral divisions
- Most deprived areas sit within major population centres, and these remain similar across all proposals
- All LCNs contain at least one library with several containing 2 or more, due to the larger geographical size in this proposal, 4 LCNs contain 4+ libraries each
- Many of the LCNs overlap between 2 and 4 PCNs

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- Many LCNs overlap between 3-6 secondary school catchment areas, no LCNs in this proposal match a single catchment area
- A close match with existing Local Plan Geographies, meaning that in the short to medium term LCNs would each work only with one Local Plan

**5. Do you support the proposed boundaries as described in Proposal C?**

You must provide an answer to this question. Please circle.

- Support
- Partially support
- Don't support

Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of this proposal.

## 6. Participation in LCNs

LCNs will meet 6 to 8 times a year in their local areas. Each LCN will be delegated authority to agree their own schedule of dates, within the context of the calendar for other public meetings.

**Can you foresee any barriers for organisations in participating in LCNs?**

**What will they be?** Tick at least 1 option.

- Time
- Financial
- Other:

## 7. What shall we call LCNs?

**Local Community Networks (LCNs) has been a working name. What do you think they should be called?**

You must provide an answer to this question. Circle your preference or provide an alternative.

- Local Community Networks
- Community Partnerships
- Community Boards
- Other:

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## **Local Community Networks Consultation Analysis - November 2022**

### **Introduction**

A Local Community Network [LCN] consultation and engagement exercise ran for six weeks during September and October 2022, with the aim of informing the development of LCNs for Somerset. 549 responses were received from a broad range of stakeholders and partners across Somerset. This paper provides a summary of the results of the consultation and engagement undertaken.

### **Consultation & Engagement**

The LCN consultation document was launched in September and formally closed on the 17 October 2022. During this period there was a significant communications campaign and engagement activity to promote the completion, understanding and feedback on the role, name, boundaries and challenges to participation in the emerging model of LCN's. Late responses for a few City, Town and Parish [CT&P] Councils were accepted, as a result of them not being able to meet due to the period of national mourning for Queen Elizabeth.

The range of communication undertaken include:

- Dedicated space on the New Somerset Website
- Comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions which were regularly updated with new questions as the consultation progressed
- Letter from the lead LGR member to all C&TP Councils
- Newsletter updates
- Press releases and media coverage across the county
- Information and links shared through Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise [VCFSE] networks
- Multi-channel communications; including social media across all 5 councils
- Signposting through City, Town and Parish Networks
- LGR update meetings
- Wider partner updates

Engagement activities included:

- 6 in person face-to-face sessions held across the county with 66 participants
- Online briefing sessions for C&TP Councils, VCFSE, District and SCC members (209 Participants)
- Evening meetings for groups of parishes in the Nether Stowey area, Wells area, Cheddar area, Othery/Middlezoy, West Hatch and Doultong areas (with circa 75 parishes represented and circa 150 attendees)
- Presentation and discussion sessions at each of the three LCN pilot meetings
- A dedicated LCN email box (circa 256 conversations)

- 1:1 telephone calls with Clerks and other interested parties
- Individual and group meetings with colleagues and partner organisations: Health, Infrastructure organisations, SCC Senior Leadership Team.

In order to ensure a wide reach and breadth of engagement with the VCFSE sector, the LCN Team worked in partnership with Spark Somerset to inform the consultation and promote opportunities for engagement throughout the 6-week period. Spark sent a newsletter and two personal emails to their database of 1,700, signposting people to the New Somerset webpage for further information, LCN briefings and drop ins. Spark posted on various social media platforms during the consultation, and while attending several partnership meetings shared the information on the consultation, encouraging participation.

### **Response Coverage**

A total of 549 consultation responses were received online, with participants completing the survey on behalf of the following sectors:

- 371 Individual responses
- 71 VCFSE responses
- 207 Individual City, Town and Parishes responses
- 18 Groups of city, town and parish responses
- 5 Emergency services
- 13 Education
- 22 Health
- 18 Business

Many respondents ticked more than one box, acknowledging that they completed the survey on behalf of more than one sector.

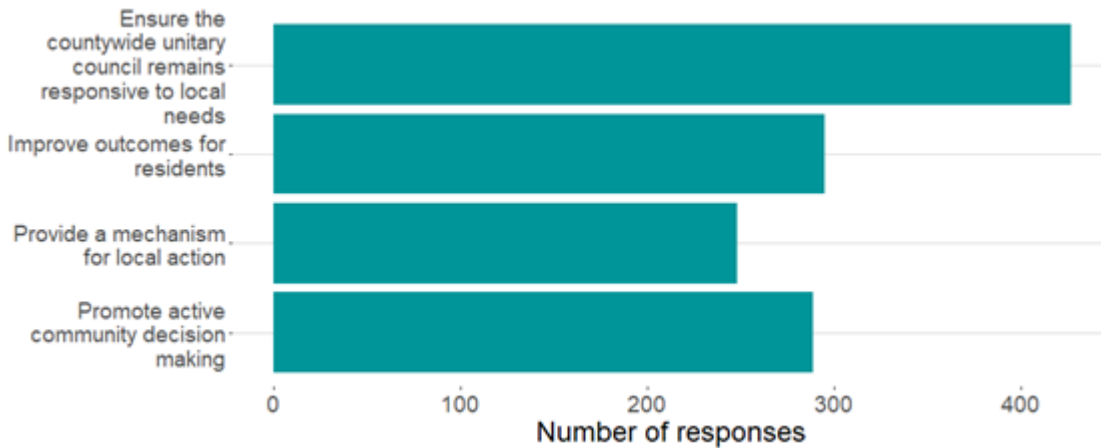
The following map shows the geographical coverage of 339 respondents who voluntarily provided their postcode.



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**Summary of Responses to the Consultation questions**

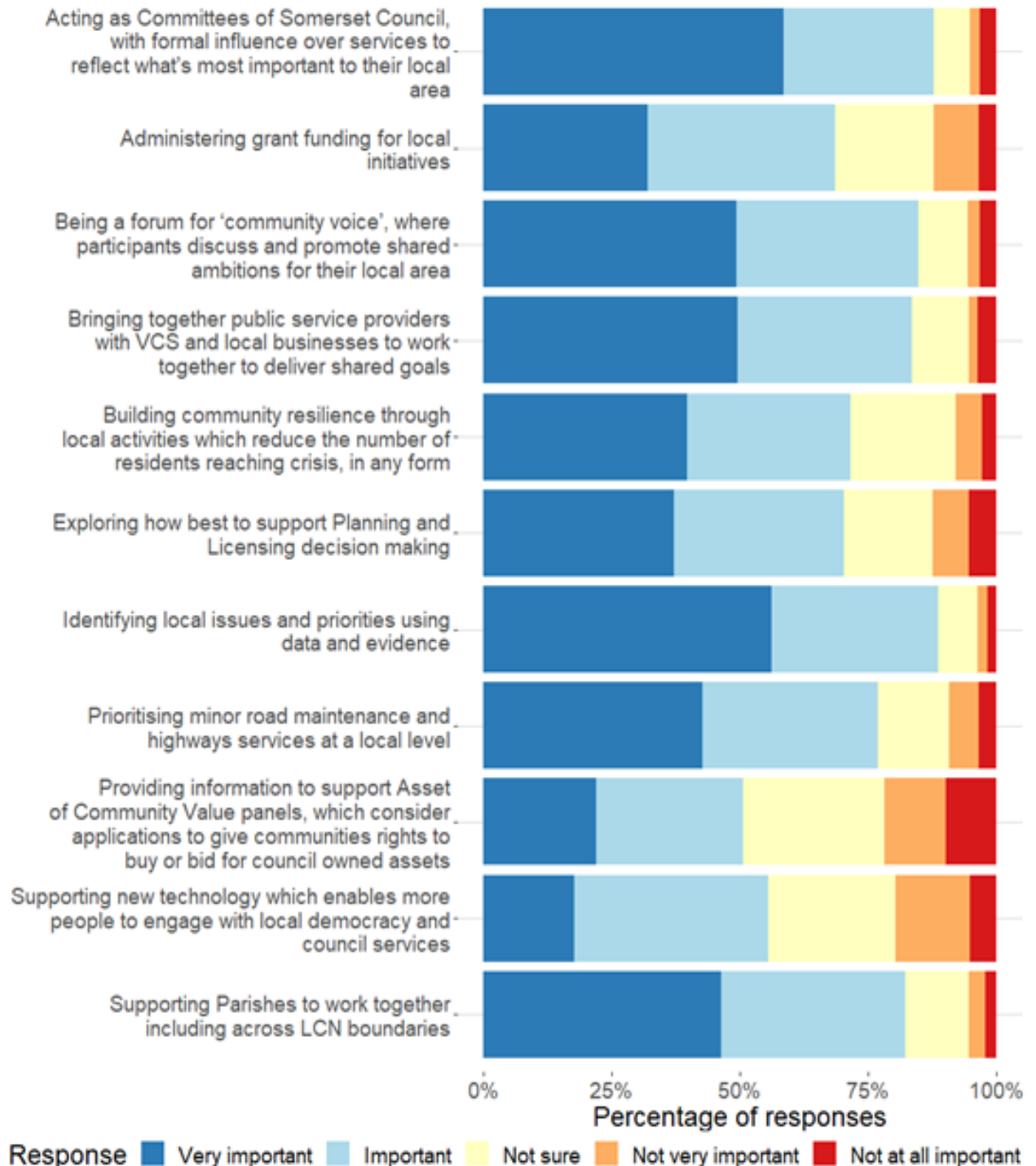
**Question 1 - Which do you think are the most important aims of LCNs?**



NB. Participants could choose any number of responses to this question.

The text box responses noted the positive opportunities that LCNs might offer for service alignment, transformational change, national and regional funding, identification of common goals and creation of collective voice, meaningful input into decision making, greater communication and resident engagement, collaboration amongst partners and support for parishes and sharing of resources and assets.

**Question 2 - How important do you consider each of the following roles for LCNs to be?**



The greatest support is for:  
 01 – Acting as committees  
 04 – Identifying local issues

Then

02 – Bringing together public services with VCFSE

03 – Being Forum for community voice

11 – Supporting parishes to work together

Participants were also asked if there were other roles and responsibilities, they considered important but not listed. Responses can be broadly grouped under the following headings:

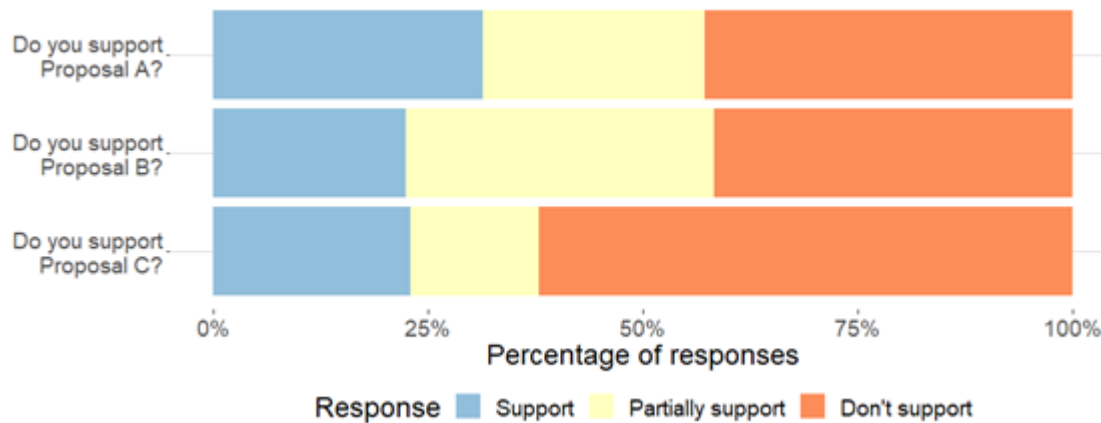
- Climate and Nature\_
- Health and Social Care
- Planning and Licensing
- Working culture of the new Somerset Council
- Highways
- Opportunities to work together to: attract funding, work across LCN areas, create collective voice around common issues
- Create greater communication with residents, gather local knowledge, enhance engagement
- Scrutiny of Somerset Council
- Support and enhance role of Parish Councils

Participants also noted concerns:

- Lack of clarity on what the roles of an LCN would or could be
- Lack of inclusivity – transport, representation, timing and scheduling of meetings
- Financial sustainability
- How the meetings will be run and who will be selected as chair
- Number of meetings in a year and the potential burden of too many
- Overall governance not being clear hence the concerns of voices being heard, and issues not being brought to light
- Reliance on volunteers who have limited computer literacy, funding, or time
- Local decisions may not be taken at local level
- Lack of responsibility and accountability
- Risk that LCN's become a talking shop
- Lack of commitment if nothing is secured/decided in first few meetings
- General disinterest in a small community which doesn't feel that it will achieve any representation

### Question 3 to 5 - Boundary Proposals A, B & C

Participants were asked to tell us about their thoughts on each of the three boundary proposals with the option to either support, partially support or don't support.



- 31.2% of respondents did not fully support any of the proposals
- 0.18% of respondents fully supported all three boundary proposals
- The majority of participants provided detailed written feedback on one or more of the proposals.

Comments pertaining to the geographic boundaries provide specific information about potential groupings of parishes, identifying those which naturally align with one LCN area rather than another. Other comments in this section can be grouped into the following themes:

- A strong desire to work together in natural communities, and at a sub unitary LCN level
- Concern smaller parishes may lose voice to town issues [rural vs Town]
  - Connection with the Cornwall model, for example Truro Style delivery method where towns and parishes are grouped together but enabled to explore rural and town themes separately.
  - Having distinct town LCNs and rural LCNs
- Some parishes would prefer to be grouped by landscape character:
  - Lowlands & high lands
  - Coastal & moorland
  - Historical connections & themes which they are already working on e.g. highway issues connecting villages
  - Blackdown hills & AONB
  - Levels
  - Polden villages
  - West Hatch grouping
  - Exmoor National Park & Panel

- Quantocks & AONB
- Some parishes specified a desire to be grouped with neighbours not currently identified in one of the three proposals.
- Losing voice in large areas and a lack of natural community identity was also raised.

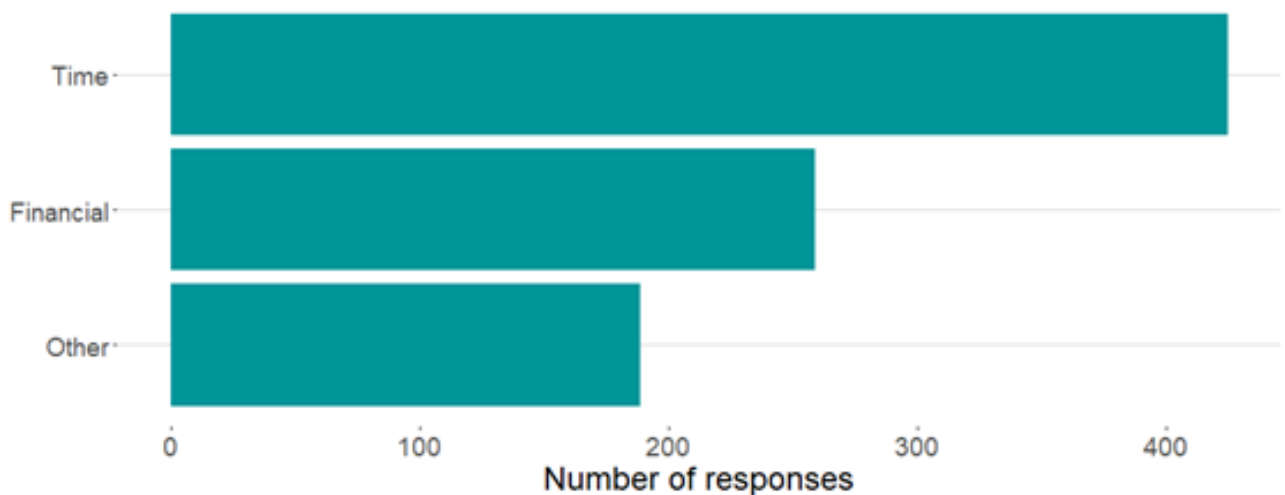
VCFSE colleagues commented that smaller LCN areas will allow more opportunity to make a meaningful difference for people and places and the engagement of smaller, locally based, organisations, who would welcome the opportunity to participate. They have also recognised the importance of ensuring residents voices are represented and heard and that smaller LCN areas would support this.

There was concern that county wide organisations would find it difficult to participate in too many LCNs and that smaller LCN areas may not reflect a broad demographic and that smaller areas of deprivation will not be recognised.

Health colleagues indicated that LCN alignment with PCN areas would be preferable in order to better understand local challenges across all services, enabling co-designing of solutions and commissioning of services.

The police expressed a preference for proposal C, recognising that smaller towns and parishes may feel under-represented in larger geographical areas.

**Question 6 - Participants identified the following barriers to participating in LCNs:**



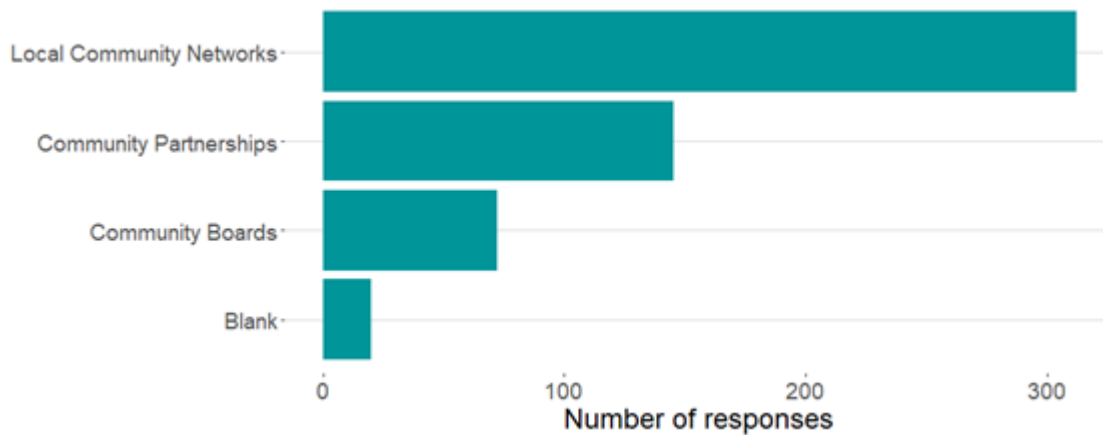
Respondents also raised the following barriers to participation under the following themes:

- **Inclusivity to participation** – issues of attending in person and ensuring hybrid/online being an option for attendance. Access to and the cost of public transport, timing of meetings being accessible to all including volunteers and residents [work/caring commitments] and scheduling of meetings to avoid conflicts, membership and the process of identifying who attends, funding of travel expenses, time to travel to meetings and creative ways to increase participation. The impact of climate change was also of concern.
- **Chairing & Voting** - Need for independent chair appointed by the LCN not the new Somerset Council which has a set term of office. All representatives to have an equal say (vote if required) to prevent largest or loudest areas dominating. Lack of voting may be a barrier to participation at LCN's. Skilled leadership to balance power dynamics.
- **Vision and Objectives** – Lack of agreed objectives/priorities and a clear strategic vision could hamper progress and value of LCN's Important to gain insight from 'lived experience' in shaping new ways of working. This takes considerable time and effort.
- **Formal 'committees'** environment /meetings can be off-putting. Mechanisms for engagement need to be ambitious if we want this to be different. Unlikely that larger organisations straddling two or more LCNs, will have the capacity to participate. Too much emphasis on elected councillors may risk bringing more politics into the LCN environment than is helpful, which could mean that other individuals/organisations feel disenfranchised. Bureaucracy being onerous and taking too much time. Locally planned calendar of meetings.
- **Financial support** - for participants who may be volunteers or from groups with limited resources. Concern regarding the potential impact for parish councils.
- **Place based impact** – local affinity will encourage engagement. Evidence of positive change. Engagement of all sectors at a local level, representing all areas within an LCN.
- **Capacity in the servicing of LCNs** – having the right roles with capacity to support and deliver action. Suitable venues.



### Question 7 – Name for LCN's

When asked what LCNs (which has been a working name) should be called participants gave the following responses:



58 respondents commented on the name options with many offering alternatives to the three above which included:

- Community Councils
- Local Parish Networks
- Community Parish Networks
- Local Residents Board
- Somerset Local Boards
- Local Community Partnerships
- Regional Community Teams
- Community Action Partnerships
- Talking Shop
- Area Partnership Boards
- Community Committees
- District Councils
- Community Steering Groups
- Community Hubs
- Community Partnership
- Cheddar Valley Cluster
- District Communities
- Community Teams
- Local Interest Communities
- Communities Connect

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## Unitary Locality working arrangements comparison

| Council   | Purpose & overall focus   | How long in place  | What are they called  | Staff in teams  | No of T& PC in each LCN/Board/Area   | What governance? Examples of ToR  | No. of LCN - boundaries | Issues covered & Priority themes (Planning or not)  | What funding do they give  |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|-------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Cornwall</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>168 Town &amp; Parish Councils</b></li> <li>• <b>3,563 km<sup>2</sup> (1,376 sq mi)</b></li> <li>• <b>568,210 population</b></li> <li>• <b>19 to start moving towards 10 area boards</b></li> <li>• <b>313 state funded schools</b></li> <li>• <b>Include rural/Town sub panels e.g.</b> mining villages &amp; Sub group on derelict sites &amp; strategic transport</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support Cornwall Councillors and local councils in their <b>local leadership</b> roles<br/>Member feedback – “Community Link Officer and Community Support Assistant support is really valuable”; “Their patience and incredible hard work has been vital”; “Your CLO is pivotal”</li> <li>2. Build <b>strong working relationships</b> across networks between all partners</li> <li>3. Work with Members, Council, partners to resolve community issues - “<b>can do</b>” approach</li> <li>4. Act as Council’s local “<b>eyes and ears</b>”, ensuring local issues are highlighted appropriately to the Council and/or partners, and followed up</li> <li>5. Coordinate <b>devolution</b> of assets/services at local level and <b>Community Right To Bid</b></li> <li>6. Coordinate and develop the Panels and Councillors’ <b>Community Chest</b> grants scheme</li> <li>7. Help to facilitate town/rural <b>development and regeneration</b> projects (most recently: Town Deal and now Shared Prosperity Fund)</li> <li>8. Advise/facilitate Council services and partners on <b>community engagement</b> in relation to local service delivery and projects (current example: dualling of A30 in mid-Cornwall)</li> <li>9. Facilitate <b>community planning</b> (e.g. Neighbourhood Planning) and help communities secure <b>external funding</b> (e.g. Changing Places toilets for 6 towns/parishes)</li> <li>10. Involvement in major community events (e.g. G7, Tour of Britain) and crisis response and recovery (e.g. Covid-19 and Coverack flooding)</li> </ol> | Unitary in 2009<br>Commission for localism set up 2017<br>Published People power in 2018 | Community network areas & panels now called-<br><br>Area Partnerships | The Panels are supported by, primarily, the Council’s Communities and Devolution team.<br>1x CLO from localism team for each panel<br><br>2 panels each | Approx. 10-40<br><br>Up to 10 Cornwall Council divisions and up to 40 parishes per network.<br><a href="#">Cornwall Council Interactive Map</a><br><br>In general terms the networks in the West tend to have more Cornwall Councillor divisions and the East have more Parishes, which reflects the population spread and how communities are split up by Parishes. | Meetings, particularly AGM follow rules set out in Cornwall councils constitution | Was 19 now proposed 10  | Some of the issues that community networks deal with include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anti-social behaviour,</li> <li>• economic development,</li> <li>• the environment,</li> <li>• community planning, (<b>neighbourhood planning helping create the documents</b>)</li> <li>• regeneration,</li> <li>• conservation,</li> <li>• community safety, and</li> <li>• transport and highway issues.</li> </ul><br>Link to review <a href="#">About Community Networks - Cornwall Council</a> | <u>Funding to community groups</u><br>The Community Chest gives small grants to not-for-profit groups across Cornwall.<br>Each Cornwall Councillor has a small grants budget to support projects in their area.<br><br>Grants can cover a wide range of activities.<br><br><b>Shared Prosperity Fund: Good Growth SPF Investment Plan for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly</b><br>On 20 July 2022, Cabinet approved a spending plan for the £132m Shared Prosperity Fund. A briefing was sent to Chairs & Vice-Chairs on 22 July 2022. The key points/references are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link to Cabinet papers and spending plan: <a href="#">Cabinet agenda 20.7.22 (See Item 7)</a></li> <li>• Media release: <a href="#">Council approves £132m plan to boost business, communities and skills - Cornwall Council</a></li> <li>• Portfolio Holder update included in written briefing for Chairs &amp; Vice-Chairs</li> <li>• Email address for project ideas/questions: <a href="mailto:goodgrowth@cornwall.gov.uk">goodgrowth@cornwall.gov.uk</a></li> </ul> |
| <b>Wiltshire-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>253 Town &amp; Parish Councils</b></li> <li>• <b>3,485 km<sup>2</sup> (1,346 sq mi)</b></li> </ul>  | The overall focus of the Area Boards is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strong, well established and highly functioning network of local partners, organisations and</li> </ul>  | 2009 Unitary – Area board introduced in 2009   | Called Area Boards or Area Committees for                             | <u>Officer Support for the Area Boards:</u><br>In terms of  | 1-39<br>Salisbury is one board. The 39 are SW Wiltshire, other areas are any no. of  | <u>Wiltshire Responsibility For Functions.pdf</u><br>– section 4                  | 18                      | Each Board has reviewed available local data and evidence and agreed up to five local priority themes, some of which are:   | <u>Funding and Grants to community groups</u><br>There are three separate funding schemes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth funding is allocated in</li> </ul>   |

|  |   |   |              |  |                      |  |    |   |   |
|--|---|---|--------------|--|----------------------|--|----|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>510,400 population</b></li> <li>• <b>18 areas</b></li> <li>• <b>316 state funded schools</b></li> </ul>  | <p>residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate an in-depth understanding of our local communities, including the demographics and the issues faced by the residents</li> <li>• Empower and facilitate community led action</li> <li>• Recognise the talents, expertise and knowledge of our communities, trusting and supporting them to co-deliver local services</li> <li>• Ensure decisions are taken in consultation with and close to the residents that they affect</li> <li>• Effectively share data and intelligence at a local level</li> <li>• Provide a local platform for local engagement and conversation</li> <li>• Deliver an opportunity for residents to gain an understanding of the way the council works</li> <li>• Help deliver the Wiltshire Council business plan at a local level with the involvement of communities</li> </ul> |   | constitution | <p>support for the groups - each group has a Community Engagement Manager (CEM) There are 12 CEMs - six dealing with two Area Boards and the other six just dealing with single board.</p> <p>Recent restructure – 3 boards each now = smaller team.</p> | councils in between. | Area boards (part 3b)  |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth engagement, employment and positive activity opportunities (all 18 Area Boards)</li> <li>• Addressing climate change (17 out of 18)</li> <li>• Reducing isolation and loneliness (11 out of 18)</li> <li>• Supporting the local economy (9 out of 18)</li> <li>• Improving transport and access (3 out of 18)</li> <li>• Strengthening communities and communication networks (3 out of 18)</li> <li>• Positive mental health and well-being (9 out of 18)</li> <li>• Reducing anti social behaviour (3 out of 18)</li> <li>• Community safety (1 out of 18)</li> <li>• Highway safety (2 out of 18)</li> <li>• Supporting low income individuals and families (6 out of 18)</li> <li>• Celebrating diversity (1 out of 18)</li> <li>• Supporting digital inclusion (3 out of 18)</li> <li>• Housing and employment (1 out of 18)</li> </ul> | <p>partnership with local youth networks and helps to provide positive activities for young people in the target age range of 13 to 19 or up to 25 with SEND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and well-being groups in each area help to award funding for services that support older or vulnerable people from our communities.</li> <li>• Area boards hold capital funding that can support all types of local group to help purchase equipment, assets, refurbish existing buildings or build new ones</li> </ul> <p>In terms of dishing out grants, the Area Boards provide over £1m of grants each year to non-profit organisations including community groups, charities and Community Interest Companies (CICs).</p> <p>Grants are awarded for up to £5,000 but can be more than this in exceptional circumstances. Applications have to be completed and include information on how the local priorities of that area will be addressed.</p> <p>Grant applications are considered at the Area Board meeting. The Community Engagement Manager reviews any applications to ensure that they are complete before they go forward to the Board. Applicants are invited to come along to the Area Board meeting to introduce and present their application.</p> |
| <p><b>Buckinghamshire-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>171 Town &amp; Parish Councils</b></li> <li>• <b>1812.9km2 (Over 700 sq miles)</b></li> <li>• <b>551,560 population</b></li> <li>• <b>236 state funded schools</b></li> </ul> | <p>Working Together: local voices, local choices and local action</p> <p>To achieve these aims and objectives each community board will be expected to:</p> <p>Agree Community Area Priorities, based on evidence of local needs, and an action plan to address these with targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree a tailored communications &amp; engagement plan for actively</li> </ul>  | <p>1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – new single council.</p> <p>As a result of the consultation feedback, recommended that 16 rather than 14 community boards are</p> |              | <p>Per board<br/>1x chairman<br/>1x vice chair<br/>1x Board coordinators (therefore 16 of each)- <i>chair and co-ordinator</i>. Part of their role is to make links with people in</p>   | 2-35                 | <p>Voting open to all T&amp;PC &amp; other councillors:<br/><a href="#">Appendix2 Terms of Reference Nov19.docx</a></p> <p>They hold 5 public meetings a</p> | 16 | <p>Priority themes for 2020/21 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the environment</li> <li>• Supporting economic recovery</li> <li>• Supporting young people</li> <li>• Improving health and wellbeing</li> </ul>   | <p>Each board to have different funding allocated due to needs of population: In 2020/21 three funding streams allocated to community boards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Area Priorities Fund</li> <li>• Health &amp; Wellbeing Fund (one year only)</li> <li>• Local Infrastructure Fund</li> </ul>  |

|   |  |                                      |  |  |  |  |   |  |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|
|   | <p>involving residents and community organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set-up action groups to support the delivery of the Community Action Plan.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to ensure that the local community is able to respond to consultations and influence service commissioning decisions in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to ensure good communications and information from Buckinghamshire Council, and partners, on local issues.</li> <li>• Make recommendations to Buckinghamshire Council on funding local projects.</li> <li>• Make recommendations to Buckinghamshire Council, and partners, on key local issues.</li> <li>• Produce an annual report with a self-assessment of success in relation to the aims and objectives for community boards, and action plan delivery.</li> <li>• Hold at least one annual community event to enable residents and community groups to set area priorities and address issues.</li> </ul> | set-up with revised boundaries.      |  | <p>the local community to make sure information is shared and local views and ideas are captured.</p> <p>Also 3 area managers covering 5-6 boards each (localism teams)<br/>Community Boards are part of:<br/>Localities &amp; Strategic Partnerships<br/>Service &amp; Service Development and Engagement</p> |  | <p>year. At the meetings funding is allocated and feedback will be shared on the plan of action. Action notes from the meetings will be published online</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving roads and paths</li> <li>• Improving community spaces and places</li> </ul> <p>Each Board uses local data, intelligence and the views of local people and partners in the community to identify key areas of focus and priorities for the board. These priorities will help determine where the boards take action and allocate funding to improve the local area.</p> <p>Priorities from Boards (other than those listed above) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel and Transport</li> <li>• Community Safety</li> <li>• Parking, speeding and cycling</li> <li>• Community cohesion</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Crime and Anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Older and vulnerable people</li> <li>• Green spaces</li> </ul> <p>no planning as stated in ToR.</p> | <a href="#">Appendix3 Funding Nov19.docx</a> |
| <p><b>Somerset-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 332 Town &amp; Parish Councils (including Parish Meetings)</li> <li>• 4,171 square kilometres (1,610 sq mi)</li> <li>• 571,600 population</li> <li>• 265 State funded schools</li> </ul> |  | <b>New vesting day in April 2023</b> |  |  |  |  | <b>tbc</b>  |  |

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