

Minutes of a Meeting of the Local Community Network - Dowsborough held in the Stogursey Victory Hall - Victory Hall, on Wednesday, 14 June 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Brian Bolt	Somerset Council
Cllr Mike Caswell	Somerset Council
Cllr Hugh Davies	Somerset Council
Ian Dyer (Chair)	Cannington Parish Council
Lin Hook	Chilton Trinity Parish Council
John Vassalli	Durleigh Parish Council
Greg Doyle	Fiddington Parish Council
Richard Kilbey	Goathurst Parish Council
Sarah Nason	Holford Parish Council
Karen Scott (Clerk)	Holford / Kilve Parish Councils
Steve Skinner	Kilve Parish Council
Greg Glendell	Kilve Parish Council
Penny Everett	Nether Stowey Parish Council
Caro Slaymaker (Clerk)	Nether Stowey Parish Council
Tina Gardener	Otterhampton Parish Council
Connie Sanders	Otterhampton Parish Council
Duncan Peaster	Over Stowey Parish Council
Amanda McMurrin (Clerk)	Over Stowey Parish Council
Simon Stretton	Spaxton Parish Council
Bryony Carver	Stockland Bristol Parish Meeting
John McVerry	Stockland Bristol Parish Meeting
Chris Morgan (Chair)	Stogursey Parish Council
Bridget Hedaux	Wembdon Parish Council
Tony Jay (Clerk)	Wembdon Parish Council

Other Members present remotely:

Cllr Rosemary Woods (Somerset Council), Ann Diment (SALC), Amanda Hubbard (Enmore PC), Iain Porter (Quantock AONB), Sara Skirton & Frances Gully (Somerset Council), John Roberts.

In attendance:

Cllr Val Keitch	Somerset Council
Julian Gale	Member of the Public

Officers:

Ally Laing, Kate Hellard, Emma Plummer, (LCN Development) Sam Murrell (Clerk), Ollie Lindsall & Sam (ICT)

1 To appoint the Chair of the Local Community Network - Agenda Item 1

Somerset Cllr Mike Caswell was nominated by Chris Morgan (Stogursey PC), seconded by Somerset Cllr Brian Bolt.

No other nominations were made so Cllr Mike Caswell was duly elected.

2 To appoint the Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network - Agenda Item 2

There were no nominations forthcoming, so the Chair agreed that this could be deferred to the next meeting.

3 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 3

Apologies were tendered from Peter Felton (Chilton Trinity PC) and Somerset Councillors Lance Duddridge and Gill Slocombe.

4 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 4

None were declared

5 Public Question Time (Items not covered on the agenda) - Agenda Item 5

No public questions or statements were made.

6 To determine the priorities and areas of focus for the Local Community Network (LCN) for the next 12 months - Agenda Item 6

Kate Hellard (LCN Development Lead) shared a presentation on the purpose of the LCN and how it would feed back into the work of Somerset Council. The presentation slides can be viewed [here](#).

There is a dedicated page on the Somerset Council website which can be accessed via this [link](#).

Attendees were asked to share what themes, issues and opportunities they wanted the Dowsborough LCN to explore over the next 12 months.

What is important to our residents and how do we know that?

Somerset Council

- Service standards; Poor customer service, contacting the council, lack of accountability, lack of response. Too much bureaucracy.
- Communication from Somerset Council to residents needs to be better. More consultation and information about local initiatives.
- Better responses when it comes to planning issues and other regulatory services.
- Lack of information on the website – not user friendly.

Highways

- Lack of road maintenance around potholes, verge/hedge cutting, road markings and signage.
- Flooding of highways during heavy rain due to blocked drains and culverts.
- Traffic management to do with congestion and vehicle size, especially travelling towards Bridgwater.
- Lack of parking.
- Bridgwater Barrage
- Speeding through the villages especially along the A39 corridor, and Enmore Road.

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Communication / Connectivity

- Better internet/broadband service needed.

Hinkley Point

- Impact on the Environment. Issues such as Light Pollution need to be monitored and breaches dealt with.
- Development of land for additional housing with little added infrastructure.
- Planning Enforcement. Needs to be more proactive and not reactive. There needs to be more transparency.
- Fly-parking in the villages.
- Lack of affordable accommodation for young families. They have to move away to secure cheaper housing outside their local villages,

Rural Isolation

- Lack of public transport / access to essential services. Heavy reliance on own

vehicle.

- Withdrawal of bus services on commuter routes between Bridgwater & Taunton.
- Lack of community facilities – shops, post offices, GP surgery.

Environmental Issues

- Climate Change – Flooding resilience, preparedness.
- Dog Bins/Mess – more needed / better enforcement and awareness.
- Managing habitats and biodiversity loss – not enough resource currently.
- Hunting – not following designated routes, and lack of dog control
- Litter and fly-tipping.
- Hinkley Point.

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Anti-Social Behaviour

- Centred around play areas for young children. Teenagers make the area undesirable, or families feel unsafe/vulnerable.
- Lack of police presence.

Employment and Skills

- Young people move away as there are a lack of good quality jobs. They don't return after university.
- There used to be local trades such as butchers, poultry packers and farming, but this is no longer the case.

How do we know?

Speaking to residents; meeting/emailing local MP; Traffic surveys and meetings; social media. Living in the area and having direct experience of these issues.

Is there something we can do about it, and/or are there local examples already working?

Somerset Council

- Implement new/better ways of working to achieve the required outcome.
- More face-to-face communication and an active presence at local level. This also applies to the Police and other public services.

Highways

- Parish pathways liaison officer/warden is a great asset.
- More traffic calming measures required.
- Local initiatives such as cameras and community speed groups.
- Implementation of restricted speed limits in certain areas.
- Installation of controls and crossings.
- Better signage.

- Easier and better ways to report defects and problems.

Spaxton PC are implementing a Sign Washing service to identify and maintain SC assets in their parish. Are already liaising with SC Traffic Management to push this forward. (Would like more information on the Highway Steward pilot trialled on Exmoor).

Hinkley Point

- Planning management needs to be designated to officers with local knowledge.
- There needs to be a simple method for reporting planning breaches.
- Allocated parking required on site for contractors.
- Affordable / rentable accommodation provided for workers to prevent inflation of rents at a local level.

Rural Isolation

- More affordable and frequent public transport. This is needed not only to provide access to essential services for the rural villages, but also to meet the climate change agenda. Less reliance on own vehicle.
- Incorporate/Implement bus routes where there aren't any currently!
- Assist with implementation / offer initiatives to establish community shops in the villages.

Environmental Issues

Somerset Council to prioritise budgets to provide more resource into environment and land management including:-

- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Control of hunting with dogs – vehicles, landowner pressure, police
- More collaboration from Somerset Council on climate change mitigation working alongside the Environmental Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE)
- Introduction of re-wilding in some areas. [Somerset Wildlife & Churches](#) have introduced a Wilding Programme. Enmore Church is already an active participant.

Who do we need to talk to? Who else could be in the room?

- Important that there is representation from **Hinkley Point** – engagement/community worker. (*Tracy Walker*)
- **Environment Agency (EA)** and **Natural England (NE)**
- **The Police** – preferably a senior officer and this should supplement their presence at Parish Council meetings (not replace it!) Alternatively a senior PCSO or the local neighbourhood beat manager.
- **The Quantock Hills AONB**

▪ **Somerset Council – Highways**

Is there any data that would help?

- Somerset Council Career Strategy
- Community Land Trust Information
- Census Information
- Schools – Somerset Council
- [Exmoor Highways Pilot](#)
- [SALC – Health and Wellbeing](#)

7 The schedule of meetings for the next 12 months - Agenda Item 8

It was requested that the next meeting was scheduled for September, and then followed bi-monthly after that. Thus, future meetings would fall in November, January, March and May.

8 To agree the frequency of meetings - Agenda Item 7

It was agreed that the meetings should be held every other month and take place on either a Wednesday or Thursday evening. It was asked if the venues could be alternated so that all parishes with a suitable hall could host.

Other suggested venues are: Wembdon VH, Chilton Trinity VH, Nether Stowey VH, Holford VH and Stockland Bristol Social Club. The LCN team were advised that some of these venues would charge for use of their hall.

(The meeting ended at 8.40 pm)

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CHAIR