

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Chard and Blackdowns

Date: Monday, 23 October 2023

Time: 7.00 pm - 8.36 pm

Location: Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall, Hatch Beauchamp, Taunton TA3 6SG

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

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:	Representing
Neal Parsons	Buckland St Mary Parish Council
Ian Firth	Churchstanton Parish Council
Kevin Comer	Hatch Beauchamp Parish Council
Mark Palmer	Neroche Grouped Council
Peter Cordier	Pitminster PC
Melvyn Mullins	Ruishton & Thornfalcon Parish Council
Colin Fisher	Stoke St Mary Parish Council
Ross Henley	Somerset Council
Jenny Kenton	Somerset Council
Sarah Wakefield (Vice-Chair)	Somerset Council

Officer attendance:

Name:	Representing
Tim Cook	Somerset Council
Beth Poole	Somerset Council
Tom Parkinson	Somerset Council
Angela Cox	Somerset Council

Other attendees:

Name:

Gareth Hughes (Clerk)
Julie Wardle (Clerk)
Andy Grant
Lucy Montgomery
Richard Tyzack (Clerk)
Martin Middleton
Sheila Read
Caroline Matthews
Lisa Turner
Ken Pearson
George Roffe-Silvester
Paul Elliston

Representing

Chard TC
Churchstanton PC
Hatch Beauchamp PC
Otterford PC
Pitminster PC
West Hatch PC
West Hatch PC
Avon & Somerset Police
Blackdown Hills AONB
Blackdown Hills Parish Network
Blackdown Support Group
Somerset Rivers Authority

Virtual attendees:

Name:

Dawn Rogers
Jody Green
Heather Bryant (Clerk)
Adrian Whatmore

Representing

Somerset Council
Resident of Chard
Ruishton & Thornfalcon PC
Pitminster PC

Apologies:

Name:

Jason Baker
Martin Wale
John Harrison
A representative

Representing

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Corfe PC
Combe St Nicholas PC

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 9: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jason Baker, Martin Wale, John Harrison (Chair of Corfe PC) and a representative from Combe St Nicholas PC.

Item 10: **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Ross Henley advised that he was Chair of the Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN.

Councillor Sarah Wakefield noted that she was Vice-Chair of the Chard & Blackdowns LCN.

Item 11: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 02 August 2023 were approved as a correct record by those present.

Item 12: **Public Question Time**

In response to questions, the Chair and Locality Manager confirmed that Somerset Council had their own Communications Team who would publicise the work of the LCNs and any parish who wished to request a particular item for discussion at an LCN meeting could contact the LCN team at: lcns@somerset.gov.uk

Mark Palmer of Neroche Parish Council asked that social media links be shared as local residents felt they were not being informed about the work of the LCNs.

Item 13: **Highlights of themes discussed at the last meeting**

The Chairman drew attention to the 12 areas of priority which had been identified at the first LCN meeting on 02 August as:-

Transport – local transport solutions & Active Travel	Access to medical services
Planning Policy	Anti-social behaviour
Rural Isolation	Conservation
Youth provision	Flooding
Climate & Environment	Highways – road maintenance & A358
Road Safety – speed of traffic	Communication & connectivity

Colin Fisher of Stoke St Mary PC said that all of the priority areas had been identified and he did not feel that it was for the LCN to now say they were not interested in any of them.

Later in the discussion, it was noted that the LCN working groups could join together across the County to progress common projects and priorities.

Item 14: **An introduction to data**

Beth Poole, Locality Officer, introduced a slide of statistics which related directly to the Chard and Blackdowns LCN area. She advised that the data gave an indication of what was available and to give an understanding of the area. She noted that some of the data could be misleading and the Census 2021 data would now be 2 years old. The school census data was updated twice a year and the Somerset Intelligence Network could provide data on a parish by parish basis:

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/>

There were ongoing opportunities to build data for the LCN working groups to gain further information which could help towards funding bids for projects.

During discussion, it was noted that:

- Parish Councils who required more information could contact the LCN team at lcn@somerset.gov.uk
- Some of the data could be skewed by Chard town statistics.
- It would be possible to benchmark the data across all of the LCNs.

Item 15: **Discussion: To agree initial priorities and the formation of working groups**

The Chair invited the LCN members present and on-line to join break-out groups to identify 3 priority areas from the 12 identified at their initial meeting in August. He noted that the LCN discussions would be as informal and inclusive as possible and Parish Clerks were welcome to join in the debate. After the discussions, the groups feedback was:

Group 1

Social Services and rural isolation.

Lengthsman Scheme for drainage and highway maintenance issues.

Youth Provision – explore Youth Councils in the area.

Group 2

Access to medical services - no NHS Dentist in Chard and only one Doctors Surgery.

Transport – the Somerset Bus Partnership had trialled a service in Hatch Beauchamp which had recently ended but there was an excellent local car sharing service. The Slinky Bus service needed to be looked at.

Services for young people – Chard paid £10,000 towards its youth service provision. Hatch Beauchamp had lots of services for the elderly but not many for the youth.

Group 3

Considered the rurality of the area and felt that many of the priorities identified were interconnected like climate & environment / flooding/ road safety as they covered speeding, road maintenance, Lengthsman Scheme and the impact of flooding.

Group 4

Planning Policy – the Somerset Local Plan / policy / health.

Connectivity and Communication – support for older people.

Climate & Environment – economic support and energy.

On-line group:

Planning enforcement is weak and there is a perception that nothing is happening.

Highways – there was support for a Lengthsman Scheme and to learn from the experiences of other parishes.

In response to questions, the Locality Manager replied:

- Highway issues had been raised at many of the LCN meetings and Highway Officers had subsequently attended some LCN meetings.
- There was the potential for lobbying on issues like access to medical services by combining the voices of the LCNs.
- There were still some Parish Rangers in existence but only two or three schemes remained. The Exmoor pilot LCN had looked at providing low level maintenance for highways.

The Chair asked for people who would be willing to put themselves forward to join a sub-working group and the following people agreed:

Peter Cordier – Youth

Mark Palmer – Connectivity and

Sheila Read – Environment

Spud Middleton – Highways

Andy Grant – Transport & Connectivity

Ken Pearson – Environment

During discussion it was noted that:

- Parishioners should be encouraged to join the working groups.
- The Unitary Council should repair potholes etc in roads early to prevent insurance claims by motorists for damage to their vehicles.
- The working groups could decide their own terms of reference
- The recent Local Plan consultation had not felt very open but more leading questions.
- Neighbourhood Plans were out of date within 2 years. The new Somerset Local Plan should be more local.

Item 16: **Dates of future meetings**

The provisional dates for future meetings were noted as:

- Wednesday 17 January 2024- venue to be confirmed
- Wednesday 13 March 2024 - venue to be confirmed.

Please note that the LCN team work hard to minimise diary clashes but asked that they be contacted on lcn@somerset.gov.uk if there are any issues.

Contact officer for meeting: LCN Team lcn@somerset.gov.uk