

## **Local Community Network Meeting Notes**

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Dowsborough

Date: Wednesday, 13 September 2023

Time: 7.01 pm - 8.26 pm

Location: Spaxton Village Hall

Chaired by: Mike Caswell (Chair)

### **LCN core membership attendance:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Brian Bolt	Somerset Council
Cllr Ian Dyer,	Cannington Parish Council
Cllr Lin Hook	Chilton Trinity Parish Council
Cllr John Vassalli	Durleigh Parish Council
Cllr Derek Buller	Fiddington Parish Council
Cllr Richard Kilbey	Goathurst Parish Council
Cllr Mike Coplestone	Holford Parish Council
Cllr Kevin Ferriday	Nether Stowey Parish Council
Cllr Simon Stretton	Spaxton Parish Council
Cllr Chris Morgan	Stogursey Parish Council
Cllr Bridget Hedaux	Wembdon Parish Council

### **Officer attendance:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Kate Hellard (Virtual)	Somerset Council

Emma Plummer	Somerset Council / LCN
Bev Norman	Somerset Council Highways
Pip Hughes	Somerset Council / LCN
Sam Murrell (clerk)	Somerset Council / Democratic Services
Tom Parkinson	Somerset Council / ICT Technician

### **Other attendees:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
PCSO Lora Bray	Avon & Somerset Police
Peter Felton	Chilton Trinity PC
Sue Goss	Stogursey PC
Julian Gale	Member of the public
Karen Scott (Clerk)	Holford / Kilve PCs
Vernon Hughes	Member of the public

### **Virtual attendees:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Caro Slaymaker	Nether Stowey Parish Council
Lorna Edwards	Wembdon PC
Steve Skinner	Kilve PC
Luke Jackson	Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)

### **Summary of discussion:**

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

##### **Item 9: Election of Vice Chair**

Councillor Simon Stretton (Spaxton PC) was proposed by the Chair Cllr Mike Caswell (Somerset Council) and seconded by

John Vassalli (Durleigh PC).

No other nominations were received from the Core Members in the room so Cllr Simon Stretton was duly elected to the position of Vice Chair.

Item 10: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Somerset Councillors: Hugh Davies, Lance Duddridge, Gill Slocombe and Rosemary Woods.

Tina Gardner (Otterhampton PC).

Item 11: **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made by the Somerset Councillors present.

Item 12: **Public Question Time**

**Julian Gale** – How well are these meetings advertised? They are public meetings but there is very little publicity from the parish and Somerset Council prior to them happening. It is important to maximise engagement and this can't happen if local people are unaware of them! *The interim LCN team have only initiated a soft launch until a permanent team is in place. The meetings are publicised on the Somerset Council website at least 5 days in advance and the agendas are published according to the Somerset Council terms of reference. Going forward it is hoped that the parishes will share the meeting dates via newsletters and noticeboards. Meeting dates when they are confirmed will also be shared in the minutes of the meetings and via emails to the membership and stakeholders. If participants have other suggestions on how to publicise the meetings, please contact the LCN team.*

**Stogursey PC** – Better communications need to come from Somerset Council especially around Planning Enforcement. Stogursey PC has written to Somerset Council on several planning issues and has not received a response from the officer team. This is a less than satisfactory service.

**Cllr Chris Morgan (Stogursey PC)** – Asked that there was more

publicity around the purpose of LCNs, as members of the public were still uninformed and had no idea what they were designed to accomplish. It would help to remove the mystery and thus increase engagement. There was marked less attendance in Spaxton than had been present at the first LCN in Stogursey. He was concerned that this showed interest was waning.

Item 13: **Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record and unanimously approved by those present.

Item 14: **Highlight of themes discussed at the last meeting**

An overview of the last meeting was provided by Kate Hellard. A series of slides were shown which highlighted the key issues.

The slide pack can be viewed here: [PowerPoint Presentation \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk).

Item 15: **Introduction to the data available**

- **Highways Issues – Including Road Safety and Maintenance**

Bev Norman – Strategic Manager for Traffic Management was introduced to the meeting. Bev stated that there was a very limited budget for Highway Improvement works and resources would be prioritised to areas that already have evidence-based need.

The Vice Chair, Cllr Simon Stretton presented some slides on the work being carried out by Spaxton Parish Council on a Road Sign and Roadside Management Project. These slides can be viewed via the website [here](#).

Spaxton PC currently has 4 volunteers willing to undertake the necessary training to carry out the work but is hampered by the lack of available courses. (The earliest date is March 2024). They are also looking to re-purpose and recondition existing finger post signs as there is no money for complete replacement.

Spaxton PC are now hoping to introduce a Community

Speedwatch group.

- **Environmental Issues – Improving bio-diversity and increasing resilience**

The Chair highlighted a number of environmental issues which had been brought forward from the previous meeting:-

**Hunting with Dogs** – anti-social behaviour around this was a police matter and not something the LCN was equipped to deal with. The police worked closely with the Hunts to monitor anti-social behaviour around parking and the followers/protestors activity.

**Flooding/Resilience/Preparedness** – this was something that could be addressed going forward as climate change was very much in the forefront of everyone’s mind. Parishes united together could tackle the bigger issues and inform on community priorities.

**Rewilding** – Enmore PC have been working with Somerset Wildlife & Churches on a community rewilding project. It might be possible for Enmore to share the learning so that other parishes could participate in such work.

**Hinkley Point** – the negative environmental impacts of the Hinkley development which included fly-parking, noise, traffic congestion and light pollution. The Chair noted the lack of nocturnal wildlife since the HP development had got underway especially bats and foxes. He suggested this was because the night-time eco-system had been seriously disrupted by the light from the development site.

Item 16: **Discussion:**

**Highways Issues**

Following on from the Highways presentation parishes contributed to the discussion as follows:-

- **Chilton Trinity PC** – would like to see “Rumble Strips” or alternative traffic calming measures introduced on the main road through the village, especially on the approach to the pedestrian crossing. There had been a number of near misses, and it was just a matter of time before a serious accident occurred. *Bev Norman commented that there was no money set aside at present for new projects,*

*and residents in other areas where rumble strips were laid, had complained about the noise.*

Community Speed Watch – Chilton Trinity PC had been advised that it would not be safe to engage volunteers to undertake a Speed Watch as the traffic was travelling too fast, and it would be too dangerous to implement.

Grit Bin Maintenance – It was suggested that it was a waste of money to employ an operative from Somerset Council to inspect the grit bin, when several parish councillors regularly passed the spot, and could report back if re-filling was required.

- **Holford PC** – The clerk for Holford/Kilve PC reported that better communications were needed around recent road closures especially along the A39 corridor. Recently Utilities had advised that a road closure would be in operation which would completely close the A39 between Holford and Kilve overnight. As such businesses including the local pub decided to remain closed, only to learn that the road closure did not in fact take place. They subsequently lost out on business, which was totally unnecessary. They also have to wait to determine when the works will take place instead and potentially lose another night of trading. It is vitally important to rural communities that any postponements or amendments to the work are communicated ahead of time!

Road Safety – Vitally important that the Police are involved with traffic management and slowing motorists. Signage needs to be clear and visible so that motorists can comply with the required speed limits. A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is currently being talked about between Holford and Kilve to reduce speeding.

- **Spaxton PC** – Who is the contractor for verge trimming and hedge cutting? It would be beneficial if the workers liaised with the parishes prior to undertaking the work. It would also be useful to understand the requirements and service standards as stated in the contracts.

Drains are blocked following hedge cutting and verge maintenance and there was no way to pass this information back to Somerset Council. A Highways sub-group such as employed on Exmoor would be good for Dowsborough. Could such a sub-group be implemented?

- **Stogursey PC** – Stogursey currently employed the services of a Parish Lengthsman. Cllr Chris Morgan queried whether it was possible for some of the other parishes to reinstate/implement the Parish Lengthsman scheme so that they could share a workman and the cost.
- **Wembdon PC** – Could a bit of joined up thinking be employed please? Ditch maintenance alongside roads should coincide with the drain/gully emptying and resurfacing work. All these works have a direct impact on each other and need to be coordinated to ensure benefit.

Bev Norman advised the LCN, that work to pilot a Highways Steward scheme on Exmoor had been very successful, and Somerset Council were evaluating how this project could be extended to other LCNs. This was overseen by a Highways working group made up of parish council representatives and highways officers. They met every other month to discuss suitable ways of working and communicate ongoing projects. This has been well received by the parishes and they are keen to continue.

Julian Gale asked if it was possible to communicate to the street sweeping team of the requirement to sweep the road following resurfacing.

### **Environmental Issues**

For future meetings the Chair would like to extend an invitation to officers working in the Quantock Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This would be to provide an update on work currently being undertaken in the Dowsborough Area, and how the Dowsborough LCN may be able to contribute.

- **Vernon Hughes (Friends of the Quantocks)** said he was still waiting on a Freedom of Information request which was submitted in May 2023, and was now beyond the specified time frame for an answer. This concerned

environmental issues in Spaxton.

### **Other discussion points**

- Lorna Edwards (online) suggested that a Planning tile was required to cover the aspects of work around enforcement, new homes coming forward and the impacts on local communities.

Cllr Ian Dyer (Cannington PC) questioned the sustainability of the Dowsborough LCN as there was less engagement from the parishes and other stakeholders than there had been at the launch meeting. He was concerned with the budgetary pressures that Somerset Council faced, that it was not cost effective in terms of officer time and money to continue in this format. *The Chair addressed his concerns by stating that this was only the start of a much wider process and it was important that all representatives of the LCN fully engaged to make it work. There was a will on the part of Somerset Councillors to ensure it did.*

### Item 17: **Date of the next meeting**

The provisional future meeting dates are :-

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 (Venue to be confirmed)

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 (Venue to be confirmed)

The LCN team have worked hard to avoid diary clashes but please contact them on [LCN@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:LCN@somerset.gov.uk) if there are any issues. The team would also like information on alternative suitable venues within the Dowsborough area.

Contact officer for meeting: LCN Team [lcn@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:lcn@somerset.gov.uk).