

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Dowsborough

Date: Wednesday, 31 January 2024

Time: 7.03 pm - 8.32 pm

Location: St Mary's Church Centre, Nether Stowey

Chaired by: Mike Caswell (Chair)

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:

Cllr Brian Bolt
Cllr Ian Dyer
Cllr Lyn Hook
Cllr John Vassalli
Cllr Michael Hopkins
Cllr Robin Kinahan
Cllr Sarah Nason
Cllr Steve Skinner
Cllr Kevin Ferriday
Cllr Tina Gardener
Cllr Patrick Tully
Cllr Simon Stretton (Vice Chair)
Cllr John McVerry
Cllr Sue Goss
Cllr Bridget Hedaux

Representing

Somerset Council
Cannington Parish Council
Chilton Trinity Parish Council
Durleigh Parish Council
Enmore Parish Council
Fiddington Parish Council
Holford Parish Council
Kilve Parish Council
Nether Stowey Parish Council
Otterhampton Parish Council
Over Stowey Parish Council
Spaxton Parish Council
Stockland Bristol Parish Meeting
Stogursey Parish Council
Wembdon Parish Council

Officer attendance:

Kate Hellard (LCN Development Lead), Emma Plummer (LCN Interim Lead), Pippa Hughes (LCN Interim Link Officer), Ollie Lindsell (ICT Specialist), Sam Murrell (Democratic Services)

Other attendees:

Name:

Peter Felton
Cllr Andrew Hawkins
Karen Scott (Clerk)
Connie Sanders
Bryony Carver
Cllr Peter Major
John Roberts
Denise Hopkins

Representing

Chilton Trinity Parish Council
Enmore Parish Council
Holford / Kilve Parish Councils
Otterhampton Parish Council
Stockland Bristol Parish Meeting
Wembdon Parish Council
Member of the Public
Member of the Public

Virtual attendees:

Name:

Rosemary Woods
Richard Wand
Lorna Edwards
Anne Reed

Representing

Somerset Council
Member of the Public
Member of the Public
Wembdon Parish Council

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 30: Apologies for Absence

Somerset Councillors Lance Duddridge, Hugh Davies and Gill Slocombe. Cllr Chris Morgan (Stogursey PC) substituted by Sue Goss.

Cllr Rosemary Woods attended virtually.

The Chair on behalf of the LCN extended his condolences to Nether Stowey PC on the sad loss of councillor Penny Everett.

Item 31: Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

Item 32: Notes from the Previous Meeting

The notes from the previous meeting were unanimously agreed

by those present.

Item 33: **An update on Somerset Council's Financial Position**

Emma Plummer, Interim LCN Link Officer explained the current timeline and shared a presentation. This can be viewed [here](#).

Item 34: **Public Question Time**

Cllr Rosemary Woods advised that the Williton Recycling centre was marked for closure. Although outside the Dowsborough LCN area it would impact the nearby communities of Holford and Kilve. It was important that all parishes took part in any consultation that takes place.

Item 35: **An update on the Highway Steward Scheme and formation of a Highways Working Group - Terms of Reference.**

Kate Hellard, LCN Development Lead shared a presentation on the Highway Steward scheme which had been trialled on Exmoor. The presentation can be viewed [here](#).

The annual cost of the Highway Steward including transport is £50k and this could be shared across 2 LCN areas. (This would lessen the cost impact on individual parishes).

In addition it was also proposed that a Highway Working group be established to progress the concerns of the Dowsborough parishes. This would be held bi-monthly between the main LCN meetings and would be made up of parish representatives and staff from the Somerset Council Highways Team. This did not incur a cost to the parishes beyond their time and would be a good opportunity to progress local issues directly with the Highways staff. This meeting would be held during the day at a local venue.

(The Terms of Reference to be circulated and volunteers invited to participate). A show of hands was made in the room, and interested parties were asked to leave their details with the clerk.

Questions from the floor included:-

- Concern about the cost of the Highway Steward, especially from the smaller parishes. They simply couldn't

afford it!

- How the work would be fairly distributed on an operational level. Who would be responsible for overseeing the work and ensuring that it was completed to a satisfactory standard?
- The Exmoor Highways pilot had made use of Parish Online. Had the Somerset Council data sets relating to hedges and verge maintenance been updated in that area, and would this now be rolled out across Somerset? *(Sam Murrell advised that the Parish Online trial had finished and did not involve the former SCC uploading their data to the site. Parishes were able to pay a subscription if they wished to continue and could upload their own data, such as the location of defibrillators etc).*
- It was important that all the parishes collaborated to ensure that if the model was adopted the cost was spread proportionately.
- It was stressed that the Highway subgroup was independent of the Steward and could be progressed whether the Steward scheme was adopted or not.
- It was requested that a senior highways officer was present at the next meeting to talk about current highway issues. Sue Goss stated that this used to work well at the former West Somerset Area Panel for Watchet, Williton and Quantock Vale.

Item 36: **Developing a way forward for the LCN**

It was agreed by a show of hands for a Highways working group to be set up. Can participants please email the dowsboroughlcn@somerset.gov.uk to register their interest. The first face-to-face meeting will be set up shortly, at an accessible venue with representatives from the Highways team.

It was agreed that the Highway Subgroup Terms of Reference (TOR) would be circulated to parishes so that they could have an idea of the time commitment required.

Item 37: **Discussion on Planning. What are our concerns and issues?**

The Chair stated that he felt strongly that the LCN should be a consultee on strategic planning issues, especially in respect of Infrastructure.

Concern was expressed about the lack of planning enforcement and general access to planning advice and information. The Chair advised that Planning Enforcement was not a statutory function of the Council, and as such could be subject to further service cuts. It was requested that the Somerset Council website was updated and the relevant outstanding enforcement notices listed for inspection.

It was acknowledged that there was a national problem with recruitment and retention of Development Control staff, which meant access to planning staff at local level was difficult.

Item 38: **Date for the next meeting**

Provisional dates proposed:-

- Monday 18 March 2024
- Wednesday 12 June 2024

Venues to be confirmed. Cllr Sue Goss suggested the Victory Hall, Stogursey for the March meeting.

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

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Your Local Community Network

Dowsborough LCN

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of interest
3. Approval of minutes of the last meeting
4. An update on Somerset Council's financial position
 - general update
 - service and asset devolution
5. Public Question Time (not covered on the agenda)
6. An update on the Highways Steward Scheme and a Highways Working Group-TOR
7. Developing a way forward for the LCN.
8. Discussion on planning and what are our concerns and issues
9. Dates for the next meeting

Budget update

- Budget consultation has now finished – over 5000 responses
- Executive Meeting 15th Jan detailed the proposals [Agenda for Executive on Monday, 15th January, 2024, 10.00 am - Modern Council \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)
- Service and Asset Devolution
- City, Town and Parish Somerset Council webpage includes Highways information, land and asset lists , FAQs on recycling centres [City, Town and Parish Councils \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

Budget update

Timetable for decision making

- 15 January. Meeting of Executive Committee will discuss Budget Update report, including savings proposed approach to bridging the funding gap.
- 22 January. Budget consultation closes.
- 25 January. Audit Committee to discuss technical budget papers and make recommendations to the Executive Committee.
- 1 February. Meeting of the Corporate and Resources Scrutiny Committee. Due to discuss the budget, including savings proposals and make recommendations to the Executive Committee.
- 7 February. Meeting of Executive Committee to consider feedback from Scrutiny Committee and results of budget consultation before recommending budget for decision at Full Council.
- 20 February. Full Council meets to agree final budget for 2024/25.

Highway Steward

- The Highway Steward is a skilled highway operative, in a branded vehicle, who visits parishes and towns to a defined works programme but is also empowered to undertake ad hoc works when identified.
- The Highway Steward scheme delivers minor works within the capability of a single operative.



Highway Steward

- The Parish or Town Council decide on the local priorities.
- The Highway Steward targets discretionary parish works. Any statutory or safety-related work (potholes, damaged regulatory signs, etc.) should be reported in the usual way for the Highway Authority to inspect and assess the appropriate response.



Highway Steward

- The scope of works could include:
 - ‘Low tech, high value works’ such as:
 - verge maintenance,
 - highway surface water drainage maintenance
 - weed removal
 - sign cleaning
 - cutting back vegetation





Pound Walk, Dulverton—vegetation management



Recent works in Clatworthy

Signage works at Winsford

Options for delivery of the Highway Steward and other functions:

- Through Somerset Councils' Highway Maintenance Contract, or
- Self-delivery through suppliers commissioned by a Parish, or by Parish collaboration (note, there are examples around the county of this happening already...)

Costs:

- Through Somerset Councils' Highway Maintenance Contract, or
 - Currently in dialogue with the new highway maintenance contractor for a '*Parish Price List*'.
- Self-delivery through a Parish, or by Parish collaboration
 - Volunteer network at no cost, or
 - Market rates through the local supply chain.

Others works Parishes could undertake (but not limited to):

- Winter services (snow clearance and salting of footways and paths)
- Minor repairs to Footway and off-road cycle ways
- Verge cutting and weed control
- Tree and hedge maintenance
- Rights of way maintenance
- Passenger transport infrastructure maintenance (bus stop flags and bus shelters)
- Repair and maintenance of road signs

Considerations NOT barriers:

- Permission from the Highway Authority to undertake the works, together with any necessary form of licence/ legal agreement.
- An approved Temporary Traffic Regulation Order and temporary traffic signals (if required).
- Risk assessments.
- Public liability insurance.
- Confirmation of health, safety, and welfare of operatives and those travelling through the site.

Highlights and themes raised so far

Highways
Road Maintenance

Connectivity and
Communication

Rural Isolation

**Environment
including
flooding**

Anti Social
Behaviour

Employment and
Skills

Hinkley Point

**Local Plans -
Housing, infra-
structure
planning
enforcement**

Dates for the next meetings

Future draft dates :

Monday 18th March 2024

Wednesday 12th June 2024

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