

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Levels and Moors

Date: Monday, 13 November 2023

Time: 7.00 pm - 8.38 pm

Location: Edgar Hall, 8 Cary Hall, Somerton Business Park, Somerton, TA11 6SB

Chaired by: Cllr Richard Wilkins

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:	Representing
Alan Bradford	Somerset Council
Andy Dingwall	Somerset Council
Tim Kerley	Somerset Council
Matthew Martin	Somerset Council
Dean Ruddle	Somerset Council
Mike Stanton	Somerset Council
Richard Wilkins	Somerset Council
Gerard Tucker	Aller Parish Council
Andrew Plumbley	Beercrocombe Parish Council
Mike Jay	Burrowbridge Parish Council
Marion Detier	Chedzoy Parish Council
Fleur Wood	Curry Mallett Parish Council

Marcus Hembrow	Curry Rivel Parish Council
Tricia Robinson	Drayton Parish Council
Laura Howard	Fivehead Parish Council
David Vigar	High Ham Parish Council
Jayne Redfern	Huish Episcopi Parish Council
Lorraine Vaughan-Davis	Isle Abbotts Parish Council
Sarah Peterkin	Langport Town Council
Paul Helyer	Martock Parish Council
Paul Baker	Middlezoy Parish Council
Andrew Flower	Muchelney Parish Meeting
Mike Dennis	North Curry Parish Council
Anthony Betty	Othery Parish Council
Gary Maughan	Somerton Town Council
Ian Cromey-Hawke	Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary

Officer attendance:

Name:	Representing
Adrian Moore	Locality Officer Somerset Council
Kate Hellard	LCN Development Lead Somerset Council
Ollie Lindsell	ICT Reactive Support Somerset Council
Stephanie Gold	Democratic Services Somerset Council

Other attendees:

Name:**Representing**

Liz Leyshon

Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead
Member for Resources and Performance

Julia Gadd

Member of the public

Bill Covington

Member of the public

Tony Greenaway

Member of the public

Amanda Chuter

Member of the public

William Wilkswood

Member of the public

Rodney Young

Member of the public

Virtual attendees:**Name:****Representing**

Lyng Parish Council

Summary of discussion:**Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome:
item:**Item 17: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Emily Pearlstone.

Item 18: **Declarations of Interest**

There were no other declarations of interest received.

Item 19: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 20th September

2023 were approved as a correct record.

Item 20: **Update - Somerset Council's Financial Position**

The full presentation used for the meeting can be found here

[Document Levels and](#)

[Moors Nov '23 - Modern Council \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

The Chair welcomed Kate Hellard, LCN Development Lead at Somerset Council, and Cllr Liz Leyshon, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive member for Resources and Performance to address the Local Community Network (LCN) following the decision by Somerset Council's Executive to declare a 'Financial Emergency' on the 8th November 2023 (as advised in a letter that had been sent to all parish and town councils from the Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans) Cllr Leyshon explained how the decision to declare the financial emergency had been reached and the impacts on service provision. She advised that the Council was taking immediate action to significantly reduce spending and close the current in-year budget gap of £27.3m, and that it would be putting in place an action plan to reduce the £100m budget gap forecast for the year 24/25. Cllr Leyshon stressed that The Council would be doing everything it could to avoid a S114 noticed being served on Somerset Council.

The Deputy Leader of the Council invited comments and questions from those in attendance, and the following points were discussed: -

- Parish and town councils need to work collaboratively with Somerset Council to ensure any gaps in service provision within the community can be mitigated.
- Parish and town council precepts will be set in the coming weeks, all parish and town councils need to carefully consider their position on this. Parish and Town councils were advised to look at increasing precepts to enable them to 'build a war chest'.
- The differences between how the Council's assets are categorised and disposed of; Commercial Investment Assets Disposal, Council Occupied Assets, and Devolution of Assets to town and parish councils.

- If the Council cannot set a balanced budget and a section 114 notice is served, all non-essential service provision will cease, including Local Community Networks.
- Parish councils may wish to consider the Power of Competence.
- Local Community Networks are not a legal entity and do not hold a budget. Any money that parish/town councils have ring fenced for LCN funding is NOT payable to Somerset Council, and will be retained by the parish/town council to reallocate if necessary.
- The largest contributor to the budget shortfall is Adult Social Care, and this is a national issue due to many factors including inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, the energy crisis and crucially the impact of the abandonment of the Fair Cost of Care exercise on local authorities.
- As well as taking drastic action to reduce spending in the short term, the long-term aim is transformation of Somerset Council to create a smaller, sleeker more efficient council that is more financially sustainable for the future.
- The Council is working on a set of infographics to enable greater understanding of the 'Financial Emergency' declaration, and this would be shared with all parish and town councils and be made publicly available on the Councils website as soon as possible.

Resolved

The Chair thanked the Deputy Leader and Executive Lead member for Resources and Performance for her attendance and it was agreed that there would be further information and opportunity for questions and discussion regarding the Councils 'Financial Emergency' at a future meeting.

Item 21: **Public Question Time**

There were no questions received from any members of the public.

Item 22: **Presentation and Q&A with the Police**

The Chair welcomed Ian Cromey-Hawke, PCSO Supervisor of Avon and Somerset Constabulary to give a presentation to the LCN (slides 3-23). He talked members through the slides, advising that some of the data had been sanitised because it was for internal (police) use only. He invited comments and questions from those in attendance and the following issues were discussed: -

- Drug crime and more specifically County Lines and what is being done to tackle it across all areas of policing i.e. Operations Scorpion and Remedy.
- More localised data (broken down into 'beats') data can be obtained on request from your local neighbourhood policing team.
- One member, speaking on behalf of Langport Town Council, took the opportunity to express their gratitude and appreciation to the neighbourhood policing team for helping to resolve some issues in Langport, and advised that all members of the Local Community Network engage with their local neighbourhood policing team.
- The decline of the restorative justice approach and increasing use of other methods such as community resolutions and youth offending teams.

Resolved

The Chair thanked Ian Cromey-Hawke for a very detailed and interesting presentation.

Item 23: **Update from working groups**

The Chair welcomed Cllr Gerard Tucker of Aller Parish Council and lead for the Active Travel working group to give a presentation to the LCN (slides 25-37). Cllr Tucker advised that some great work had already begun on improving footpaths

(Monks Clyse Sluce) and that the work so far had been funded with contributions from parish councils and other external funding providers. Cllr Tucker felt that the only frustration he had experienced so far had been some difficulty in contacting the Somerset Council Rights of Way Officer, and in response the LCN Development Lead advised that she would look to facilitate this. Cllr Tucker invited any member who would like to be involved in the Active Travel working group to attend a meeting at 7pm on the 30th November in Langport Town Hall.

The Chair then welcomed Cllr Mike Stanton of Somerset Council to give an update (on behalf of the Cllr David Fothergill who was absent) on the progress of the Health and Wellbeing working group. Cllr Stanton advised that the first meeting had taken place and that it had been attended by 8 people, where a very good discussion had taken place. Cllr Stanton introduced Somerset Council Localities Officer, Adrian Moore who informed the LCN that they would be invited to complete a Health and Wellbeing questionnaire in due course, which would be used to identify issues and scope the aims and objectives of the Health and Wellbeing working group.

Resolved

The Chair thanked those members for their updates and encouraged all members of the LCN to work collaboratively in its mission to improve Active Travel and Health and Wellbeing in the LCN Levels and Moors area.

Item 24: **Action and next steps for working groups**

The LCN Development Lead asked members to agree that the following actions and next steps for the LCN Levels and Moors are as follows: -

1. The LCN Team would circulate Somerset Council's infographics regarding the 'Financial Emergency' with all members of the LCN, for information.
2. All members of the LCN would work with the police to obtain localised data regarding crime as required.
3. The LCN Development Lead would facilitate a

conversation between Cllr Gerard Tucker and the Somerset Council Rights of Way Officer regarding the Active Travel working group.

4. All members of the LCN would continue to work collaboratively in its aims and objectives.
5. The LCN Development Lead and the Chair would discuss scheduling an extra LCN meeting, before January 2024, to look at the Somerset Council 'Financial Emergency' in more detail.

Resolved

The Chair concluded that the actions as detailed above were agreed upon by all members of the LCN Levels and Moors.

Item 25: **Dates of future meetings**

The LCN Development Lead advised that the provisional future meeting dates are: -

- Monday 15th January 2024 (Venue to be confirmed)
- Monday 4th March 2024 (Venue to be confirmed)

Resolved

After some discussion and debate members agreed that the above dates were to be confirmed, but that in future it would be helpful if the meetings were held on different days of the week, in rotation, to ensure that the same parish council meetings did not clash with the LCN meetings every time.

The LCN team have worked hard to avoid diary clashes but please contact them on LCN@somerset.gov.uk if there are any issues. The team would also like information on alternative suitable venues within the Levels and Moors area.

For any other queries regarding the LCN Levels and Moors, please email LevelsandmoorsLCN@somerset.gov.uk

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