

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Vale of Frome

Date: Thursday, 8 February 2024

Time: 7.00 pm - 9.05 pm

Location: Wanstrow Village Hall, Frome Road, Wanstrow, BA4 4SX

Chaired by: Frome Town Councillor Max Wide

LCN Core Membership in Attendance:

Frome Town Councillor Max Wide (Chair)

Somerset Councillor Martin Dimery

Somerset Councillor Dawn Denton - online

Somerset Councillor Michael Dunk - online

Somerset Councillor Adam Boyden - online

Buckland Dinham Parish Councillor John Reckless

Norton St Philip Parish Councillor Catriona Murfitt - online

Rode Parish Councillor Mike Salmon - online

Selwood Parish Councillor Richard Hammons - online

Trudoxhill Parish Councillor Chris Kenyon

Wanstrow Parish Councillor Michael Gay

Other Attendance:

Frome Town Councillor Anita Collier

Frome Town Councillor Lisa Merryweather

Nikki Cox, Partnership Lead, Frome Town Council

Bel Deering, Somerset Rivers Authority

Melody Hunter-Evans, Connect Somerset

Rebecca Mau, Frome Birth Talk

Debbie Rigby, Health Watch

Joanne Flindell - online

Eamma Wilkes, Community Connect and Headteacher at Oakfield School

Somerset Council Officer Attendance:

Emily Window, LCN Team - online
Kate Hellard, LCN Team
Adrian Moore, LCN Team
Claire Dicken, Democratic Services

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 32: **Apologies for Absence**

None.

Item 33: **Welcome to Wanstrow**

The Chair invited Parish Councillor Michael Gay to welcome everyone to Wanstrow Village Hall. He described area and what it had to offer including farming and a number of thriving businesses. He also noted the lack of buses, lack of safe pavements and frequent flooding.

He recommended a workshop which had been held recently in Bruton on the topic of flooding. Bel Deering of the Somerset Rivers Authority said her team would be willing to hold similar workshops in any of the LCN areas on request.

Other Parishes within the LCN area reported frequent flooding including Buckland Dinham where several residents had had to evacuate.

Item 34: **Declarations of Interest**

None.

Item 35: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 7 December 2023 were approved as a correct record.

Item 36: **Actions since the Previous Meeting**

The questionnaire survey and the financial emergency were both listed on this agenda.

Rode were pleased to announce their TRO had been published as requested at the last meeting of the Vale of Frome LCN and the modified speed limit in the village should be implemented during the next financial year.

The Chair was delighted the Vale of Frome LCN had been able to facilitate this action.

Item 37: **Public Question Time (issues not covered on the agenda)**

The LCN had drafted a questionnaire. The LCN team agreed to circulate a copy of the questionnaire, after the meeting, to the parishes in the area and all interested parties. In the meantime, Members of the Steering Group would be reaching out of parishes very soon to help them capture issues within the Vale of Frome area LCN. The issues would be reported to the next meeting so that future meetings could be planned.

It was suggested that the interested parties, including health services, who had contributed to the questionnaire should leave their contact details with the parishes.

There was a discussion about health services in the parishes including the provision of defibrillators and who had financed them. Also, who had access to them. Kate Hellard agreed to put the interested parties in contact with each other.

Item 38: **Response to the Financial Emergency - How have other parishes in Somerset responded? What has your parish considered?**

Somerset Council had declared a financial emergency. There was currently a significant financial gap in next year's budget. The Council was looking at how to change services in order to balance the accounts. Changes included the disposal of assets, the cutting of some services and the devolution of others.

At the last meeting we polled parishes to see what they may be prepared to take on. For instance, Frome Town Council had decided to take on some services and to increase their precept by 29% to pay for it.

Services which other communities had been prepared to take on included grass cutting, local fayres, some buildings, some open spaces, sports grounds, theatres, public toilets and CCTV.

On the whole parishes were interested in having greater control over some assets within their parish. As well as projects which contributed to community wellbeing.

Item 39: **Discussion: Is there anything that we can do together?**

The Chair presented a set of slides and asked attendees to give consideration to the following four areas:

- Assets and Infrastructure
- Thriving for All
- Disadvantage and Vulnerability
- Sustainability and Resilience

During the discussion that followed the LCN noted that Somerset had already made many cuts compared to other places like Birmingham. There was some concern that parish precepts would have to raise too much if parishes were to try to provide all of the former Somerset Council services.

Parishes were discussing other ways of delivering services. For instance, it was noted that Frome thrived in the arts despite having no specific funding.

Buckland Dinham has a toilet in the church, and a defibrillator. Also, a bus shelter and millennium gardens which it already maintained. They said the parish needed changes in planning to encourage smaller developments. In the future they expected to take on grit bins, dog poo bins and footpaths. They asked if they could be involved in the highways discussions.

The next group felt social issues needed to be considered. Wanstrow did not have any Somerset assets within the parish. However, they also expected to take on grit bins. And they were interested in being involved in highways. Other than that, they

hoped to wait and see exactly which services would be impacted by cuts before agreeing to take on services.

The next group talked generally about collaboration and how a community hub might be able to look for gaps and ways of filling the gaps. This may be preferable to, or work alongside, getting parishes to take on more services.

The online group spoke about what work the parishes already had taken on. In addition to this there was interested in bus subsidies and mobile libraries. There was concern that small communities should not have to take on too much. There was interest in the Highway Steward service. However, some parishes felt their precepts were high enough already.

Members noted that highways was separate from traffic management.

The Chair suggested the LCN establish a Highways Working Group to meet with Officers from Somerset Council on a quarterly basis. Cost of the Highway Steward would be included with the invite. It was noted that parishes could work together to share the cost of a highway Steward service.

There was also appetite for members of the LCN to meet with Officers from the Somerset Rivers Authority.

Rode Parish Councillor Mike Salmon said he wanted to hear from anyone with experience of planning applications in Conversation Areas.

The Chair thanked the participants. He encouraged discussions to carry on outside of the meeting.

Item 40: Dates and Themes of Future Meetings

The Chair advised that the provisional future meeting date was:

- Tuesday, 23 April 2024 Frome Town Hall

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