

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Burnham

Date: Tuesday, 5 March 2024

Time: 6.30pm to 8.11pm

Location: Morland Community Hub - Morland Community Hub

Chaired by: Suria Aujla (Chair)

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:	Representing
Suria Aujla	Somerset Council
Bob Filmer	Somerset Council
Alistair Hendry	Somerset Council
Kevin Bray, East Brent Parish Council (Vice-Chair)	East Brent Parish Council
Martin Chatterton	Brean Parish Council
Lesley Millard	Burnham and Highbridge Town Council
Alan Sharp	Woolavington Parish Council
Lucy Parkinson	Community Council for Somerset
Doreen Smith	Connect Somerset

Officer attendance:

Name:	Representing
Julie Cooper	LCN Team
Rob Semple	LCN Team
Bev Norman	Somerset County Highways
Sunita Mills	Somerset County Transportation
Jeremy Fry	Somerset County Highways
Leila Nicholson	Somerset County Democratic Services
Tom Parkinson	Somerset County IT

Other attendees:

Name:	Representing
Cath Searing	Burnham & Highbridge Town Council

Virtual attendees:

Name:	Representing
Kate Hellard	Somerset Council
Colin Loader	East Brent PC
Simon Langley	Puriton PC
Sam Warner	Pawlett PC
Sally Ferguson	Lympsham PC
Sally Diaz	Puriton PC

Mark Ford

Brean PC

Lewis Clarke

Press

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 27: Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors Tony Grimes and Peter Clayton, Clerks: Richard Young and Jim Murray.

Item 28: Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

Item 29: Approval of the Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

Item 30: Actions from last meeting

There were no actions from the last meeting not covered by the agenda items for this meeting.

Item 31: Brief update on Somerset Council's current financial position

The meeting received a brief update on the financial position of Somerset Council from Julie Cooper. A S25 report had been presented to Full Council from the S151 Officer to agree the 2024/2025 budget, however it was noted that a lot of further work was needed to deliver a balanced budget for 2025/26. However, further significant savings were required for 2025/26 and in order to achieve this the whole authority needed to go through a transformation to be smaller and leaner which would mean the size of the workforce would need to reduce by more than 20%. There would be a programme of devolution of assets, mainly to Parish and Town Councils who were also taking on many services to stop them from being ended. A 5% increase in Council Tax would be levied and the Council had applied for a Capitalisation Direction from Central Government which would enable the Transformation Programme to continue.

Item 32: **Public Question Time**

There were no questions from members of the Public.

Item 33: **Discussion: Highway Steward Proposal**

Jeremy Fry and Bev Norman from Highways spoke to the meeting on the Highway Steward Scheme proposed and was being undertaken by other areas within the County. It was noted that any changes are being delayed until 2025/26 so that Parish and Town councils have time to plan. All statutory road safety highway maintenance services will continue to be Somerset Council's responsibility, the schemes proposed would be to enhance the statutory services being provided.

It was explained that the Exmoor LCN was the pilot for the scheme, with a group of parishes who meet up and decide the priorities and programme of works to be undertaken, the LCN also have an input and work together to minimise issues for the area. It was noted that other LCNs were starting to take part in the scheme.

Highway Steward Scheme – all Parishes had been sent a letter in February 2024 from the Council about the schemes available and what would be covered by County and other areas which could be covered by other ways of providing non-statutory services; examples being hedge/verge maintenance, sign cleaning and gully maintenance. The system would be flexible and a contract can be taken on with other local councils/clusters of Parishes or a LCN area.

There were options available as follows:

- Highway Steward – skilled operative in a branded vehicle who visits parishes and towns to a defined work programme with priorities determined by Towns and Parishes or ad hoc works where identified.

- Local Self-Delivery – similar to Highway Steward Scheme and Somerset Council would provide a training package for the volunteers or someone appointed by the Parish or Parishes but insurance etc would need to be provided by the parish council/s or whoever is employing these people.

- Parish Price List – local councils can buy services direct from Keir as from Summer 2024 when it is hoped the price list and ordering service will be in place.
- Buying back – buying services through the raising funds through local precept and “buy back” a level of service for a particular locality.

Bev Norman explained that parishes need to consider what would be needed between rural and urban councils and allocation of hours/time would need to be agreed, for example Burnham-on-Sea have already requested a Highway Steward for half a day and other parishes locally could then take on the remaining half day as the steward would be in the locality and would then be cost effective for all. Works would be agreed between the steward and the contractors with a programme of both reactive services and planned maintenance.

A Highways Working Group was proposed and Julie asked for Parishes to let her know if they were interested and this could be set up – other LCNs were also setting up these working groups.

It was requested that more information on costings for the services being offered is needed, whether this would be for materials or just labour? ***It was confirmed that a written response would be provided.***

Item 34: **Presentation on Active Travel**

Sunita Mills, Head of Transportation gave a short presentation on Active Travel, covering Walking and Wheeling also Public Transport strategies. Need to consider users with a wide range of abilities and for different purposes.

A draft of the Somerset Local Transport Plan would be completed by summer 2024 covering what would be needed and what was trying to be achieved; an engagement plan would be created and they would be using a “People and Place” approach. Local cycling and infrastructure plans – 6 were complete and 3 more were in progress, also community led Active Travel Schemes to be progressed.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that when these plans were drawn up, the officers worked in collaboration with

Planning and Policy colleagues and that planning applications were submitted, they must reflect the circumstances of the area and include where appropriate, Active Travel Plans.

It was noted that some pathways linking parishes needed clearance work to enable safe travel for both walkers and cyclists – it was commented that this could be something that parishes could include in any highway steward scheme. Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council stated that they were developing Highbridge Train Station through regeneration, also there was work on-going with public transport and were currently evidence on bus services within the area.

Item 35: Update Young People`s Working Group

Doreen Smith gave a short update on the Young Persons working group, they had met a few times and were currently mapping youth groups and youth provision in the area. Parishes were reminded that if they hadn't responded to the questionnaire, even if it was a Nil return please do so urgently as that information can be logged so that gaps in services can be noted. There was a need to speak to youth groups to design a means of consulting young people.

Item 36: Dates and Topics of future meetings

Dates of next meetings:

25 April 2024, AGM 24 July 2024 (TBC)

Topics for future meetings:

Strategic plan for LCN (to be agreed at AGM)

Report back from highways Working Group

Budget Update

Tourism

Active Travel Strategy – linking with Highways working group

Concern was raised on attendance by Parishes to these meetings and why were they not coming? Was this due to a lack of Communication? however it was noted that working groups had good attendance. When agreeing areas to consider for the LCN, there was a need to scope out other organisations who should be attending.

Contact officer for meeting: burnhamlcn@somerset.gov.uk