

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Wellington and Wiveliscombe

Date: Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Time: 6.30 pm - 8.09 pm

Location: Wellington Rugby Football Club, Corams Lane, Wellington, TA21 8LL

Chaired by: Ross Henley (Chair)

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:	Representing
Gwil Wren (Vice-Chair)	Somerset Council
Andrew Govier	Somerset Council
Dave Mansell	Somerset Council
Sarah Wakefield	Somerset Council
David Smith	Bradford-on-Tone Parish Council
Rod Burton	Milverton Parish Council
Malcolm Vest	Nynehead Parish Council
Janet Lloyd	Sampford Arundel Parish Council
Roger Wilson	Wiveliscombe Town Council
John O'Connor	Avon and Somerset Police

Officer attendance:

Name: **Representing**

Michelle Brooks, Secretary

Jeff Brown, Somerset Council

Kate Hellard, Somerset Council LCN

Ollie Lindsell, Somerset Council

Beth Poole, Locality Officer, Somerset Council

Peter Joint, One Team Co-ordinator, Somerset Council

Bel Deering, Somerset Council

Other attendees:

Name: **Representing**

John Townend

Jeremy Toyne

Dave Farrow

Tim Parker

Michael Lodge

Pauline Holmeshaw

Andy Mickey

David Milton

Virtual attendees:

Name: **Representing**

Theo Butt Philip, Lead Member for Transformation and Human Resources

Jill Larcombe

Ally Laing

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 18: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Marcus Barr (Somerset Council), Cllr Catherine Govier (Wellington Town Council) and Wellington Town Council.

Item 19: **Declarations of Interest**

Item 20: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed upon, with the amendment of adding the attendance of Wellington Town Council Clerk, Dave Farrow and Wellington Town Councillor, Catherine Govier, and signed by the Chair.

Item 21: **Update on Somerset Council's current financial position**

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Transformation (Somerset Council), Cllr Theo Butt Philip provided an update the on Somerset Council (SC) current financial position.

A summarised overview of highlights of the update are below:

- SC knowingly declared a financial emergency, reflecting the level of concern increasing the pace of work.
- SC work to reduce the budget gap and the difficult decisions required to be able to continue to deliver services and set a budget in February 2024.
- The Adult and Childrens Social Care overspend.
- The Somerset services devolution opportunities.
- The local and national situation across the sector.
- The proposed capitalisation direction and programme.
- SC launched a 6 week consultation on budget 11 December

2023 for 6 weeks.

Following the update from Cllr Theo Butt Philip, a discussion was had between the Members where the following topics were raised:

- The autumn statement and the impact on Local Government budget.
- Whether a S114 could be avoided by devolution to City, Town and Parish (CTP) Councils and the impact on the services / assets if they are not taken on by CTP.
- The Council Tax funding model.
- The urgency for the facts, figures, data and assets and costs due to CTP meetings in early January to set precepts.
- Services that could be affected i.e. grass cutting.
- The current high level detail and the requirement for clear and more detailed information on services i.e. what is the cut to be, what is statutory, the importance to CTP, timeframe and the expected receipt of the draft SC budget (15 January 2023); 2024/25.
- Capitalisation programme and use of reserves.
- Concern from Parish Councils about the devolution project and raising of parish council precept.
- Sustainable future budget setting.

Kate Hellard, Service Manager Local Community Network Development, provided information on the Highway Steward Service, via a PowerPoint presentation, a summarised overview of highlights of the presentation are below:

- The Highway Steward scheme delivers minor works within the capability of a single operative
- The Highway Steward is a skilled highway operative, with a branded vehicle, employed by a main contractor to deliver a defined work programme and empowered to undertake ad hoc works when identified.
- The Parish or town Council decide on local priorities i.e. maintenance hedgerow / verge cutting drainage / drainage maintenance / weed removal / sign cleaning.
- The Highway steward targets discretionary parish works, any statutory or safety-relate work (potholes, damaged regulatory signs to be reported in the usual way for the Highway Authority

to inspect and assess.

- The options for delivery through Somerset Councils' Highway Maintenance Contract or self delivery through suppliers commissioned by a Parish or Parish / LCN collaboration.
- The costs, commitment and timeframes.

Following the presentation from Kate Hellard, a discussion was had between the Members where the following topics were raised:

- The capacity of work within the year, scope of CTP work needed.
- The differing rural and urban demands.
- The need for more information to factor into budgets.
- The complicated budget setting for precepts for CTPs, including inflation and Council Tax Bills.
- Highways works and other options for delivery.
- What the minimum of reduced highways services looks like for the future.
- Parishes across all LCNs related to highways not happy, highways reduced over next year, HS offer to enhance what minimum looks like in the future

The Chair summarised the discussion, and requested all information regarding the Highway Steward be circulated to the Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN Membership, the LCN team to collate feedback, and look to establish priorities and to make informed choices for the future.

Actions

Kate Hellard to circulate the Highways Steward Scheme information and presentation.

LCN Team

Collate Highway Steward feedback from the LCN Membership.

Item 22: **Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting**

The actions from the previous meeting were agreed.

Item 23: **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

Item 24: **Discussion: Themes identified in the July meeting**

Group discussions took place regarding collaboration working and devolution opportunities, the following points were highlighted;

- Highways and practicalities of how scheme will work, understand implications, clear interest in what can be done.
- Meeting with highways only meeting, discuss with individuals involved with the Exmoor pilot.
- The opportunity for control of services and ability to direct in the best way for the needs of the local community.
- The importance of consistency from Somerset Council and clarity of what is expected from CTPs.
- The risks of devolution, including increased precepts, not being able to set a relevant and adequate precept and impact on communities.
- Governance, provision and delivery of services – service level agreements.
- Collaborative working and benefits with neighbouring parish and cross boundaries.
- The LCN membership, inclusion, spreading the word and gaining involvement and engaging of VCFSE, residents, private sector and partners.
- LCN members talk to residents – orgs and partners in the room not just for parishes what’s important to communities is complex.
- The importance of Members of LCN to be acquainted with information.
- Social enterprises funding.
- Wellington Town Council Clerk, Dave Farrow, offered support for local Parish Councils in aid to look at delivery across the local area.

Actions

Kate Hellard

1. Organise a meeting of Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN and Somerset Council Highway Team (Microsoft Teams meeting during working hours) – early January 2024.
2. Circulate the Highways Steward Information to all Parish Councils not in attendance.

Somerset Association of Local Councils

Circulate list of precepts to Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN Members.

Item 25: **Provisional formation of working groups**

There were no agreed formation of working groups.

Item 26: **Dates of future meetings**

Dates of Future Meetings

Tuesday 6 February 2024

Thursday 18 April 2024

Thursday 11 July 2024

Call for venues to host the Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN

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