

## **Local Community Network Meeting Notes**

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Wellington and Wiveliscombe

Date: Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Time: 6.30pm - 8.25 pm

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

Chaired by: Ross Henley (Chair)

### **LCN core membership attendance:**

#### **Somerset Councillors**

Cllr Ross Henley (Chair), Cllr Gwil Wren (Vice-Chair), Cllr Dave Mansell, Cllr Sarah Wakefield, Cllr Marcus Barr,

#### **Parish and Town Councils**

Christopher Summers	Fitzhead Parish Council
Ian Walker	Halse Parish Council
Theresa Jacoby	Langford Budville Parish Council
Fiona Barber	Langford Budville Parish Council
Rod Burton	Milverton Parish Council
Jenny Hoyle	Milverton Parish Council
Malcolm Vest	Nynehead Parish Council
Jeremy Toye	Nynehead Parish Council
Sue Davies	Oake Parish Council
Simon Bellamy	West Buckland Parish Council
Roger Wilson	Wiveliscombe Town Council
Tim Parker	Wiveliscombe Town Council

#### **Other attendees/members of the public:**

Richard Mackrory	Wellington Bus Users Group
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#### **Officer attendance:**

Ollie Lindsell                      ICT Reactive Support Team Leader  
Jeff Brown                            Service Manager, Stronger Communities  
Stephanie Gold                      Democratic Services Officer

**Online attendees:**

Maggie Dinning                      Milverton Parish Council  
Janet Carol Lloyd                      Sampford Arundel Parish Council  
Helen Philips                        Case Management Lead (Engagement Champs)  
Emma Plummer                        Senior Community and Parish Development Officer  
Emily Window                        Business Change Assistant

**Summary of discussion:**

**Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome:  
item:**

Item 27: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Andrew Govier,  
Somerset Council

Item 28: **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

Item 29: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

**Resolved** that the notes of the previous meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup>  
December 2023 are approved as a correct record.

Item 30: **Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting**

Jeff Brown, The Service Manager, Stronger Communities advised  
that the agreed action from the previous meeting, minute Item  
24: to organise a meeting of the LCN and Somerset Council  
Highways Team would be picked up after today's meeting.

Item 31: **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

Item 32: **Identify any changes to our LCN priorities**

The Chair invited members to identify the key priorities for the LCN by holding discussions in small groups. Following the discussions each group fed back on its two key areas of focus and the following suggestions were made -

- Public Transport accessibility - Bus Services and Community Transport
- Affordable Housing
- Agriculture issues such as farm run-off.
- Flytipping and similar environmental issues i.e litter, dog fouling.
- Access to Leisure, Arts and Culture
- Climate change
- Social issues such as food poverty, mental health, support for young people ,
- Rural broadband connectivity
- Rural isolation
- Road safety

### **Resolved**

After each group had listed its key issues, the LCN came to a consensus that the Public Transport/Community Transport issue was listed by all groups and would therefore become the second working group of this LCN, in addition to the Highways working group that had been agreed upon at the previous meeting.

### Item 33: **Highway Steward Scheme Presentation**

Jeff Brown, The Service Manager, Stronger Communities gave a [presentation](#) on the Somerset Council Highway Steward Scheme.

In summary, members were advised that -

- The Highway Steward will cost 50k per year.
- Clusters of Parish and Town Councils may share the service and costs where appropriate (i.e neighbouring parishes).
- The Highway Steward service does not replace Somerset Council Statutory Highways services - it is an optional enhancement.
- The Highway Steward will undertake low tech/high value work i.e. weeding, clearing vegetation.
- The Highway Steward will not undertake any major

works including tree works.

The Chair invited comments and questions and the following points were discussed –

- There is no need for any additional insurance, this is covered in the 50k annual fee.
- The scheme can be cancelled after 12 months if it not found to be effective.
- There are no direct employment requirements for the parishes, but it would require some co ordination to plan the work required.
- The Highway Steward Scheme has been proposed very late in the year, many precepts and budgets have already been set.
- The scheme will help to minimise the impact of the cuts to Highways Services that are part of the savings proposals being taken to the 2024/2025 Budget Setting meeting of Full Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

Item 34: **Discussion: Asset and Services Devolution**

Jeff Brown, the Service Manager Stronger Communities asked members to refer back to the communication that had been sent to parish and town councils concerning potential devolution of assets and services as part of Somerset Councils response to the Financial Emergency and the impacts of this on the services that the council can continue to fund. The Service Manager asked members to hold discussions in small groups to consider the following questions.

- a) What opportunities have been identified?
- b) What additional information is required?
- c) Where are you working together to achieve actions?

During the discussions the following points were recorded –

- Wellington Town Council is already proposing to pick up a lot of assets and services at risk, and the precept will be going up by 96% to bring it up to the level need to be able to deliver those services. Part of this service delivery will include employment of an Open Spaces Manager, and

there is an opportunity for neighbouring parishes to work with Wellington Town Council on this.

- More information is needed in terms of ownership and management of assets such as open spaces, gulleys, public rights of way, bus shelters, salt bins, litter bins etc.
- More information is needed regarding contracts, budgets, condition surveys etc.
- Parish and Town Councils may consider linking up with neighbouring councils to share resources and use economies of scale.
- Somerset Association of Local Councils has written a Legal Pack on devolution and members of SALC should be able to obtain this.
- Many community groups are already managing assets and services at a local level, and this is an opportunity for the Council to work with them and identify where the gaps in service provision may be.
- In terms of its impact on biodiversity, a reduction in grass cutting can be considered a positive cut in service provision.
- The LCN is a conduit for collaborative working between parish and town councils regarding potential devolution agreements.

**Item 35: Formation of Working Groups**

The Chair asked that all members consider joining one or both of the working groups to address the LCN priorities as agreed at Agenda Item 6 and at the previous meeting. He asked that names and contact details be given to the Democratic Services officer at the end of the meeting, or by email by Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

**Item 36: Dates of Future Meetings**

The Chair advised that the dates of future meetings were proposed as –

- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024
- Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024

The LCN team were advised that both of the proposed dates clash with Oake Parish Council meetings.

The LCN team have worked hard to avoid diary clashes but please contact them on [LCN@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:LCN@somerset.gov.uk) if there are any issues. The team would also like information on alternative suitable venues within the Wellington and Wiveliscombe area. For any other queries regarding the LCN Wellington and Wiveliscombe, please email [wellingtonandwiveliscombeLCN@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:wellingtonandwiveliscombeLCN@somerset.gov.uk).

Contact officer for meeting: LCN Team [lcn@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:lcn@somerset.gov.uk)