

## Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Bridgwater

Date: Monday, 11 March 2024

Time: 7.00 pm - 8.22 pm

Location: ReCreation Community Hub, Rhode Lane, Bridgwater, TA6 6HZ

Chaired by: Diogo Rodrigues (Chair)

### LCN core membership attendance:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Councillor Kathy Pearce	Somerset Council & Bridgwater Town Council
Councillor Leigh Redman	Somerset Council & Bridgwater Town Council
Councillor Diogo Rodrigues	Somerset Council & Bridgwater Town Council
Councillor Gill Slocombe	Somerset Council & Bridgwater Town Council
Councillor Brian Smedley	Somerset Council & Bridgwater Town Council
Cllr Tim Mander (Vice-Chair)	Bridgwater Town Council

### Officer attendance:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Emmaline Kay	LCN Team
Ollie Lindsell	IT
Steve Taylor	Democratic Services

Emily Window

LCN Team

### **Other attendees:**

**Name:**

**Representing**

Paul Moore

Bridgwater Town Deal Board

Gary Perrett

Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign

Jacqui Pierce

Hamp Community Association

Deb Richardson

Somerset Film

### **Virtual attendees:**

**Name:**

**Representing**

Daniel Bell

Village Agents

Councillor Hilary Bruce

Somerset Council

Julie Cooper

LCN Team

Luke Jackson

SASP & Connect Somerset for Bridgwater

Ally Laing

Somerset Council

Helen Phillips

Somerset Council

### **Apologies:**

**Name:**

**Representing**

Stephen Leahy

Bridgwater Chamber of Commerce

Rev. Dean Whitaker

Holy Trinity Church

### **Summary of discussion:**

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

Item 35: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from the Rev. Dean Whitaker (Holy Trinity Church) and Stephen Leahy (Bridgwater Chamber of Commerce).

Item 36: **Declarations of Interest**

No additional declarations of interest were made.

Item 37: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 22 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

Item 38: **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

Item 39: **Bridgwater Town Deal**

Paul Moore, the Chairman of the Bridgwater Town Deal gave a presentation highlighting:

- In 2019 the Government had been looking for 101 towns to submit bids of up to £25 million for improvements and as a result of a successful bid they had been awarded £23.2 million for 11 projects to improve Bridgwater and its town centre.
- They had looked at the strategic priorities for local investment:
  - Maximising the community potential
  - Re-energising the town centre
  - Sustainable access and movement
- The money has to be spent by 2026 or it is returned to the Government.
- Some projects had to be ruled out due to the time constraints and/or ownership issues e.g. Bridgwater Hospital and the Classic Building.
- The 11 projects fell under 3 main headings:
  - Unlocking Growth
  - Bridgwater Tidal Barrier - a contribution towards a cycle path and pedestrian access.
  - Dunball Junction - Improvements to the Junction to unlock housing and employment land for

development.

- Walking & Cycling – The provision of local cycling links connecting the EDF funded river trail to the docks and Northgate Yard for access to the Town Centre.
- Places and Spaces
- Celebration Mile – a long held aspiration of the former District Council to improve St Johns Street & Eastover.
- Restoration of the historic Docks - to create a new leisure and tourism destination.
- Diversifying Town Centre Offer and Installing Civic Pride
- Arts Centre – To create essential flexibility to support local artists and cultural events in the grade I listed building with an improved Theatre, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and circulation spaces.
- Town Hall Theatre – To provide a cultural facility with inclusive access, improved lighting, changing facilities, a lift and a new reception space.
- Engine Room 2.0 – Providing increased capacity for the community media centre, engaging people with digital art and media enhancing skills and giving opportunities to disadvantaged parts of the community.
- Bridgwater “Step Up” – a flexible business and enterprise hub including creative “pop-up” and “taster-event” space and support. The funding for this had been reduced and they were currently looking for a venue.
- Bridgwater Carnival – As a big part of Bridgwater and its identity was the Carnival they were helping to secure the future of carnival events by part funding phase 1 of the carnival production space.
- Town Wardens / Event Ambassadors - Public engagement had highlighted this up as a potential asset to the town centre as it provided a support presence to help reduce antisocial behaviour and build confidence for visitors.

The LCN then split into groups to consider the following questions:

1. From the following list of projects that were *not* taken up by the Town Deal, which ones do you feel could be a priority for the residents of Bridgwater?
  - Bridgwater Hospital
  - Mecca Building
  - Bridgewater College - Centre of Sporting Excellence
  - Blake Museum
  - Cycle paths
2. What ideas/thoughts do you have for this to be successful?
3. Which partners should be working together for this to happen?

The following feedback/suggestions were given:

- Refurbishment of the Bridgwater Library, a pop-up food venue at the Bowerings Building and cycle paths with links to the College and the work of the Active Travel Group.
- There were concerns over the lack of momentum now that Sedgemoor had been replaced by the new Unitary Authority.
- Cycle routes and improvements around the Docks and Russell Place
- Bridgwater Town Council held £30k for a feasibility study of the Classic Buildings.
- Brick and Tile Museum and the Blake Museum – improvement to enhance the visitor experience of these valuable tourist assets.

Item 40: **Updates from Active Travel and Youth Provision working groups**

Gary Perrett, Chair of the Active Travel Working Group, gave an update highlighting:

- That there were some things that could be done without funding such as training and guided cyclins, as provided by the Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign, as well feasibility studies.

- They had four general topics that the working group was working on:
  1. Eastover Bikeability Programme – trying to replicate and roll out the work done at Eastover School which looked to provide access to bikes and cycle training for all year 5 and year 6 pupils.
  2. The creation of an active travel hub – they were speaking to local planning officers, looking at the Taunton and Newport travel hubs.
  3. Undertaking a Bridgwater Lighting Survey to identify issues and problems by the end of March to present to the Town Council and which would hopefully achieve some quick wins.
  4. Active Travel – they were engaging with local businesses and local employers to try and understand what they were doing regarding active travel.

The following Youth Provision Working Group update was given:

- They had been meeting since the beginning of the LCN.
- They had created a ‘live’ list of youth provision that was now online on the Bridgwater Town Council’s website
- They were looking to get providers to showcase themselves on the website with reels, photos and music.
- They were looking into the setting up of an interactive App for young people and were speaking to Bridgwater and Taunton College to see if any of their IT students could help with this.
- The Police’s Violence Reduction Partnership had launched two safe spaces, one in Taunton, and the other in Bridgwater, upstairs in Café #1, on Fridays between 4 – 6pm.

It was suggested that an action for the Working Group could be to talk to Dave Englefield at Sedgemoor FM about supporting youth provision possibly with the help of students.

Item 41: **Actions**

There were no further actions.

Item 42: **Dates and high priority issues**

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be the LCNs

annual general meeting on 5 June 2024 – the venue was still to be confirmed.

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