

Minutes of a Meeting of the Local Community Network - Exmoor held in the The Moorland Hall - Cutcombe, Wheddon Cross TA24 7DL, on Thursday, 8 June 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Frances Nicholson	Somerset Council
Cllr Steven Pugsley	Somerset Council
Sally Baker / Patricia Bainbridge (Clerk)	Brompton Ralph PC
Sarah Buchanan (Clerk)	Brompton Regis PC
Jan Aldridge (Clerk)	Brushford PC
Sally Moran / Norma Martin	Clatworthy PC
Jon Levenson / Roger Foxwell	Cutcombe PC
Christine Dubery / Nick Thwaites	Dulverton TC
Mike Ellicott	Exford PC
Jill Wright / Francis Schott	Exmoor PC
Janette Sapsford	Exton PC
Mark Bolland / Anne Sparling / Dave Powell	Luxborough PC
Duncan McCannlis	Porlock PC
Dan Barber	Skilgate PC
Katy Attwater / Lesley Webb (Clerk)	Timberscombe PC
Fran A'Brook	Upton Parish Council
Colin Wilkins	Winsford Parish Council
Julian Soltau	Withypool & Hawkridge PC
Andrew Bray	Wootton Courtenay PC

Other Members present remotely:

John Anson (Cutcombe PC)

In attendance:

Cllr Val Keitch (SC), Loretta Whetlor (SALC), Tony Brooks (Crowcombe PC)

Sara Skirton (Virtual), Kate Hellard (Virtual) Kevin Bridgwater & Kali Martin (SC Highways) Frances Gully, & Emma Plummer (SC LCN Development), Tom Parkinson & Ollie Lindsell (IT), Ally Laing (SC Comms), Beccy Brown (SC Employment & Skills), Sam Murrell (SC Clerk)

- 1 To elect the Chair of the Local Community Network** - Agenda Item 1
Somerset Cllr Steven Pugsley was nominated by Mike Ellicott (Exford PC), seconded by Andrew Bray (Wootton Courtenay PC).

No other nominations were made so Cllr Steven Pugsley was duly elected.

- 2 To appoint the Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network** - Agenda Item 2
Mike Ellicott (Exford PC) was proposed by Cllr Steven Pugsley, seconded by Andrew Bray (Wootton Courtenay PC).

No other nominations were received so Mike Ellicott was duly elected.

- 3 Apologies** - Agenda Item 3
Apologies were received from Stephen Kimsey (Huishchampflower PC) Michelle Haines & Linda Brooks (A&S Police) Andrew Turner (SC Highways), Matthew Headley (Brompton Regis PC), Will Lock (Exmoor Young Voices)

- 4 Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 4
No declarations of interest were made.

- 5 Public Question Time (Items not covered on the agenda).** - Agenda Item 5
No questions, statements or comments were made at this point of the agenda.

- 6 To approve the minutes of the previous Exmoor Area Panel meeting held on Tuesday 25 April 2023** - Agenda Item 6
The minutes of the last meeting of the Exmoor Area Panel were agreed.

- 7 Update on actions from last meeting** - Agenda Item 7
There were no matters arising.

- 8 Update on the Exmoor LCN Highways Pilot Project** - Agenda Item 8
The minutes of the Highways Subgroup Meeting had been circulated with the agenda. Matters arising were as follows:-

- Cutcombe PC asked for an update on the Exford B3224 Land slippage. It was reported that this was progressing very positively. The Bridges Team were now looking at the tender process and would be inviting expressions of interest. All landowners were receiving communications and it was hoped that this work would be delivered within the current financial year. The Chair acknowledged the hard work of officers and members to expedite this issue and work towards a resolution.

- The parishes were reminded that the Highway Steward is a single operative who will carry out a dynamic risk assessment before undertaking work on the Highway. If it is deemed too dangerous and or there is a requirement for traffic management then the work will be deferred. In the main his current work involved working on the minor roads, cleaning signs and cutting back foliage. Parishes were asked to continue to log work requests via the online form.
- General defects outside of his scope, should continue to be reported via the defects portal. The link can be found [here](#).
- Parishes were reminded that the Devolved Funding Budget was still available to be drawn upon. The only money spent in the last financial year was for the provision of Grit Bins which had used some capital funding. It was requested that a costing breakdown of the spend was provided at the next Highway Sub-group Meeting, so that it was clear what budget remained.
- Andrew Bray asked if the devolved funding requests concerning second cuts on the roads in Wootton Courtenay had been progressed? The clerk advised that she had been waiting on a map identifying the affected hedgerows, so that this could be followed up.
- The Chair stated that the representation of the Sub-group would need to be reviewed to ensure that the group wasn't too unwieldy but all parishes on the moor had a way to feed into the work. At the last sub-group meeting there were only 3 parish representatives in attendance.
- It was envisaged that the model for the Highways Project would be rolled out across Somerset where other LCNs consider this a priority. Feedback is important in order for the Highways team to evaluate the effectiveness of the Highway Steward during this pilot period. The team can track metrics and performance but it's the parishes stories that bring the role to life and articulate the difference that the service is making. Please complete the Highway Steward satisfaction survey (found [here](#)). Alternatively, feedback can be sent to HighwaySteward@somerset.gov.uk.

Future meetings will be held at the Dulverton Sports Pavilion on Friday 23 June and Friday 22 September 2023.

9 To determine the priorities and areas of focus for the Local Community Network in the next 12 months - Agenda Item 9

The Chair opened the discussion by stating that it was important that the Exmoor LCN decided what themes, issues and opportunities it wanted to explore over the next 12 months. The Highways pilot was already underway, and it was agreed that this should continue as it has been very successful.

There were a number of other subjects that could be considered, such as:-

- Affordable housing for young families;
- More accessible public transport across the moor;
- Social care and looking after the most vulnerable;
- Economic Regeneration – ensuring local businesses prosper
- Access to Education / linking in with employment and skills
- Youth Work and supporting young families.

The chair then invited members of the LCN to provide their thoughts as follows:-

- Andrew Bray (Wootton Courtenay PC) agreed that housing and economic regeneration were key issues in supporting communities locally;
- Duncan McCanlis (Porlock PC) wanted the Exmoor LCN to concentrate on getting itself organised and established in its first year, to create a solid foundation. This would involve ensuring that all parts of the moor had representation and parishes were able to feed into the relevant sub-groups where needed. In the second year, he identified Public Transport, Road Safety and Devolution as items worth exploring.
- Mike Ellicott (Vice-Chair/Exford PC) asked if information could be shared from the other pilot areas in Wincanton and Frome, to see if there was any learning that could be employed in the Exmoor area. He thought this would be a good opportunity for the three pilots to work together. He also hoped that going forward LCNs would come together to work on common issues/themes and share expertise. *Cllr Val Keitch responded that this was a positive idea, and one she would look to progress.*
- Katy Attwater (Timberscombe PC). Climate Emergency especially around severe weather events and how Exmoor housing can be better equipped to deal with this. (Insulation, resilience to flooding etc). The Chair advised that Climate Change should underpin all the emerging themes as opposed to being a separate item.
- Julian Soltau (Withypool & Hawkridge) How can we influence Council decisions? How can we ensure we are not just a talking shop? *Cllr Val Keitch advised that in the absence of the former District Councils, LCNs were seen as a way for the parishes to work collaboratively together with Somerset Council and identify the issues that matter most to them. The LCNs would feed back into the Council, and would be a key way to align priorities and budgets going forward.*
- Janette Sapsford (Exton PC) Education and social support for young people especially around mental health.
- John Levenson (Cutcombe PC) Would like to see planning consultation opened up to include Exmoor Young Voices, and more development for low-cost affordable family housing. He also would like to see more opportunities for the introduction of Fibre Broadband across the moor, and for utility

companies such as Openreach to be held accountable and scrutinised.

- Andrew Bray - Subgroups should be created, which need to be supported by key officers/specialists and align with executive portfolio holder responsibilities. This would ensure that key decisions and ways of working are delivered. Actions need to be tracked in real time and be accessible so that everyone can monitor and report back. It was important that the LCN didn't overload itself with priorities in the first year, but rather concentrated on a few to ensure success.

Other questions arising:-

- Clarity was required and more information on the LCN way of working and Terms of Reference (TOR), for those who had not attended previous meetings. The TOR had been circulated with the agenda pack. Information relating to the Exmoor Area Pilot, including minutes of previous meetings can be found on the website [here](#). A LCN handbook has also been produced which provides information on the operating model for LCNs. This can be downloaded from the Somerset Council website [here](#).
- It was suggested that a skills audit was undertaken across the Exmoor LCN to determine who had expertise and could contribute to the sub-groups. It would be a good way of assessing who had capacity and experience, and where gaps need to be filled. The emphasis should be on "What can you do and what can you contribute?"

Identified Outcomes:

- The Chair concluded by saying that the Exmoor LCN would be working towards "allowing Exmoor communities to flourish via the provision of affordable housing and support to families; making services more accessible and enabling businesses to prosper". This would be accomplished by setting up sub-groups and working through data packs of information. These data packs would identify areas where the sub-groups could make the most impact. Topics underpinning these headlines would be around broadband, employment and skills training, education and housing.

Who else needs to be here?

- Christine Dubery (Dulverton TC) proposed that a representative from the West Somerset Flood Group should be invited to participate. The Chair identified Brenda Maitland Walker Brendamw49@gmail.com as a contact point for the WSFG.
- Beccy Brown (SC) - Homestart would be a good partner to include from the VCFSE as they had extensive knowledge and experience of working with young families across West Somerset.
- Exmoor Young Voices - They have been added to the core membership of the

LCN, but unfortunately their representative (Will Lock) was working on the evening of the meeting. They would continue to be invited to attend and included in any sub-groups where relevant.

Who can provide the data needed?

- Somerset Council Business Intelligence has information that can be used to evaluate the emerging themes.
- Somerset Council as the principal housing authority for the Exmoor area would have access to information on housing need, and affordability.
- Exmoor National Park as the principal planning authority would have information on development proposals and housing providers on the moor.

The Chair stated he would like to see the sub-groups set up before the next meeting of the Exmoor LCN in September. It was agreed that this would be done over the summer. The LCN link officer (once established) to liaise with the elected members, and vice chair to determine a way forward.

10 Avon and Somerset Police Report - Agenda Item 10

The Police had tendered their apologies in advance of the meeting, and an update report had been supplemented to the agenda.

A discussion was held about how the Police could add value to the meeting. It was agreed that the crime figure updates could be found online, and that it would be more informative for them to provide insight on local hot topics. Domestic violence was given as an example.

The LCN would provide a good opportunity for the Police to engage more directly with local communities and be a visible presence. They might find it beneficial to have representatives on the sub-group specific to housing and supporting people in their homes.

11 Exmoor National Park Authority Update - Agenda Item 11

There were no officers from the park in attendance but the following updates were provided:-

- Due to financial pressures and budget restraints, charging for services (such as car parks) is being introduced. There is also likely to be a reduction in the number of meetings, and a Governance Consultation is being launched aimed at the Exmoor parishes. It is very important that parishes used this opportunity to consult with the park about the review.
- The vote for the parish representatives is ending shortly, and each parish has 5 votes to elect 5 members. (The vote is per parish council).

- The Exmoor Parish Consultative Forum is a very important way for parishes to communicate with the National Park, as it includes ALL parish councils on both sides of the county border. The Park has recently indicated that the LCN would be their preferred method of consultation in the future, but this means that the North Devon parishes will not be represented. It was very important that parishes continue to support the Consultative Forum as well as working with the LCN.

Daniel Barber asked what the ENPA policy was on accessibility around Wimbleball Lake, following a planning decision to refuse a pathway around the perimeter which would have enabled wheelchair users to enjoy the lake facilities? Cllr Pugsley responded that there were considerations which led to the refusal such as unsuitability of the terrain, and the concerns about water levels rising and covering the proposed pathway. He went on to add that the correct place to raise this type of issue in the future would be the Exmoor Consultative Forum. The next meeting is due to take place at 7pm on the 22 June at The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe. Details can be found [here](#).

12 To agree the frequency of meetings - Agenda Item 12

The Exmoor Area Panel had traditionally held their meetings every other month which culminated in approximately 5/6 meetings a year. (They were not usually convened over the summer months or December due to holidays). It was agreed that this meeting schedule would be the model to work from.

13 To agree the schedule of meetings for the next 12 months - Agenda Item 13

In the past meetings had been held in January, March, May, July, September and November. This had got slightly out of sync recently, but it was agreed to try and return to this pattern, whilst allowing for smaller themed working groups at alternate intervals in between.

14 Date and time of next Local Community Network meeting - Agenda Item 14

Thursday 7 September 2023 at the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe

(The meeting ended at 8:40pm)

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CHAIR