

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Minehead and Watchet

Date: Thursday, 13 July 2023

Time: 7.00 pm - 8.20 pm

Location: Crowcombe Village Hall - Crowcombe

Chaired by:

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:	Representing
Cllr Mandy Chilcott	Somerset Council
Cllr Andy Hadley	Somerset Council
Cllr Marcus Kravis	Somerset Council
Cllr Rosemary Woods	Somerset Council
Cllr Mike Rawle	Bicknoller Parish Council
Cllr Brenda Maitland-Walker	Carhampton Parish Council
Cllr John Passingham	Combe Florey Parish Council
Cllr Tony Brooks,	Crowcombe Parish Council
Cllr Tony Melnyk	Dunster Parish Council
Cllr Debbie Telling	Lydeard St Lawrence & Tolland PC
Cllr Craig Palmer	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Kate Adams,	Monksilver Parish Council
Cllr Ian Duncan	Old Cleeve Parish Council
Cllr Jan Swan,	Sampford Brett Parish Council
Cllr Mostyn Symes	Stogumber Parish Council
Cllr John Irven	Watchet Town Council
Cllr Maggie Forkes	West Bagborough Parish Council
Cllr Sue Sherry	West Quantoxhead Parish Council
Cllr Peter Payne,	Williton Parish Council
Cllr Robert Hall,	Withycombe Parish Council
Bernard Maynard-Smith,	Minehead and Coastal Development Trust
Cllr Loretta Whetlor,	Somerset Association of Local Councils

(SALC)

Officer attendance:

Name:

Kate Hellard, LCN Development Lead
Emma Plummer
Emily Window, Project & Change Assistant
Kali Martin, Highways Co-ordinator,
Sam Murrell, Clerk
Tom Parkinson, Technical Solutioner

Representing

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council Highways
Somerset Council
Somerset Council

Other attendees:

Name:

Cllr Val Keitch
Alison Prior, Ben Jewell, Collette Whiteoak
Cllr Jacquey Newton
Ann Diment
Wendy Philipson
Cllr Bill Hodson
Phil Gannon
Peter Hamilton
Geoffrey Williams
Alan Parslow
Mel Catchpole (Clerk)
Claire Morrisson-Jones (Clerk)
John Richards (Chairman)
Graham Sizer
Zara Aitken

SR White
John Stace

Representing

Somerset Council
Minehead Businesses
Combe Florey Parish Council
SALC
West Quantoxhead Parish Council
Minehead Town Council
Old Cleeve Parish Council
West Bagborough
Old Cleeve
Member of the Public
Crowcombe Parish Council
Stogumber & Bicknoller PC
WACET – Business Chamber
Minehead Chamber of Commerce
Minehead and Coastal Development Trust
(MCDT)
Member of the Public
Member of the Public

Virtual attendees:

Name:

Cllr Andy Sully
Jane Knowles
Carol Juffs (Clerk)
Marilyn Crothers
Hannah Snowdon
Cllr Mimi Palmer
Ray Tew (Chair)

Representing

Somerset Council
Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)
Nettlecombe Parish Council
Nettlecombe Parish Council
Spark Somerset
Minehead Town Council
Minehead Coastal Development Trust (MCDT)

Apologies:

Name:

Cllr Hugh Davies
Cllr Christine Lawrence
Cllr Mike Rigby
Cllr Andy Sully (attended virtually)
Cllr Robin Wichard,

Representing

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Nettlecombe Parish Council

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 1: **To elect the Chair of the Local Community Network**

Only members of the core membership are eligible to be nominated as the Chair. Either the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network must be a Somerset Council Councillor.

There were 22 members of the core membership present in the room at the time of the vote.

Somerset Councillor Andy Sully was nominated by Cllr Loretta Whetlor (SALC), seconded by John Passingham (Combe Florey PC). Although Cllr Andy Sully was not present in the meeting, he agreed to accept the position online.

No other nominations were made so Cllr Andy Sully was duly elected.

In his absence it was agreed that Cllr Mandy Chilcott could chair the meeting in the interim unless the Vice Chair (once elected wished to do so).

Item 2: **To appoint the Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network**

There were two proposals for the position of Vice Chair:-

- Cllr Tony Brooks (Crowcombe PC), proposed by Cllr Peter Payne (Williton PC) and seconded by Somerset Cllr Mandy Chilcott.
- Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker (Carhampton PC), proposed by Ian Duncan (Old Cleeve PC) and seconded by Mostyn Symes (Stogumber PC).

There were 22 of the core membership present in the room who were eligible to vote. The vote was taken with a show of hands which indicated, Tony Brooks (7), Brenda Maitland Walker (14).

Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker was therefore duly elected. For the purposes of this meeting, it was agreed that Cllr Mandy Chilcott would act as interim Chair.

Item 3: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Somerset Cllrs Hugh Davies, Christine Lawrence, Mike Rigby and Andy Sully. (Andy Sully attended in a virtual capacity). Robin Wichard (Nettlecome PC), Ray Tew, (Minehead Coastal Development Trust).

Item 4: **Declarations of Interest**

Somerset Councillor Marcus Kravis declared an interest as a Minehead Town Councillor.

Item 5: **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions or comments put forward under this part of the agenda.

Item 6: **To determine the priorities and areas of focus for the Local Community Network for the next 12 months**

The following questions were submitted by Bernard Maynard-Smith on behalf of the Minehead Coastal Development Trust:-

- How will the LCN ensure parity between the very different communities of interest and their priorities? I mean of course the upland, coastal and rural communities?
There are 18 LCNs across Somerset which have been formed as Boards of the Council following consultation with the parishes, stakeholders and residents. Key questions addressed during the consultation were about who communities identified with, and who they wanted to work with going forward. The core membership of the LCN consists of Somerset Councillors, the parishes and town councils, public services and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector who will all have one vote each. It is hoped that most of the time, themes and topics of interest will be decided by examining the data and coming to a consensus, without the need for formal voting. Smaller working groups will be set up to explore and dig deeper into the main issues and will feed back into the main meeting. All the LCN meetings are public so encourage participation from all members of the community.
- Additionally, how will the linkages be made and balanced under article 4.6 of of the Terms of Reference to ensure cross LCN priorities are addressed appropriately, particularly those of the Somerset coastal communities which spread across 4 LCNS?
The LCN boundaries are lines not walls, and it is understood that there may well be commonality on themes and issues across LCNs. All LCNs will be served by Link officers, who will work together and share knowledge on the emerging themes. This will assist in the production of an annual report, which will be considered by the Somerset Council Executive Committee. The Executive Member with remit for LCNs will meet on a quarterly basis with the LCN Chairs so that common

themes and issues can be discussed. The Scrutiny Committee(s) Chairs are also included in this meeting.

- Is there an assurance that the way the LCN is seen, heard and listened to by the ruling group at Somerset Council, will not be adversely affected by its Political make-up?
The Associate Lead Member for Localities (LCNs) & Public Health, Cllr Val Keitch responded that the LCN model was in both business cases for the Unitary Council, and thus was fully supported by all Councillors across Somerset Council. There was a very real will to make them work, and she would give her personal assurance to this.

Item 6a: **What are LCNs and how will we work together**

Kate Hellard (LCN Development Lead) shared a presentation on the purpose of the LCN and how it would feed back into the work of Somerset Council. The presentation slides can be viewed [here](#).

There is a dedicated page on the Somerset Council website which can be accessed via this [link](#).

Questions arising from the floor:-

- How many LCN link officers will there be, and how will they be contacted? Are they contactable now?
There will be 9 FTE Community Link Officers who will take responsibility for 2 LCNs each. They will be directly contactable via email and telephone and will work closely with the Chairs of the LCN. Recruitment to these posts is imminent. In the meantime, the LCN team can be contacted on LCN@somerset.gov.uk.
- How will the LCN be financed?
There is currently an earmarked budget set aside within Somerset Council to finance the first year and implementation of the LCNs. This is to pay for venue hire and associated costs with facilitating the initial meetings. LCNs will make the most of any funding opportunities, both local and national, to address the priorities of any one area. LCNs will influence the budgets and policies of

the new Council.

- When will the evidence and data packs be ready to help inform the work of the LCN?

Somerset Council Business Intelligence officers are currently compiling generic data packs which will be brought along to the next meeting. It is hoped that the worksheets and notes generated from each initial meeting will shape and tailor the content and highlight where communities want to focus their attention.

There is a [FAQs](#) page on the Somerset Council LCN webpage.

Item 6b: **Discussion – What is important to residents and businesses in our area? (An opportunity to raise any local issues or concerns for LCN to consider)**

Attendees were asked to share what themes, issues and opportunities they wanted the Minehead and Watchet LCN to explore over the next 12 months.

Some of the main issues of discussion are highlighted below:-

Housing

- No masterplan to service and provide outlying infrastructure for new build development. E.g. Access to GPs, dentists and health services. Houses going up in areas of high unemployment leading to reliance on cars to commute to work. No public transport links. Each development is judged individually – needs integration. Robust parking plans to ensure streets are not congested.
- S106 Agreements tied to local housing to ensure made available to local people.
- 35% threshold on affordable housing per development.
- More Council housing or low-cost affordable options needed.
- Introduce an extra tax on second homeowners, so that the cost of local housing is driven down. This would make it more affordable and encourage young people to stay.

Highways

- Need a strategic review of the SC Highways Plan.

- Reinstatement of the B3191 at Cleeve Hill, Watchet. (An essential link road for West Somerset and diversion route for the A39 – the only alternative route).
- Conditions of the highway/lack of maintenance to the required standards.
- Lack of capital investment in the highway's infrastructure. (Bridges and Structures).
- Lack of communication about diversions, routine maintenance. Lack of communication between the main service providers. The debris from hedge cuttings lands in the drains after they have been cleared by the gully maintenance team! Let the parishes know what is going on, so that they can ensure vehicles are moved and residents are aware of the work.
- Clearer signage and more communication with traffic management about Speed Indicator Devices (SIDS) and speeding.
- Large agricultural vehicles and HGVs using small roads that are not equipped to cope with the demands of the equipment. Subsequent damage to the verges, hedging and nearby housing/buildings and structures.
- Lack of upkeep on public footpaths.
- Obstruction of Vision splays.
- Fund "20 is plenty" schemes to reduce speeding traffic on the roads.

Transport Links

- Improve / Implement bus routes to Bridgwater especially for employment and educational opportunities.
- Need a Transport Plan.
- Student travel options – more affordable and reliable.
- More Active Travel to encourage cycling and walking.
- West Somerset Railway not cost effective for local people. Introduce subsidised tickets for local residents to encourage use.
- Encourage on demand public transport and Wivey Link type schemes.

Environmental Issues / Flooding

- Coastal Protection – Cleeve Hill Watchet and Blue Anchor.
- Flooding concerns in the rural parishes, specifically Monksilver, Nettlecombe, Dunster and Carhampton.

- Surface water flooding on the highway and run-off from agricultural land.
- Biodiversity duty.
- Enforcement of planning conditions. Planners are not local and don't do site visits. Preserve the character of rural villages.
- Litter, cleaning and dog fouling enforcement. Availability of bins and siting.

Education

- Better curriculum at West Somerset College to enable more job opportunities.

Young People

- Improve access to Facilities / Opportunities. Young people move away to pursue University Education and don't return.
- Lack of things to do leads to Antisocial Behaviour.
- Low quality and poorly paid employment.

Health and Wellbeing

- Rural isolation for both old and young people. Lack of connectivity in rural areas means that there is no online social engagement.
- Health services are overstretched. No access to doctors, dentists and social care.
- Multi- activity Leisure Centre including swimming pool. This would also provide business and tourist opportunities.
- Having mobile pantry vehicle to service the more remote villages – via the food banks and or pantry scheme.
- Tackling deprivation – food, fuel and transport poverty.

Business

- Tourism is centred on the coastal strip.
- Lack of essential facilities in rural areas – health, post office.
- Minehead BID and Watchet Business Chamber (WACET) have both undertaken business surveys in their towns to determine their priorities.
- Lack of essential toilet facilities for visitors.

Communications

- Too much bureaucracy – don't hide behind screens!
People without internet are disadvantaged, calls are not returned and there is a lack of face-to-face contact.
- Access to Councillors – make sure the right person is available.
- Better connectivity in rural areas. Remove digital exclusion.
- Undertake a digital mapping exercise.
- Bring back Area Panel meetings. LCNs are too large!
- Residents need a voice and a platform, not Council's making decisions based on assumptions.
- Respond to Parish Council concerns and correspondence.
Somerset Council is either patchy or non-existent!
- More enforcement staff – planning.

Positive Feedback

The parishes of Stogumber and Bicknoller praised the hard work of their Somerset Councillor Christine Lawrence. They recognised she was a good advocate for their communities.

They were also pleased that each representative from the core membership of the LCN got one vote as this would not overpower the towns and focus on urban issues to the detriment of the more rural parishes.

Other organisations requested to be present: -

- Julie Lynch – Idverde. (Street Cleaning and Bin emptying)
- Police – Neighbourhood Beat Team
- Public Transport
- Voluntary Transport Schemes such as Bickwatch, Wheels and ATWest
- Food Banks – Quantock Foodbank, The Pantry
- Other Community Groups – Coastal Community Teams
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Job Centre / DWP / Employment and Skills
- Environment Agency (Coastal Flood Management and main rivers)
- Local Lead Flood Team (LLFA) Surface water flooding, water courses.

Item 7: **To agree the frequency of meetings**

It was agreed that there should be approximately 6 meetings each year taking place approximately every 2 months. This would also align with the frequency of the other LCN meetings.

Item 8: **The schedule of meetings for the next 12 months**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Minehead and Watchet LCN would take place towards the end of September, into the beginning of October and every two months thereafter.

Smaller sub-groups or working parties could be set up once the themes and topics were established and could meet more often. Their findings would feed back into the main LCN meeting.

Parishes were also asked if they knew of suitable venues for hosting meetings. Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker suggested West Somerset House.

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