

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Wells and Rural

Date: Thursday, 14 September 2023

Time: 7.00 pm - 8.45 pm

Location: Gurney Slade & Binegar Memorial Hall, Binegar Lane, Gurney Slade, Radstock,
BA3 4TR

Chaired by: Somerset Councillor Edric Hobbs

Vice Chair: St Cuthbert Out Parish Councillor Tony Hathway

LCN core membership attendance:

Councillor Theo Butt Philip

Councillor Edric Hobbs (Chair)

Councillor Tessa Munt

Councillor Ros Wyke

Binegar Parish Councillor Jon Abbott

Binegar Parish Clerk Dianne Abbott

Binegar Parish Councillor Phillip Roberts

Emborough Parish Meeting Chair/Clerk Philip Blatchford

North Wootton Parish Councillor Kathy Bissett

Priddy Parish Councillor Rachel Thompson

Priddy Parish Council Clerk Gill Pettitt

St Cuthbert Out Parish Councillor Tony Hathway (Vice Chair)

St Cuthbert Out Parish Deputy Clerk Lisa Pool

St Cuthbert Out Parish Councillor Martin Cooke

Wells City Councillor Philip Welch

Westbury sub Mendip Parish Councillor Sue Isherwood

Wookey Parish Councillor Andy Tagg

Wookey Parish Council Clerk Denise Boulton

Stakeholders:

Scott McMillan, Volunteer Network

Siobhan Goodwin, Bishops Palace

Michelle Payne, Heads Up

Kim Robinson, Mendip Community Credit Union and Sustainable Wells

Siobhan White, Connect Somerset

Jessica Lewin, Connect Somerset

Sister Anne Martin, Chair of Shepton Mallet Dementia Action Alliance

Officer attendance:

Kate Hellard, Lead Officer, Council Staff

Terena Isaacs, Council Staff

Tom Parkinson, Council Staff (ICT)

Claire Dicken, Council Staff

Helen Bowen, Council Staff

Virtual attendees:

Emily Window, Council Staff

Dawn Rogers, Council Staff

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 9: **Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Heather Shearer

Somerset Councillor Tony Robbins

Godney Parish Councillor Richard Evans

Item 10: **Declarations of Interest**

None.

Item 11: **Public Question Time (not covered on the agenda)**

Wookey Parish Councillor Andy Tagg was invited to speak. He said LCNs should operate as a forum to help the Council identify issues. He said the Council needed to listen to parishes. He said, in the past there had been incidents where Mendip District Council had failed to listen to Parish Councils and this had been detrimental to the development of its Local Plan.

He suggested that the Council introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as a way of raising more funds than Section 106 Legal Agreements.

Councillor Ros Wyke spoke as the Executive Lead for Planning. She suggested the LCN could invite a Senior Officer from the Planning Team to attend a future meeting. The Somerset Council was due to adopt a new Local Plan by 2028. The Plan including the suggestion to introduce CIL would be subject to public consultation.

The Chair agreed that a senior member of the Planning Team should be invited to a future meeting of the LCN.

Wells City Councillor Philip Welch asked about the set-up of LCNs and what spending they had. The Lead Officer clarified the LCNs would not have budgets, but may in the future have some spending, perhaps by drawing in funding from partners. She explained the range of powers held by the LCNs. For instance, they could influence Somerset Council's policies and priorities. Their findings would be reported back to the Somerset Council.

Members asked for future agendas and previous notes to be made available as soon as possible.

Members said they would also appreciate it if a representative of the Police were able to attend future meetings of the LCN. The Chair noted that next Police Forum would be held on 19 September 2023 at Ashwick Village Hall, 5 pm to 7 pm.

Item 12: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes from the meeting held on 29 June 2023 were agreed.

Item 13: **Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting**

The Vice Chair said the first meeting of the LCN had produced many issues, including:

- Highways
- Connectivity and Communication
- Winter Emergency Planning
- Environment and Climate Change
- Fly Tipping and Litter
- Road Safety
- Active Travel
- Planning and Enforcement
- Affordable Housing
- Bus Travel

Item 14: **An Introduction to data**

The LCN team had produced a data pack for the area. Copies of the data would be sent to Members after the meeting.

Members queried the number of pupils and schools.

Members were encouraged to use the data as part of their decision-making, but they were also encouraged to bring their knowledge of the lived experience of the residents. Datasets would be very useful when the LCN wished to evidence an issue.

Members were asked to consider what data they felt they needed in the future. Members said they would appreciate more detail,

for instance knowing the actual numbers as well as the percentages. Members wondered whether figures of other regions and national figures would be helpful. Particularly making a comparison of similar area make-up, for instance, this LCN would need to be compared with another rural area.

Members further wished to have data of each parish as well as data for the whole LCN area.

Members said one major local issue was road safety. They would appreciate more traffic Police in the area.

Item 15: **Discussion**

See items 16 and 17 below.

Item 16: **Active Travel: including footpaths, fast and slow ways**

Members suggested that the issue be renamed as Active and Recreational Travel and Rights of Way.

Councillor Ros Wyke proposed that each Parish Council be supplied with accurate data to show the Rights of Way within the Parish, and then consider whether it meets the local needs. For instance, connectivity to the next village, muddy footpaths, plotting priority routes. Members suggested that the Parish maps then be drawn up for the entire LCN. This would result in a plan for a network of improvements to active and recreational travel across the LCN.

Members showed support for the Somerset Circle Multi User Path and links from it to nearby villages.

The Chair said another major issue was the maintenance of pavements. One Member said “parish online” was useful for residents and parishes to report broken pavements. Wells was an area of particular concern for broken pavements, sometimes caused by heavy vehicles driving and parking on them.

The LCN discussed the issue in groups. The issues that were

raised included:

- Improve existing road, footpaths, Rights of way before any new control speed in rural areas (60 mph in villages and lanes).
- Can S106/CIL be used in other geographical areas?
- Footpaths maintained by volunteers as insufficient funds at Somerset Council and 6 years of repairs and maintenance outstanding. What can be done without significant funding?
- Improve rural bus services.
- Create links to neighbouring parishes.
- Create local supporter's groups.
- Identify local landowners.
- Avoid having to crossing A and B roads.
- Payment mechanisms, Agri Schemes
- Get a map, mark parish boundary, mark community links, circuits.
- Share the work some parishes have already started. Showing things that worked, and things that did not work.
- Faster dedication of footpath requests, from landowners
- More footpath markers
- Speedier response to footpath blockage, eg trees/deliberate action by landowners
- Better accessibility eg modify stiles, by condition of rights of way
- Dangerous narrow pavements along main roads, A37, through Gurney Slade – lorries frequently mount the pavements. Residents are scared to use the paths.

- Creation of routes to join villages Binegar /Ashwick Oakhill.

In conclusion, the parishes asked to be supplied with maps of their own parishes and the neighbouring parishes.

Item 17: **Planning for winter**

This topic had been raised at the last meeting as a desire for more gritting. It was noted that the Council was due to inspect the grit stores in the next few weeks.

Item 18: **Agree themes for future meetings - identify who and what is needed**

- Invite a Senior Member of the Planning Team to a future meeting to help the LCN consider topics such as CIL and the Local Plan. Also, Members wished to receive information about changes to planning with regard to consideration of the Environment.
- Invite Andy Pritchard Police Inspector to a future meeting to help the LCN consider crime and disorder in the area.
- Further consideration of Active and Recreational Travel and Rights of Way following research by the parishes. Members wished this to be actioned by the meeting of 1 February 2024. The Lead Officer agreed to send maps of each parish to Members shortly after the meeting.
- Planning for Winter.
- Climate Change and the Environment.

Item 19: **Dates for the next meetings**

Members agreed that the meetings be extended to last 2 hours, 7 pm to 9 pm.

Thursday, 16 November 2023

Thursday, 1 February 2024

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