

## **Local Community Network Meeting Notes**

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Crewkerne and Ilminster

Date: Thursday, 21 September 2023

Time: 7.08 pm - 9.12 pm

Location: The Henhayes Centre, South Street, Crewkerne TA18 8DA

Chaired by: Mike Best (Chairman)

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

**Name:**

**Representing**

Steve Ashton

Somerset Council

Mike Best

Somerset Council

Sue Osborne

Somerset Council

Jason Crocker

Ashill Parish Council

Peter Gregory

Broadway Parish Council

Kathy Head

Crewkerne Town Council

David Light

Donyatt Parish Council

William Porritt

Donyatt Parish Council

Nicola Handlay

Dowlish Wake Parish Council

Pippa Reynolds

Hinton St George Parish Council

Julie Chant (Clerk)

Hinton St George Parish Council

Raymond Buckler

Horton Parish Council

Leanne Taylor

Ilminster Town Council

Lorraine Pike  
Kim Larsson (Clerk)  
David Aslett  
Paul Bradly  
Philip Clifton  
Tom Winder  
Jim Pendleton  
Stephen Carp  
Frank Freeman  
Hannah Snowdon, Spark Somerset

Ilton Parish Council  
Ilton Parish Council  
Merriott Parish Council  
Misterton Parish Council  
Misterton Parish Council  
North Perrott Parish Council  
Seavington Parish Council  
South Petherton Parish Council  
West Crewkerne Parish Council  
Spark Somerset

### **Officer attendance:**

#### **Name:**

Kate Hellard  
Nathan Turnbull  
Bev Norman  
Lee Norman  
Sam Crossman  
Becky Sanders

#### **Representing**

Somerset Council / LCN  
Somerset Council / LCN  
Somerset Council / Highways  
Somerset Council / Highways  
Somerset Council / ICT  
Somerset Council / Democratic Services

### **Other attendees:**

#### **Name:**

Steve Gray  
Viv Wiles  
Chris Lathan

#### **Representing**

Crewkerne Community Church  
The David Hall, South Petherton  
The David Hall, South Petherton

## Virtual attendees:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Roger Bulley	Chiselborough Parish Council
Martyn Hamlin (Clerk)	Chiselborough Parish Council
Nick Jones	Lopen Parish Council
Mark Tredwin (Clerk)	Ilminster Town Council
Fiona Day	Stocklinch Parish Council
Julia Borland	West Crewkerne Parish Council
Claire Searle	Community Council for Somerset

## Summary of discussion:

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

#### Item 1: **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Somerset Council Councillors: Adam Dance, Mike Hewitson, Val Keitch and Oliver Patrick.

An apology was also received from Councillor David Shillibier of Merriott Parish Council.

#### Item 2: **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest from Somerset Council Councillors present at the meeting.

#### Item 3: **Notes from the previous meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 15 June 2023 were approved as a correct record by those present.

Item 4: **Public question time (for items not covered on the agenda)**

The Chairman of Horton Parish Council referred to a consultation document on the Somerset Council website - 'Creating Places for People'. He noted the document had not been circulated to parishes, or the chairs of parishes. The consultation period was until mid-October and as the LCNs were referred to as a stakeholder in the document he queried why the matter was not on the LCN agenda for discussion. He also noted his surprise that Teams was the online/hybrid meeting platform of choice for the LCN meetings as it was felt there were alternative easier to use options available.

In response, Kate Hellard (Service Manager LCNs) noted:

- She was unaware that the LCNs had been referred to in the final 'Creating Places for People' consultation document. There had been discussions with officers at the drafting stage where it had been highlighted that the timeframes for the consultation wouldn't work in order for all the LCNs to consider at their meetings.
- There was an aspiration for all LCNs meetings to be hybrid and Teams was the corporate meeting platform of choice for Somerset Council. Acknowledge other platforms are available.

Item 5: **Highlights of themes discussed at the last meeting**

An overview of the last meeting was provided by Kate Hellard. Some A Powerpoint slide was presented which highlighted the key themes raised. She asked if it was felt anything was missing from the slides. In response a few suggestions were made:

- A358 dualling – would be useful to have a briefing circulated.
- Enforcement seemed to be omitted.
- Health and Wellbeing should be included

In response to the suggestions raised Kate Hellard noted that two officers from Highways were present to answer questions and she would introduce them at Agenda item 7. Health and Wellbeing was included under the heading Services but acknowledges a little more detail could be provided under each of the headings.

The presentation slides for this meeting can be viewed at the end of the printed minutes pack or online at: [Document Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN - Modern Council \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

Item 6: **An introduction to data**

Kate Hellard provided an introduction to data specific to the Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN and presented a slide with some statistics regarding:

- Population
- Crime rates
- Residential properties
- Road collisions
- Households with no access to a vehicle
- Pupil numbers

She explained that the data gave an insight to the area but if the LCN wished they could make enquiries in order fill in gaps or clarify anomalies with the data. There were ongoing opportunities to build data for the LCN area and to gain further information about who, what and why etc.

During a short discussion the following points were made:

- Some Early Years Facilities/Groups had closed this year which may have influenced some of the figures in the data.
- Was it possible to share this LCNs data with other LCNs in order to compare, and could the LCN data be shared with the individual parishes withing the LCN – so that it helps us focus and support parishes where needed?
- Could the SINEPost newsletter (Somerset Intelligence) be circulated to parishes for information?
- Is there a breakdown of state funded schools?

In response, Kate Hellard noted that some data was available via the Somerset Intelligence network, however some of that data was not available at LCN, street or postcode level.

The presentation slides for this meeting can be viewed at the end of the printed minutes pack or online at: [Document](#)

For information:

The website for Somerset Intelligence is:  
<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/>

Item 7: **Discussion:**

The Chairman introduced two officers from Highways – Bev Norman (Strategic Manager for Traffic Management & Road Safety) and Lee Norman (Assistant Highway Service Manager), and explained they were present to listen to comments and to try and answer some general queries.

The Chairman noted that the discussion was a chance to understand some of the detail of local issues, and to consider what else we need to know, who might be able to help us and what actions the LCN might be able to take.

In breakout groups, attendees were asked to consider details of particular highways issues/topics, how do we know, is there more information needed, what does good look like and what could be done.

Attendees were encouraged to forward details of any specific parish queries to the LCN team or LCN Linkworker at [lcns@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:lcns@somerset.gov.uk) (please refer to Crewkerne & Ilminster LCN in the message).

Some of the comments raised under each topic included:

(a) State of the roads and road signage

- Road surface – deterioration / pot holes
- Lack of maintenance
- Lack of response to reported issues
- Lack of co-ordination e.g. road closures and works
- Multiple needs for works on the road don't seem to be considered / coordinated e.g resurfacing followed shortly afterwards by a utility undertaking major works to dig up the road.

- Quality and efficiency of repair works – is it up to standard?
- Poor signage for road closures. Notices of work sometimes seem to be posted late or with very little forward notice. Notice work dates sometimes exceeded with no work having taken place or with works continuing to take place.
- Crewkerne Town Council are good at notifying residents on Facebook but what about those not on social media.
- Somerset Council website isn't always kept up to date regarding planned highways works, or if works are over running.
- Road signs – no consistency regarding updating – some updated for unknown reasons while others can take years to be removed.
- Removal of weeds – gullies / drainage / verges and pavements etc – told Highways will be out once a year. What if a community or parish wants to undertake some of this work in between?
- Overgrown hedges and verges reduce visibility and could cause accidents. With some wide verges on a narrow section seems to be cut and often isn't enough to improve visibility. Overgrown hedges – seems to take a long time to get resolved.
- Edge of road deterioration.
- Third party works.
- Roads need to be in a good state of repair so there is comfort as a road user with damage free vehicles and safe use by pedestrians and cyclists.
- Easy reporting of issues – difficult to contact the right person.
- Effective scheduling of works.
- Preventative maintenance.

*Some of the responses from the Highways officers included:*

- *Acknowledge and take on board comments raised. Aware better communications were needed and this was work in progress.*
- *Unfortunately the budget had been reduced for the updating of signs. If there is a particular issue with a sign this should be reported so that officers could assess.*

- *Verge cutting was planned works and scheduled for a specific date.*
- *Hedges bordering or overhanging the highway (road or pavement) are the landowners responsibility. When reported to highways, notice then has to be served to the landowner which takes time and hence often a delay before action may be seen.*
- *Regarding edges of roads and reports of eroding away – needed to be inspected and assessed to ascertain whether it is road-edge loss or verge erosion/loss. The latter is usually not a Highways responsibility.*

(b) Volume and weight of the traffic

- There has been discontinuation of data provided to some parishes. The information is useful as it helps to make local decisions.
- Lack of response
- Need recognition of local impact
- Dualling of A358 – may cause issues .eg. Broadway is/will be a cut-thru
- Interconnection between parking and weight/volume of traffic – serious issue of parking along our village main road (Broadway)
- Some parking can slow down traffic, but there are times when roads are choked and emergency vehicles cannot get through.
- Hinton St George – most roads have a high level of on-street parking. Have tried putting up signs to encourage parking in certain locations but it did little.
- Certain businesses can attract additional traffic and associated parking.
- Planning impact on villages – if all have too much development will impact local road network – but this does not seem to be considered by planners.
- Crewkerne – two ‘A’ roads cross in the middle of town – which is not designed to take that level of traffic – businesses suffer due to queuing.
- Size of agricultural vehicles and longer HGVs – issues with narrow pavements and associated proximity of pedestrians to traffic. Debris from agricultural blocks the drains.



- Need enforcement of yellow boxes and inappropriate parking.
- What good are yellow lines if no alternative parking available.

*Some of the responses from the Highways officers included:*

- *Acknowledge the comments made and will take point back to the team.*
- *Will look at traffic data and what can be shared with parishes.*

(c) On street parking

- Varying issues:
  - Lack of alternative parking
  - Parking on pavements
  - School-run parking
  - Many older houses in the local area which don't have any off-road parking.
- Need enforcement for parking issues – and clear indications of where people can park
- Need to ensure delivery and emergency vehicles have clear and easy access along roads but also able to stop without blocking traffic altogether along a road / street.
- Adequate parking per household
- Need more budget, more enforcement and more car parks in the right places at a reasonable cost.
- A lot of new development may have garages but are unable to fit a modern vehicle in so almost pointless to describe a garage as a parking space.
- Regarding planning applications, there needs to be more input from Highways regarding adequacy of parking arrangements.
- Broadway highlighted there was a need in their parish for visitor parking when private parking was not adequate. Reference was made to a recent planning approval where they had successfully negotiated some parking for public use. (Kate Hellard asked if the example could be shared with the LCNs as it was a good idea of how to approach getting some local parking provision).

*Some of the responses from the Highways officers included:*

- *Currently assessing and trying to establish usage of car parks across the new Council.*
- *Acknowledge the comments raised and will take away the points made. Also note that some residents regularly get blocked in by people temporarily parking cars.*

(d) Flooding

- Drains and gullies not cleared often enough – or new drains not installed. Would be good to know when gully cleaning /clearing would be done in a village / town, as parishes could publicise locally or put bollards out to try and minimise parking at that time.
- Inadequate drainage for flash flooding – roads become blocked / flooded.
- Maintenance of ditches, gullies and drains – if not done can lead to properties being flooded and vehicles being abandoned in floodwater.
- Run off from saturated fields
- Hedges – maintenance by landowners. Mud run off and blocked drains
- Lack of signage during times of floods to inform motorists of road closures. Sometimes signage appeared to be far from the closure. Signage in incorrect places could affect businesses.
- Good roads should be clear and open with water draining freely.
- Some cross-drains on main roads seem to be unmapped and hence not maintained.
- What could we do?:
  - Flood wardens
  - Encourage preventative maintenance and be proactive rather than reactive.
  - Work with landowners and stakeholders
  - Enforcement – e.g. ditches etc
  - Build relationships with main agencies for waterways for coordination e.g. Rivers Authority / Environment Agency etc.

*Some of the responses from the Highways officers included:*

- *Explained that during adverse weather events road closure signs are often placed during darkness by people who may not know the area well. Signs were usually placed where it enabled drivers to turnaround safely which may in some cases be some distance before the actual closure – signs were also often located by instruction from the Police.*
- *Concerns and issues about run-off from fields/agricultural land could be forwarded to FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group) who may be able to liaise with landowners and offer advice.*
- *New systems are being put into place to register every gully across the new Council area and can then start to map areas where plans have been lost.*

(e) Speeding

- Lack of enforcement / mitigation (rumble strips etc)
- 'On our own' feeling in parishes.
- Speed can be an issue in villages with no speed limits – some places have Speedwatch scheme but what about places that do not?
- In places speeding is happening more at certain times of the day or when a diversion route is in place.
- Concern regarding some SatNav systems as some seem to take drivers along routes with faster speeds.
- Parishes and towns could look to share some resources e.g Speed Indicator Devices and data loggers. Or if the LCN could have a budget it could purchase equipment for shared use of parishes.
- Need to work with Highways and the Police to improve channels of communication.

*Suggestions / responses from the Highways officers included:*

- *They would look into the possibility of sharing some data with parishes*
- *Referred to the Highways sub-group set up in the Exmoor LCN area and how they were working together to address and focus on some local issues / queries – this could be an approach the Crewkerne & Ilminster LCN may wish to consider.*

(f) Events and road closures

- Lack of fore warning of closures
- Insufficient detail - Messages currently can be disjointed.
- Parish notification of road closures for works can be ad-hoc.
- Needs to be more clear and advance communications which would enable parishes to inform their local communities better.
- Parishes need a direct contact for problems.
- Need clear and correct signage – local knowledge could help with this.
- Circulate information – local groups could help with this.
- Seems to be a lack of coordination for some events and scheduled highways works.
- Event closure orders cost a lot of money. Is there some way that would be better so that events are more cost-effective as they help to increase footfall in the communities.
- Costs of street trading licences were sometimes prohibitive – could this be reviewed?

*Suggestions / responses from the Highways officers included:*

- *If incorrect signage, please report it so action can be taken if required.*
- *Highways try to encourage statutory under-takers to always give advance notice – however advance notice does not have to be given for emergency works.*
- *Road closure information is circulated to parishes – but perhaps what isn't routinely circulated is information on other Highways works – this is something that could be looked in to.*
- *Different types of road closure for events determined the type of Order required. Unfortunately, some types of Order require public notices in the press which has a cost. It might be possible to work with several parishes in an area and do combined notices/adverts to help reduce costs.*

(g) Diversion of traffic during road closures

- Diversions during road closures – sometimes confusing and routes not always clear. Diversions should be checked and enforced.
- Should ensure roads are cleaned when tractors leave mud.
- Inadequate public transport adds to additional traffic.
- Lack of fore warning and insufficient detail - Needs to be more clear and advance communications.
- Currently experience some mis-guidance with diversions.
- Collection of signage when works complete.

*Suggestions / responses from the Highways officers:*

- see comments above at (f).

For information – useful websites:

Roadworks and road closure information across Somerset -

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/roadworks-and-travel/>

Report problems on a road – e.g. pot holes, faulty streetlight, blocked gully and overgrown hedge/verge etc

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

**ACTIONS:** Parishes to contact the LCN team if interested in the combined road closure Orders for events so that a date can be set up to discuss.

Officers from Highways to provide responses to comments taken away for consideration that had been raised during discussion at this LCN meeting.

Item 8: **Feedback and Q and A**

There was a brief a general feedback / Question and Answer session. Some of the points raised and responses included:

- Budgets are tight and we know the LCN doesn't have a budget - Insufficiencies need to be addressed – need to think outside the box – the way things have been done in

the past is not necessarily the most appropriate, efficient or best way.

- Clerk details must be kept up to date so that parishes can be kept informed.
- If there are concerns or issues about the LCNs or the Council as a whole then parishes should feed back to the appropriate officers.
- Could parishes have feedback on the new strategic structure of Somerset Council, and an organisational chart for the new authority.
  - *In response – Kate Hellard advised that an update had been circulated to clerks the previous day, and that there were fortnightly update meetings for clerks and briefings circulated to those unable to attend. She briefly explained that a high tier restructure had taken place but it would take some time to do the whole organisation.*

Kate Hellard noted that it was apparent from this meeting and the previous one that 90 minutes was not long enough for each meeting and therefore start times of meetings may need to be reviewed.

**ACTIONS:** For all parishes to check their Clerk details viewab Somerset Council website are correct - <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgParishCounspx?bcr=1>

Item 9: **Dates for the next meetings**

The provisional dates for future meetings were noted as:

- Wednesday 15 November 2023 – venue to be confirmed
- Thursday 18 January 2023 – venue to be confirmed.

The LCN team had worked hard to minimise diary clashes but asked that they be contacted on [lcn@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:lcn@somerset.gov.uk) if there are any issues. The team also asked for suggestions on alternative suitable venues within the Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN area, noting that good wifi was essential.

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