

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Wells and Rural

Date: Thursday, 16 November 2023

Time: 19:00 – 21:00

Location: Wells Town Hall, Market Place, Wells, BA5 2RB

Chaired by: Edric Hobbs

LCN core membership attendance:

Name	Representing
Councillor Theo Butt Philip	Somerset Council
Councillor Edric Hobbs (Chair)	Somerset Council
Councillor Tessa Munt	Somerset Council
Councillor Heather Shearer	Somerset Council

Officer attendance:

Name:	Representing
Kate Hellard	Somerset Council
Adrian Moore	Somerset Council
Debbie Widdows	Somerset Council

Other attendees:

Name:	Representing
Denise Boulton	Godney
Councillor Kathy Bissett	North Wootton

Clerk Gill Pettitt	Priddy
Councillor Mike Dodd	Priddy
Councillor Martin Cooke	St Cuthbert Out
Councillor Konrad Hoogesteger	St Cuthbert Out
Councillor Jim Reeves	St Cuthbert Out
Councillor Jacqui Zorab	St Cuthbert Out
Denise Boulton	Westbury sub Mendip

Virtual attendees:

Name:	Representing
Councillor Tony Robbins	Somerset Council
Councillor Philip Blatchford	Chewton Mendip and Emborough Parish Meeting
Councillor Jon Abbott	Binegar
Cath Law	Binegar
Councillor Andy Tagg	Wookey
John Bowskill	Wookey
Dawn Rogers	Somerset Council
Lisa Pool	Deputy Parish Clerk St Cuthbert Out
Rosa Kell	Wells' Bus users' group
Jim Hardcastle	Mendip Hills AONB (Natural Landscapes)
Jessica Lewin	Connect Somerset are champions for West Mendip
Siobhan White	Connect Somerset are champions for West Mendip

Bella Lapwood

Other Stakeholders:

Name:	Representing
The Volunteer Network	Scott McMillan

Members of the Public:

Name:	Representing
Shane Bond	Himself
Reece Coulson	Himself

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 20: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from

Somerset Councillor Ros Wyke
Wells City Councillor Philip Welch
North Wooton Councillor Simon Shimmin
Priddy Parish Councillor Rachel Thompson

Item 21: **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

Item 22: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes from the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were proposed by Councillor Philip Blatchford and seconded by Councillor Jon Abbott and were carried unanimously.

Item 23: **Update on Somerset Council Financial position**

Councillor Theo Butt Philip gave a presentation and highlighted the following:

- Net budget was about £1,00M
- Council budget is about £30M
- The bulk of the pressure on the budget was coming from adult social care, £70M and is a statutory service.
- Somerset Council had to make some decisions as to where they spend money and to stop spending it. They had to decide on what they are legally required to do and what they do not have to do.
- Somerset Council were hoping to rely on the Parish Councils to take up some slack and confirm which services they were able to provide from their own budgets. There was a list sent to all Parish Clerks last Wednesday for them to indicate what they could provide.
- There was a role for LCNs in this because smaller Parishes on their own could not provide all necessary services but a neighbouring LCN may be able to. This had to be done as soon as possible as the budget for the Somerset Council was going to be set in February.
- Each Parish had to talk to their own Councillors.

It was queried whether the 126 from Wells to Weston Super Mare bus route was in danger of being cut again and Councillor Theo Butt Philip confirmed that he was already following up on this and would let everyone know. However, he did concede that everything was being cut.

There were further queries about working on the roadside licenses and insurance for volunteer work,

There was a query about the road closures for Carnival as there was some confusion as to which roads would be closed. Councillor Tessa Munt undertook to confirm this immediately and report back.

Item 24: **Public Question Time**

There were none.

Item 25: **Topics continued from previous meeting**

Item 25a: **Winter planning - presentation, Scott Mcmillan from Volunteer Network**

Scott McMillan from volunteer network gave his winter planning

presentation. Highlighting that they:

- Provide support and opportunities to people who were 'struggling with life' to help them better themselves. For example, by assisting to create allotments for people where they can grow their own food, teaching them how to cook or helping people without mobile phones or internet access to apply for benefits or advice from Citizens Advice etc.
- They also provided food for people who needed it without referrals. There had been an increase in the amount of people needing this.
- During the winter they were going to provide a warm space and open their building twice a week where people could go for some company.
- They were going to start cookery classes with a group and after the class they would share what they cooked and eat the meal and then take some food home.
- Scott offered his services to the Parish Councils if they wished for him to sit down with them and discuss ways of helping them decide what they could do to survive the winter months and the cuts Somerset Council were going to make.
- He also offered his help to any of the LCNs.
- The volunteers mainly came from Glastonbury, this side of Bridgwater and Taunton, Frome, Cheddar and Wells.
- Scott mentioned that funding had recently become harder and was an issue for the organisation.
- He also mentioned that people were going into debt to pay core bills.

He said that they were going to run a program on how to bleed your radiators and show people how to live within their means.

Councillor Martin Cooke mentioned that he knew of two individuals who had made use of the Volunteer Network's program and they gained confidence to work with a community radio station and said that it was a credit to the organisation

If anyone needed to contact the volunteer network they were able to do so at www.thevolunteernetwork.org.uk or email Scott McMillan on Scott@volunteernetwork.org.uk

Councillor Tessa Munt mentioned that she was working with a team of people at Somerset Council from Children and Family

Services who were going to identify each person who should be claiming a benefit and registering them automatically to receive free school meals. Then if the family did not want to receive the school meal they should merely deregister.

It was also stated that the YMCA, likewise noticed an increase in need in the young people as well and they could be contacted on WestMendipChampion@ymca-bg.org.

It was further pointed out that Connect Somerset Champions could also help.

A Parish Community Fridge/Larder was suggested as the one in Shepton Mallet was working well.

Jessical Lewin confirmed that in her Area Champion role they were beginning to explore ways that they could assist with supporting local communities, such as linking services. She offered that if any parishes would like to explore using local venues, such as village halls, as venues for support services to access, herself and Siobhan would be happy to help. They can be contacted on WestMendipChampion@ymca-bg.org. They would like to help in delivering services to the rural community.

The Chair requested that Scott McMillan update them on what they have achieved over the winter and come back to the LCN.

Item 25b: **Active Travel - Discussion regarding maps, what we want from them**

Each Parish was given a map to take away and bring back This gave people the opportunity to mark on the maps where they would like to have active travel routes. It was suggested that working groups be set up to discuss this further, rather than having the conversation in an LCN.

Jim Hardcastle from the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) mentioned the work that Rachel Thompson from The Trails Trust has been doing and it was agreed that her work would be included in the consultation for the next Management Plan meeting. The Management Plan is a statutory document so if local authorities adopt it that means

that they have to pay due regard to it and further the purposes so if there were any targets to it, like strategic access network, which was broken down to show all its national routes, the local authorities must work to deliver that.

The Chair suggested that if there was a working group for this he would like to see some input from them. He suggested that Members not represented from the villages who were within the AONB be included in the working group He said that he would contact those Parish Councillors.

Councillor Philip Blatchford mentioned that he had tried to dedicate a footpath across his land which was well used but had not been able to and requested help with that.

Access gates on footpaths were discussed as these were typically kissing gates and pushchairs and wheelchairs could not get through them. They needed to be replaced with something more appropriate.

Item 25c: **Working groups going forward (Active Travel, Planning Policy)**

It was suggested to set up another working group around the budget and that the LCN group and Parishes work together and discuss how they want to make that work.

There was already an existing team at Wells City Council who would perhaps be available to help.

A request would be sent round to the individual Parishes and the team would ask for them to respond. The question would be posed as to what they believed was most important for the residents in their areas. They would collate the information and it may be that more groups would be convened.

Maps were tabled of the Rights of Way within each Parish.

Everyone was asked to study the maps to identify any inaccuracies and mark important cross boundary links. Also key paths should be noted that were used for a) access to major facilities and b) quiet routes in the countryside that were used to boost mental and physical wellbeing.

Item 26: **Action and next Steps**

1. To convene working groups around active travel.
2. An email as described above under point 6.3 would be sent to the Parish Clerks and would include a requisition to consider who could join the working group for active travel and for them to respond to the LCN team with that list.

Item 27: **Dates of future meetings**

1 February 2024.

The venue must be moved around within the LCN area.

Contact details for meeting:

Wellsandrurallcn@somerset.gov.uk

Contact officer for meeting: LCN Team

lcn@somerset.gov.uk

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