

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Burnham

Date: Wednesday, 10 January 2024

Time: 6.30 pm - 8.05 pm

Location: Main Hall - Puriton Village Hall, Riverton Road, Puriton, TA7 8BP

Chaired by:

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:	Representing
Kevin Bray, East Brent Parish Council (Vice-Chair)	East Brent Parish Council
Bob Filmer	Somerset Council
Tony Grimes	Somerset Council
Alistair Hendry	Somerset Council
Mike Murphy	Somerset Council
Gavin McArdle	Berrow Parish Council
Martin Chatterton	Brean Parish Council
Lesley Millard	Burnham and Highbridge Town Council
John Wakefield	West Huntspill Parish Council
Alan Sharp	Woolavington Parish Council
Danielle Hardaway	Avon and Somerset Police

Officer attendance:

Name:	Representing
Julie Cooper	LCN Team, Somerset Council
Rob Semple	LCN Team, Somerset Council
Leila Nicholson	Democratic Services, Somerset Council
Ollie Lindsell	IT, Somerset Council

Other attendees:

Name:	Representing
Cllr Theo Butt-Phillip	Somerset Council
Cllr Claire Sully	Somerset Council
Sam Warner (Clerk)	Pawlett Parish Council
Cath Searing	Burnham and Highbridge Town Council

Virtual attendees:

Name:	Representing
Doreen Smith	Connect Somerset
Kim Wilcox	Village Agent
Richard Young (Clerk)	Burnham Without PC & Woolavington PC
Simon Langley	Puriton Parish Council
Maureen Phillips	Burnham Without Parish Council
Sally Diaz (Clerk)	Puriton Parish Council
Sally Ferguson (Clerk)	Lympsham Parish Council

Apologies:

Name:	Representing
Suria Aujla (Chair)	Somerset Council
Jane Knowles	SASP
Jim Murray (Clerk)	East Brent Parish Council

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 18: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Suria Aujla, Jane Knowles (SASP) and Jim Murray (clerk to East Brent).

Item 19: **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were made.

Item 20: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes from the meeting held on 31 October 2023 were agreed with no amendments needed.

Item 21: **Actions from the Previous Meeting**

No actions needed, update on Young People working group on agenda.

Note that the date of next meeting has changed to 5 March 2024 but venue to confirmed and will be notified when the agenda is issued.

Item 22: **Update on Somerset Council's current financial position Q & A**

Councillor Theo Butt-Philip attended the meeting and gave an update on the Council's position and budget situation. He explained that the Council were facing a number of budget cuts or the ending of funding for a number of discretionary services due to increased costs, especially for adult and children's social care. The budget proposals had been published and there was a

timetable of meetings to discuss the proposed budgets and where things could be cut or reduced.

During question time, Members made the following comments:
Request for street lighting costs – not known by Cllr Butt-Philip but didn't think it was affected by the proposed cuts.

Devolution & Parish/Town Councils:

Need for the parish and town councils to increase budgets if they want certain work undertaken or to take over buildings/duties but need to know now as they were also setting their budgets – it was confirmed that discussions were taking place with other councils to establish what was most important for them and what could be taken on or how Somerset Council could assist them to take on services/buildings.

Lesley Millard from Burnham-on-Sea felt that there was a real opportunity for all the parish and town councils to work together and support the smaller rural parishes to solve some of the problems and tasks involved i.e. highways.

There were also questions about Discretionary Rate Reliefs, liability for councils to undertake work traditionally undertaken by County and also proposals to take on responsibility for buildings/property and land by the Parishes. A comment was made that a lot of parishes were staffed by unpaid volunteers who had no experience in running a business; it was suggested that SALC could give advice and also that the Town Councils had more experience and that the parishes in the LCN needed to work together.

Councillor Grimes also stated that parish/town clerks would need to work extra hours and that cost would need to be included in the parish precept, this would incur problems for the smaller parishes in particular.

It was confirmed that the councils concerns and comments had been noted, with the assurance that services will not be withdrawn without notice and that the budget proposals would be discussed and nothing agreed until the budget set meeting at Full Council on 20 February 2024.

Item 23: **Public Questions**

There were no questions put forward from the Public.

Item 24: **Discussion**

Rob Semple gave a presentation on a Highway Steward scheme that was currently being trialled on Exmoor. The highway steward would be employed by Somerset Council (employee of Kier) and would undertake minor works; these works would be decided by the parishes and local priorities.

An option proposed was that this could be a joint venture with adjoining parishes and even adjoining LCNs so that the steward would focus their work within specific areas, with the frequency and duties being agreed so that the steward's time would be used to the advantage of the parishes.

During discussion, members asked about the use of different agencies and the coordination of the costs and maintenance, along with the equipment and resources needed. It was confirmed that the operative would provide their own equipment and would remain as an employee of Kier who would therefore be responsible for insurance, their holiday and pay and that the parishes would need to just agree the duties and shared costs to reflect the work to be undertaken.

It was requested that Town and Parish Councils express their interest via this email: devolution@somerset.gov.uk

Item 25: **Update Young People`s Working Group**

The LCN were updated by Doreen Smith from Connect Somerset on the work of the Young People`s working group. They had held their first meeting in December where it was agreed that needed to including Housing Associations and that Barnardos had requested to join the group.

It was also agreed that there was a need to consult with other youth groups and the Somerset Rural Youth Project. The Police will be providing Anti-social behaviour statistics and a further meeting will be taking place next week.

The group requested feedback from LCN members:

- What provision do Parishes already have?
- What would they like in the future?

Item 26: **Dates and topics for future meetings**

Avon and Somerset Police (Sedgemoor area) are trying to revamp attending/setting up local hubs as previously did and are requesting whether the group have any suggestions for venues but they must have access to wifi. Community and Council drop-in, with the next one at East Brent on 9 February 2024 for the Friday Hub Café.

Topics for the Future proposed:

- Strategic plan for LCN
- Devolution and budget update
- Highway Stewards – see if someone can attend from the Exmoor trial?
- Tourism in the area

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