

Dowsborough LCN – Highways Working Group Minutes of 29th February 2024

Held in West Somerset House, at 10am.

Attendees:

LCN Parishes Name		Parish	Somerset Council Name		Area
Cllr Simon Stretton	SS	Spaxton	Cllr Mike Caswell (ch)	MC	Somerset Council
Cllr Sue Goss	SG	Stogursey	Cllr Rosemary Woods	RW2	Somerset Council
Richard Wand	RW1	Stogursey	Cllr Hugh Davies	HD	Somerset Council
Cllr Mike Copleston	MC	Holford	Andrew Turner	AT	Highways Infrastructure Manager
Cllr John McVerry	JMV	Stockland Bristol	Katherine Tyson	KT	Traffic Manager
Cllr Paul King	PK	Wembdon	Luke Green	LG	Principal Street Works
Cllr Richard Curtis	RC	Over Stowey	Kali Martin	KM	Highway Maintenance
Cllr John Addison	JA	Cannington	Graig Gowan	CG	Planned Maintenance
Cllr Terry Yarwood	TY	Nether Stowey	George Simmonds	GS	Street Works
Karen Scott (clerk)	KS		Emma Plummer	EP	LCN Lead Officer
			Sam Murrell	SM	Interim Link Officer
			Pippa Hughes	PH	Interim Link Officer

- 1. Introductions** – all introduced themselves.
- 2. Highways Steward Presentation** – AT explained the history, method and impact of the Exmoor Highways Working Group Pilot and the Highways Steward initiative and then gave a brief overview of the purpose of the Highways Steward.

AT confirmed that this meeting will be led by the LCN and the agenda will be created by the LCN. Highways would try to anticipate the next agenda to ensure that the correct Somerset Council Highways personnel were in attendance.

It was suggested that it would be useful if Andy Cope could be in attendance. **SC Action.**

SG enquired about the attendees from the area office as some parishes were in the old Somerset West and Taunton Area and some from the old Sedgemoor Area. AT agreed that it needs to be considered how that will work to avoid 2 representatives at the meeting.

AT confirmed that Kier Group Plc have been awarded the maintenance contract for the entire road network from 1st April 2024 and will undertake all works required to ensure the safe surface and sustainable statutory requirements. There is a schedule for works which covers essential verge cutting, gully cleaning etc. A letter (dated 26th Feb) detailing what is covered, plus other options, was emailed to all Parish Clerks on 27th February 2024.

The letter contains a menu of works that parishes may want to procure, and it also lists the activities that parishes are able to undertake themselves. A price list will be available in the Summer (2024). If doing the work themselves, parishes need to consider the standard, training, insurance and the need to keep the public safe. More detail about this will be available in the Summer (2024).

Parish Online – For the Exmoor pilot all parish councils were given access to Parish Online (if they didn't already use it), some found it very useful and others, of limited use. At the moment, pertinent information is held on a variety of maps. It would be useful if all the Highways information in respect of maps could be made available. **SC Action.**

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3. **Adoption of Terms of Reference (TOR)** – SG commented that the 3rd point is not applicable.

There needs to be a further component as follows:

The Highways Working Group is a sub-group and does not have the right to communicate outside of the Group.

The TOR will be ratified at the next Dowsborough LCN meeting. **D-LCN Action.**

4. **Agreement regarding parish representatives** – Agreed that this has to be a nominated person from each parish council. For continuity reasons it was suggested that maybe a councillor and clerk for continuity. Agreed that the need to cover old ground should be avoided, therefore, the person should be fully up-to-date.

Agreed that the recommendation is a nominated person and a back up.

All relevant Somerset Council Councillors are welcome to attend.

The meeting venue will move around, but they will always be during the day. **It should be noted, that there is not a budget to cover venue hire.** Fire Stations and Libraries are possible free venues.

5. **Pressing Highways concerns.**

- a. **Wembdon** – The new build that is occurring adjacent to the A39 is resulting in people using the back road which are flooding and some support is required.
 - i. The temporary 20mph is for 1 year in place of a safety zone. Liaise with the developer to see what can be done to mitigate the issues when no work is being done. For example, remove the temporary speed limit.
 - ii. Traffic lights are in plan for when the highways works commence but no start date is available yet. Agreed to provide a detailed update at the next meeting. **SC Action.**
 - iii. Where possible, they will try to avoid work on Mondays and Fridays as these are the heavier traffic days.
 - iv. Police have advised that they will not enforce the 20mph because too many are speeding. It needs to be linked to police and enforcement if it is to be effective.
 - v. AT confirmed that it is a wider issue and will arrange for someone from Development Control to attend. **SC Action.**
- b. **How do we communicate with Highways better?** AT confirmed that this working group will be where the detail and strategy can be discussed. This group will also be about quality regarding work and communication. A list of key point of contact email addresses will be provided. **SC Action.**
- c. **An issue with the non visibility of traffic signs was reported a year ago and it still has not been addressed. Will the new contractor be asked to clear up the back log?** The contractor will work on instruction from the council.
- d. **A blocked gully was reported, but the contractor did not clear it because it was too blocked and some residents did it instead.** Confirmed that this was a quality of work issue which this working group would report so it gets to the relevant people. With regard to gullies there is a plan of works in place.
- e. **When fixing a pot-hole, could the contractor fix adjacent pot holes.** No, the contractor will only do what they are employed to do.

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- f. **Intervention criteria** – If it is a busy road it will get fixed quicker than one on a rural quiet road.
 - g. **The Intervention criteria needs to take into account how important that road is to the residents.** – In Stolford, the road is so bad that many residents do not venture out. However, it is vital to them as it is the only way in and out of the village. Biffers Corner is in a bad state. **SC Action**
 - h. **C182 – It is understood that EDF have a budget to meet the cost of repairs, but highways do not appear to want to.** – EDF only cover the capital costs not repairs.
 - i. **Resurfacing of the A39 by the VW garage – why has this not been done when the rest of the road was done?** It is in plan, but work has to be phased to take into account road closures, their impact on traffic and businesses. If they did the whole road in one go, it would need to be closed entirely so it is phased to reduce impact.
 - j. **The Cannington West Roundabout needs repairs, are these in plan?** Will check to see if there is work planned in the forward program. **SC Action.**
 - k. **C182 A deflectorgraph survey has been undertaken on the state of the road. The undulation of the road means that vehicles appear to lurch towards each other.** The report has been received and an update will be provided at the next meeting. **SC Action.**
 - l. **Why do we not seal the edges of pot-hole repairs any more?** They are now sealed on the vertical plane rather than horizontal. It was found to be dangerous for motor cycles. If the repair breaks away, it is a quality of works issue and should come to this meeting.
 - m. **TTRO emails to clerks – who updates the ‘one network’ and why is the duration so long?** The duration is applied for by the requesting company, not the council. When they have finished, a notification of completion of works should be submitted which will remove the road closure from the system. There are penalties that Somerset Council can apply. If it happens, please report it.
 - n. **Shurton Ford Issue (planned re-direction of traffic through the ford).** Apologies, it was a training issue.
 - o. **Timing of the Traffic Signals at Chiltern Trinity needs some observation.** Will investigate. **SC Action.**
6. **Recommendations to the Dowsborough LCN Meeting** – Agreed to meet quarterly. Next meeting in June. **D-LCN Action**
7. **Date, time and venue of next meeting** – We said that it would be after the June LCN meeting. (clerk comment) Upon reflection and following a short discussion, it would be useful if it was before the LCN meeting so that updates on the issues raised here could be provided. It can also be noted that the chair to the working group does not have to be the same person who is chair of the Dowsborough LCN. **D-LCN Action**
8. **Meeting closed 11.52.**