

## Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Taunton

Date: Monday, 5 February 2024

Time: 6.30 pm - 8.25 pm

Location: Taunton Minster (St Mary Magdalene), Church Square, Taunton, TA1 1SA

Chaired by: Dawn Johnson (Chair)

### LCN core membership attendance:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Dixie Darch	Somerset Council
Tom Deakin	Somerset Council
Caroline Ellis	Somerset Council
John Hunt (Vice-Chair)	Somerset Council
Hazel Prior-Sankey	Somerset Council
Federica Smith-Roberts	Somerset Council
Andy Sully	Somerset Council
Tony Taylor & Nigel Quarman	Bishops Hull Parish Council
Graham Withnell	Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council
Tessa Dean	Trull Parish Council
Sam Bushen & Andy Gloyn	Avon & Somerset Police
Phil Durban & Julian Nicholson	Bishops Lydeard Residents Action Group
John Haines & Fran Hicks	Citizens Somerset

Nigel Pearce & Richard Holt

Taunton Chamber of Commerce

Vickie Robbins

Taunton Brewhouse

### **Officer attendance:**

#### **Name:**

#### **Representing**

Emma Plummer

Somerset Council

Pippa Hughes

Somerset Council

Angela Cox

Somerset Council

Nicola Dawson

Somerset Council

Bel Deering

Somerset Rivers Authority

Ollie Lindsay

Somerset Council

### **Other attendees:**

#### **Name:**

#### **Representing**

Tobie Osmond

Reverend of Taunton Minster

### **Virtual attendees:**

#### **Name:**

#### **Representing**

Kate Hellard

Somerset Council

Mike Ginger

Taunton Area Cycling Campaign

Marion Nieuwenhuizen

Sustrans

Ally Laing

Somerset Council

Mark Burgess

Joanna Lewin-Harris & Clive Martin

Bishops Lydeard & Cothelstone PC

Marcus Prouse

Taunton Town Council

Sharon Coles

Tony White

Allan Debenham

Neal Glossard

## **Apologies:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Habib Farbahi	Somerset Council
Simon Coles	Somerset Council
Bev Fernandes	Taunton Town Council

## **Summary of discussion:**

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

#### **Item 28: Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Habib Farbahi and Simon Coles of Somerset Council and Bev Fernandes of Taunton Town Council.

#### **Item 29: Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made by the Somerset Councillors present at the meeting.

#### **Item 30: Notes from the Previous Meeting**

It was noted that further refinements were required to the notes from the previous meeting and so they would be re-presented to the next meeting of the LCN.

**Item 31: Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting**

The Chair welcomed all to the February meeting of the Taunton LCN and advised of various housekeeping rules during the meeting.

The Rev Toby Osmond, vicar of the Taunton Minster Church spoke of the work of the church, particularly relating to their support for children and young people. He advised they had recently purchased two garages to create a young peoples hub. He also noted their café had been a designated warm space and had been the Somerset County Gazette coffee shop of the year recently.

**Item 32: Update on Somerset Council's Financial Position**

An update on the Somerset Council's financial position was provided by Emma Plummer, Senior Community & Parish Development Officer. She noted the timeline of the reports to the various Committees of the Council, concluding with the Full Council meeting on 20 February 2024. She also advised that over 5,000 responses to the Council's Budget consultation 2024/25 had been received. Over 100 responses were received from City, Town & Parish Councils regarding service and asset devolution and they were working through the proposals and would be contacting those who responded shortly.

The Chair of the LCN advised that despite meeting the criteria, the Government had refused the Council's request to raise Council Tax by an additional 5%. She said the situation was still evolving as the Council tried to avoid a Section 114 Notice and so it was likely that a higher amount of capitalisation funding would be requested.

In response to a question, Cllr Dixie Darch advised that although part of the budget proposals was to close 5 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), they were in consultation with Biffa to make savings on the contract and the proposed closures did

not include the HWRCs at Taunton or Wellington.

Cllr Tom Deakin, as Leader of Taunton Town Council, advised that they were looking at taking responsibility for some Somerset Council services including CCTV, the Visitors Centre, the securing of Vivary Park overnight, and youth, cultural and other non-statutory services in the town. He said they also hoped to establish a community grants budget to support small groups and organisations. In response to a question, Cllr Deakin advised that the Taunton Town Council budget meet would be held on 13 February 2024.

The Chair noted that Cllr John Hunt had suggested that volunteers could help to keep Vivary Park open and maintained.

Item 33: **Public Question Time**

The Chair introduced Mr Mike Ginger of the Taunton Area Cycling Campaign. He said they would like to play an active role in supporting the LCNs in the future. He said they had secured funding for the Otter Trail and for waymarking from Silk Mills to Taunton town centre. They also monitored and commented on major planning applications.

Marion Nieuwenhuizen of Sustrans, an active travel charity, said they helped to create green ways and cycle routes by talking to landowners. They were assisting with the planned Kingston St Mary to Taunton active travel route which encouraged people to cycle rather than drive.

Item 34: **Community Resilience and Emergency Planning**

The Chair introduced Nicola Dawson, Civil Contingencies Service Manager at Somerset Council and Bel Deering, Community Engagement Officer at Somerset Rivers Authority. They provided the LCN members with a comprehensive presentation on their work in preparing for emergencies and how they could help communities recover from them. **(the Presentation slides have been published as an appendix to the Agenda)**

The Somerset Rivers Authority are part of Somerset Prepared which is a multi-agency partnership working closely with communities to deliver advice, support and training to help

enhance local resilience to emergencies. The partnership is made up of many organisations able to provide advice, guidance and support to help you develop local initiatives that enhance resilience to emergencies. <https://www.somersetprepared.org.uk/>

The Somerset Rivers Authority could provide advice and guidance to communities, training, resources, help with projects (telemetry), and grant support. They were hoping to run Community Resilience and Emergency Planning roadshows across the County in partnership with other agencies during the year.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that:

- The Somerset Council precepted on behalf of the Somerset Rivers Authority.
- The Council was responsible for setting up rest centres to assist people affected by emergency situations. They needed to be warm and accessible and were usually village or community halls, schools or sports centres.
- The Council no longer provided sandbags to private houses but encouraged local communities to be resilient.
- Maintenance of watercourses was complex but generally it was the responsibility of the adjoining landowner.
- Advice and support could be requested at [flooding@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:flooding@somerset.gov.uk)

At the conclusion of the debate, it was acknowledged that some communities had been very proactive in planning for emergencies in their community and it would be helpful to arrange a meeting with other interested parishes and useful organisations to exchange information and ideas. Contact Pippa Hughes if you are interested in joining this group.

[Pippa.hughes@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Pippa.hughes@somerset.gov.uk)

Subsequent to the meeting, Pippa Hughes, Interim LCN Link Officer asked that her thanks be recorded to Paul Elliston, Community Engagement Officer at Somerset Rivers Authority for reacting to individual Parish Council requests for help with specific issues.

Item 35: **Feedback from the Young Peoples Working Group**

Pippa Hughes, Interim LCN Link Officer, advised that the Young Peoples Working Group was chaired by Bev Fernandez of Taunton Town Council and it had met on two occasions to network with organisations like Mind to plan sport and youth activities. There were plans for a youth hub in Taunton and also in Bishops Lydeard.

PCSO Sam Bushen of Avon & Somerset Police advised that a new youth project was about to start at McDonalds in Taunton. The aim of the project was to reduce the risk of young people being assaulted and let them be in a safe space. It was being launched on Saturday 10 February in partnership with other agencies.

The Chair said there was work to be done to make young people aware of what was available to them in Taunton.

In response to a question, Cllr Dixie Darch advised that she and her fellow Cllr Derek Perry held a surgery for residents in the Staplegrove area in the village hall each month and could help to pass on local issues to the Council.

Item 36: **Priorities and forward plan for the Taunton LCN.**

The following priorities were identified for discussion at future meetings:

1. Support available for Local Businesses
2. Village Agents be invited to give a presentation on their work in communities
3. Commissioning for vulnerable young adults
4. Active Travel
5. Housing and homelessness

It was also noted that:

1. The Taunton Chamber of Trade were meeting on 29 April (pm) in Trull to discuss their priorities. Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of their membership were from micro-businesses.
2. The Collar Factory in Taunton offered workspace and

private meeting rooms for businesses.

3. The Somerset Youth Alliance were training Town and Parish Councillors to be able to run youth clubs.
4. It was requested that future LCN meetings be more interactive for the participants.

Item 37: **Dates and Agendas for the next meeting**

A question online by Allan Debenham was asked at the end of the meeting in regard to communication and how best Parish & Town councils communicate the Somerset Council. Whether this be through the council directly or via the LCN team. The Chair Dawn Johnson answered this question with the following: that in the first instance any resident should use the first method of reporting – for example the dedicated flooding email address, the online “Report a Highways Issue” on the Somerset Council website – there is also Somerset Council Customer Services. Who can advise residents and also report issues to specific services – for example Paying Rent, enquiries on Council Tax, Waste Management, Anti-Social Behaviour within our housing stock – to name but a few. If the topic would benefit the wider community then it could be a topic for discussion at the LCN.

Cllr Dixie Darch then added – she warmly greeted Allan Debenham and politely reminded Allan Debenham that he was in constant communication with his Division and Unitary Councillors – as Dixie regularly communicates with Allan Debenham and she was assured any issue Allan Debenham wished to raise would go to the correct officer or Councillor.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Local Community Network – Taunton would take place at 6.30pm on 26 March 2024 at the Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE.

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