

Local Community Networks Terms of Reference May 2024

Part E - Local Community Networks

Terms of Reference

The Council has established 18 Local Community Networks to promote the development of stronger and more resilient communities across Somerset.

For the purposes of the Constitution, the Local Community Networks will be classed as Area Boards.

1.0 Purpose, Role and Function of the Local Community Networks

1.1 The purpose of the Local Community Networks is to be the focus for community development, engagement and partnership working at a local level; improving outcomes for residents and establishing strong connections between the Council, our communities and our partners.

1.2 The Local Community Networks will have the following roles and functions:

- Establishing effective local community engagement and influence;
- Promote enhanced participation in democracy, active community decision making and scrutiny;
- Enhance collaboration by bringing together at a local level representatives from partner organisations, City, town and parish councils, community groups and others
- Ensure local influence over the Council and wider public service activity;
- Share information, ideas and solutions to enable services to be delivered to help meet local need;
- To inspire more responsibility for local place shaping;
- To identify evidence-based community priorities; across Economic, Social and Environmental issues;
- To create plans to reflect how the priorities will be addressed; and
- To identify and secure resource opportunities for local projects

2.0 Local Community Networks Approach

2.1 The Local Community Networks will:

- a) Agree priorities and areas of focus for the local area on an annual basis
- b) Agree a tailored communication and engagement plan for actively involving residents and other local stakeholders

- c) Provide opportunities to ensure that the local community is able to respond to consultations in a timely manner.
- d) Provide opportunities to ensure good communications and information from Somerset Council, and partners, on local issues.
- e) Make recommendations to Somerset Council and/or other partners on funding local projects.
- f) Make recommendations to Somerset Council, and partners, on key local issues.
- g) Produce an annual report with a self-assessment of success in relation to delivery against the agreed priorities and areas of focus for the local area for the next 12 months.
- h) Hold an annual meeting to enable residents and local stakeholders to input into setting area priorities for the next 12 months and highlight local issues.

3.0 Composition

3.1 The Local Community Networks have been established as Area Boards. For clarity, the Local Community Networks are not Council committees. Summary meeting notes of their meetings will be published on the Council's website.

3.2 In the event of a Somerset Council Councillor being elected following a by-election, the Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to appoint the Councillor to the relevant Local Community Network (s) that includes their electoral division.

3.3 Local Community Networks are established for 18 areas covering Somerset. Any proposed changes to the names of the LCNs or their boundaries will need to be recommended to the Executive Lead Member for Transformation and Human Resources for approval.

4.0 Policy and Constitution

4.1 Local Community Networks will be informed of and invited to feed into the development of strategic policies to ensure that local priorities and concerns are considered.

4.2 Any key decision or policy proposal of the Council that has, or is likely to have, a significant impact in the local area will be discussed with the Local Community Network.

4.3 Where appropriate, Local Community Networks may set up Working Groups to cover particular topics. Updates from working groups will be received at the main meetings of the Local Community Network.

- 4.4 In the event of the topic spanning more than one Local Community Network area, the Working Group will be set up to include representatives from all appropriate Local Community Networks.
- 5.0 Membership & Representation
- 5.1 To support stakeholder involvement, Local Community Networks aim to comprise the following core membership:
- 1) The elected Somerset Council Councillors representing the electoral divisions covered by the Local Community Network;
 - 2) A member from each City, Town or Parish Council and Parish Meeting within the area covered by the Local Community Network;
 - 3) Representatives from the following groups or organisations:
 - a) Local Neighbourhood policing team;
 - b) Somerset National Health Service
 - c) Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service;
 - d) Education
 - e) Representatives from Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Organisations
 - f) Representatives from Businesses or Trade Groups
 - g) Others as may be considered locally important
- 5.2 The Executive Lead Member for Transformation and Human Resources will approve the core membership of each LCN. Each LCN will, prior to their annual general meeting, review their core membership and make any recommendations for changes to the Executive Lead Member for Transformation and Human Resources. The core membership list will be classed as the voting members of the Local Community Network.
- 5.3 Each Local Community Network will support and encourage wider participation and engagement from additional attendees. This could include, for example:
- Local Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations
 - Local Businesses or Trade Groups
 - Housing Associations or Housing Officers
 - Any other relevant local groups which could include youth groups, cultural organisations, environmental groups, older people's groups, disability groups, etc.
- 5.4 Local Community Networks can invite any Executive Member to attend their meeting to discuss matters relating to their remit, if appropriate.

6.0 Officer Support

- 6.1 Each Local Community Network will be supported by a dedicated Officer from Somerset Council. (On average this will be 0.5 full time equivalent per LCN).
- 6.2 Local Community Networks can ask other officers (including external partners officers) to attend their meetings to discuss items of business on their agenda.
- 6.3 Somerset Council Directors will provide an oversight role for the Local Community Networks, ensuring that officers in their directorates attend and engage with the LCNs as and when appropriate.

7.0 Order of business for the Annual Meeting of the Local Community Networks

- 7.1 The Annual Meeting of the Local Community Networks will take place annually in either June or July of each year.
- 7.2 At each annual meeting the Local Community Network will :
 - a) Elect the Chair of the Local Community Network
 - b) Appoint the Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network
 - c) Consider the Annual Report on the Local Community Network's work in the last 12 months
 - d) Consider the priorities and areas of focus for the Local Community Network for the next 12 months
 - e) Agree the schedule of meetings for the next 12 months

8.0 Order of business for Ordinary meetings of the Local Community Networks

- 8.1 Items of business for the ordinary meetings of the Local Community Networks will be determined by each LCN.

9.0 Process for electing the Chair of the Local Community Networks

- 9.1 Only members of the core membership are eligible to be nominated as either Chair or Vice Chair. Either the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network shall be a Somerset Council Councillor.
- 9.2 Election will take place annually at the Annual Meeting of the Local Community Network.
- 9.3 A Somerset Council Officer supporting the Local Community Network meeting will call for nominations for the position of Chair of the Local Community Network.

- 9.4 Only voting members can make nominations. The nomination must be seconded to be valid.
- 9.5 An individual shall not be nominated in their absence without their written consent.
- 9.6 In the event of only one valid nomination being received, the person presiding will declare the nominated member elected.
- 9.7 In the event of two or more valid nominations, the Somerset Council Officer supporting the Local Community Network meeting will ask for a show of hands for those members in favour of each nominated candidate and declare the candidate receiving the majority of votes (of the core membership present and voting) to be the winner.
- 9.8 In the case of an equal number of votes, then the members will vote again to determine the winner. If the vote is still tied then the Somerset Council Officer supporting the meeting shall draw lots or use an equivalent method to break the tie, determine the winner of the election and declare the result. .
- 9.9 The Chair and Vice-Chair will hold office until the next Annual Meeting unless they resign from the position. In the event of a resignation, an election for the Chair and/or Vice-Chair will take place at the next available meeting.
- 10.0 Chairing arrangements
- 10.1 The Vice-Chair will preside in the absence of the Chair and if neither is present, the Local Community Network will appoint a Chair from among its core membership (section 5.1) for that respective meeting.
- 10.2 The role of the Chair will include:
- a) Providing leadership to ensure that the objectives of the Local Community Networks are met.
 - b) Working with Officers to set the agendas and to ensure that any action points are picked up and dealt with.
 - c) Ensuring that the meeting is a forum for debate of matters of interest and/or concern to local communities.
- 11.0 Reporting

11.1 The Executive will consider an annual report of the Local Community Networks and updates on LCN priorities will also be provided to Scrutiny and Executive meetings between AGMs where appropriate to help inform Council policy and decision making.

12.0 Decision making

12.1 Local Community Networks will seek to operate on the basis of consensus agreement from its core membership where possible. Local Community Networks do not have any formal decision making powers from Somerset Council, instead LCNs may make recommendations to the Council's Executive, a Scrutiny Committee or to other partners.

12.2 In exceptional circumstances, the Local Community Network may not be able to achieve consensus and in this instance the Chair may propose for the matter to be put to a majority vote by the core membership present. Where the vote is tied, the Chair of the Local Community Network shall have a second or casting vote.

13.0 Quorum

13.1 Quorum will be 25% of the core membership.

14.0 Meeting frequency and location

14.1 Local Community Networks will meet at least 4 times a year, however the frequency will be at the discretion of each individual LCN.

14.2 Local Community Network meetings will be held in accessible venues and will be held in various locations within the local area (dependent on the numbers likely to attend the meeting).

14.3 Local Community Network meetings are open to members of the public and press. The agendas for Local Community Networks should be published on the Council's website at least 8 calendar days before a meeting takes place. Summary meeting notes will be published on the Council's website within 21 calendar days of a meeting taking place.

15.0 Standards of Behaviour and Conduct

15.1 Somerset Council Councillors are subject to Somerset Council's Members Code of Conduct.

- 15.2 City, Town and Parish Councillors are reminded that they have been elected to the Local Community Network as a representative of their Council, and therefore should follow their Code of Conduct.
- 15.3 At our meetings we aim to ensure that everyone will be treated with respect and courtesy and that they will be listened to and be able to speak without interruption or intimidation. We ask everyone to behave with courtesy and conduct themselves in a reasonable way at our meetings.
- 15.4 In the case of a disturbance during the meeting, the Chair will ask those involved to behave reasonably and not to disrupt the meeting. Should a disturbance make the scheduled business of the meeting difficult or impossible to progress then the Chair may adjourn the meeting for as long as they consider necessary.
- 16.0 Review of the Terms of Reference
- 16.1 The Terms of Reference for the Local Community Networks will be reviewed on an annual basis and any proposed changes recommended to the Executive to consider. This is to ensure that the Terms of Reference appropriately reflect the role of the Local Community Networks as they evolve over time.