



Local Community Network

Yearly Report 2023/2024

Crewkerne and Ilminster



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Local Community Networks (LCNs)

Purpose

“To be the focus for community development, engagement and partnership working at local level; improving the outcomes for residents through establishing strong connections between Somerset Council, our communities and partners.”

Map

There are 18 LCNs in total.

They cover every city, town, and parish within the local authority area.

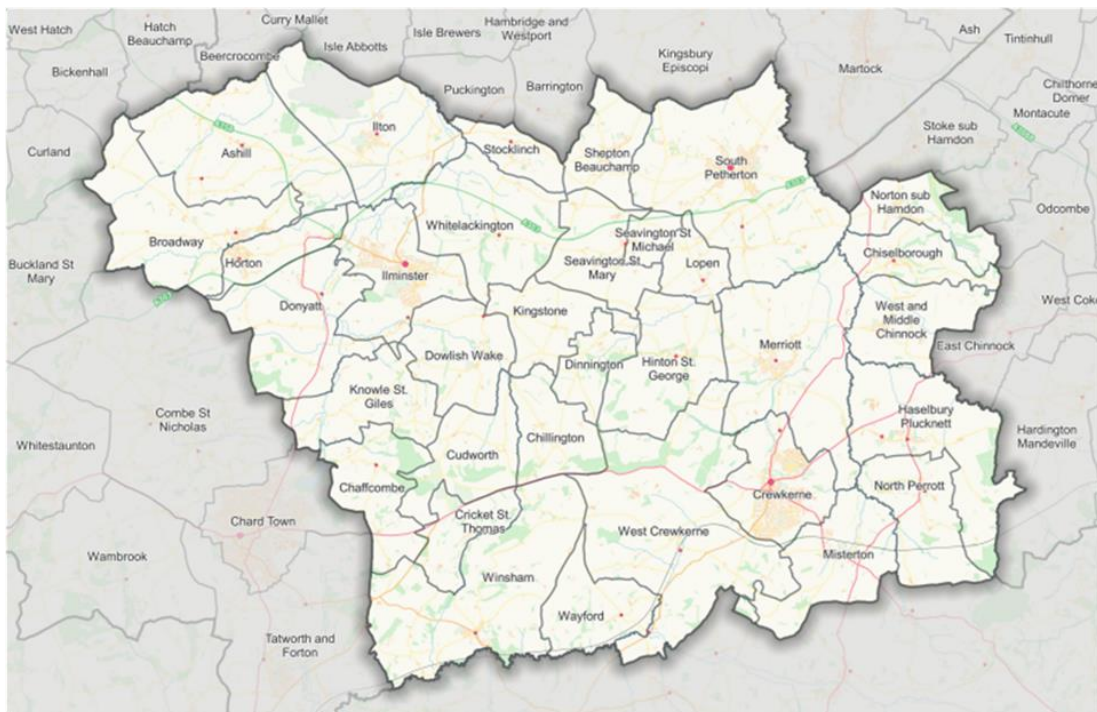
Full details of each LCN, including their demographics, characteristics, agendas, and meeting dates, can be found online.

Please visit the following webpage:

www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/



Crewkerne and Iminster LCN



Crewkerne and Iminster LCN is situated on the southern edge of the county and borders with Dorset. It sits next to three LCNs.

It has a population of more than 31,000 and boasts good road, rail and cycle routes.

The LCN consists of two towns and 31 parishes.

It has four electoral divisions (Coker, Crewkerne, Iminster and South Petherton & Islemoor).

For more details visit:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/crewkerne-ilminster/>

Crewkerne and Iminster LCN Area

Chair and Vice Chair



Chair: Cllr Mike Best

Cllr Best is Chair of Somerset Council and sits as a member of Crewkerne Town Council. He also Chaired the legacy South Somerset District Council for seven years.

Mike has lived in Crewkerne all his life. He was Mayor of Crewkerne for nine years and is a familiar face around the town.

He has a keen interest in amateur dramatics and supports the local dramatic society with their stage lighting. In the little spare time that Mike has left, he acts a director of the Aqua Centre.

Vice Chair: Cllr Leanne Taylor

Cllr Taylor has been a town councillor for Ilminster for five years. She served as Mayor of Ilminster for two years in 2023 and 2024, stepping down in May this year. She described the role as an absolute honour and a privilege.

Originally from Milton Keynes, Leanne was a lecturer in the Further Education sector.

She has a special interest in green issues, young people and in her hometown of Ilminster, which she hopes will continue to flourish and grow as a friendly and successful community.



Introduction

This LCN held its launch meeting on 15th June 2023 with approximately 40 attendees in the room and a further seven online.

We were delighted to be elected as Chair and Vice Chair and have worked closely together over this year to consider how best to ensure the meetings have been inclusive and participative.

We have taken a steady approach to identifying topics and priorities and recognise that whilst the initial list of priorities identified common concerns amongst parishes, other topics will present themselves over time and will be added to the list for consideration.

Our two working groups (Active Travel and Highways and Traffic) have enabled us to better understand the detail of the topic and to consider specific challenges and opportunities in detail. We have particularly welcomed the opportunity to work closely with Somerset Council officers and have found their expertise and insights into specific subject areas such as Highways and Traffic, invaluable.

The LCN has expressed concern about the availability of funding to deliver actions, such as the maintenance of the Active Travel route between Chard and Ilminster. However, we also recognise the financial position of Somerset Council and will be considering how best to utilise volunteers and external funding sources in the coming year.

We are conscious of ensuring that the LCN supports and encourages the participation of all the parishes within the LCN area and will seek to actively include grassroots community and other voluntary organisations in both the main LCN meetings and the working groups as we progress.

The LCN Chair and Vice Chair away day, which brought all LCN leads together, was particularly helpful this year. It provided an opportunity to hear more from other LCNs, understand their challenges and explore what was working well, and less well. We hope these opportunities to get together continue over the coming year.

Whilst the main towns of Crewkerne and Ilminster have a key role in supporting the delivery of agreed actions for the LCN we are eager to ensure the priorities agreed address the needs of all residents across the LCN area, recognising that residents move in and out of all of our parishes to access schools, healthcare, the arts, commerce and other leisure opportunities.

This LCN is developing well, with many parishes being represented at each meeting to discuss what is relevant to their parish. It has been a good space to share information from Somerset Council. We look forward to seeing the LCN continue to develop its ambitions, build a portfolio of productive working groups and meet the needs of our residents over the coming year.

Cllr Mike Best
Chair, Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN

Cllr Leanne Taylor
Vice Chair, Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN

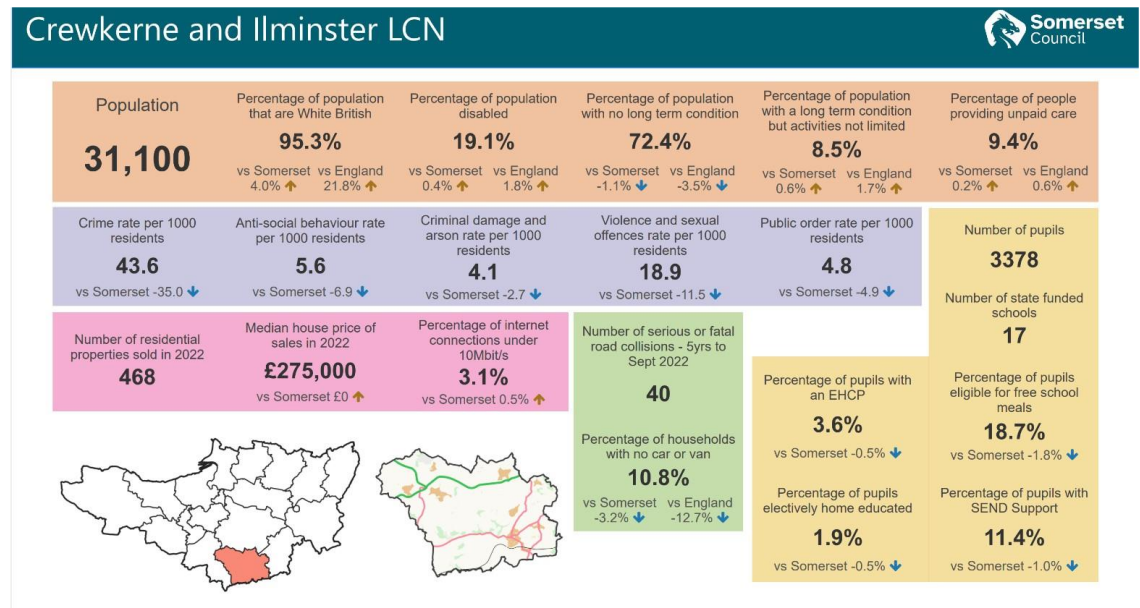
Priorities and Ambitions

Data

Somerset Council's Business Intelligence Team produced bespoke, detailed data for the Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN area.

You'll note it gives fascinating information and insights on population, residential properties, and policing.

Also featured are the number of pupils in education, and those with educational needs.

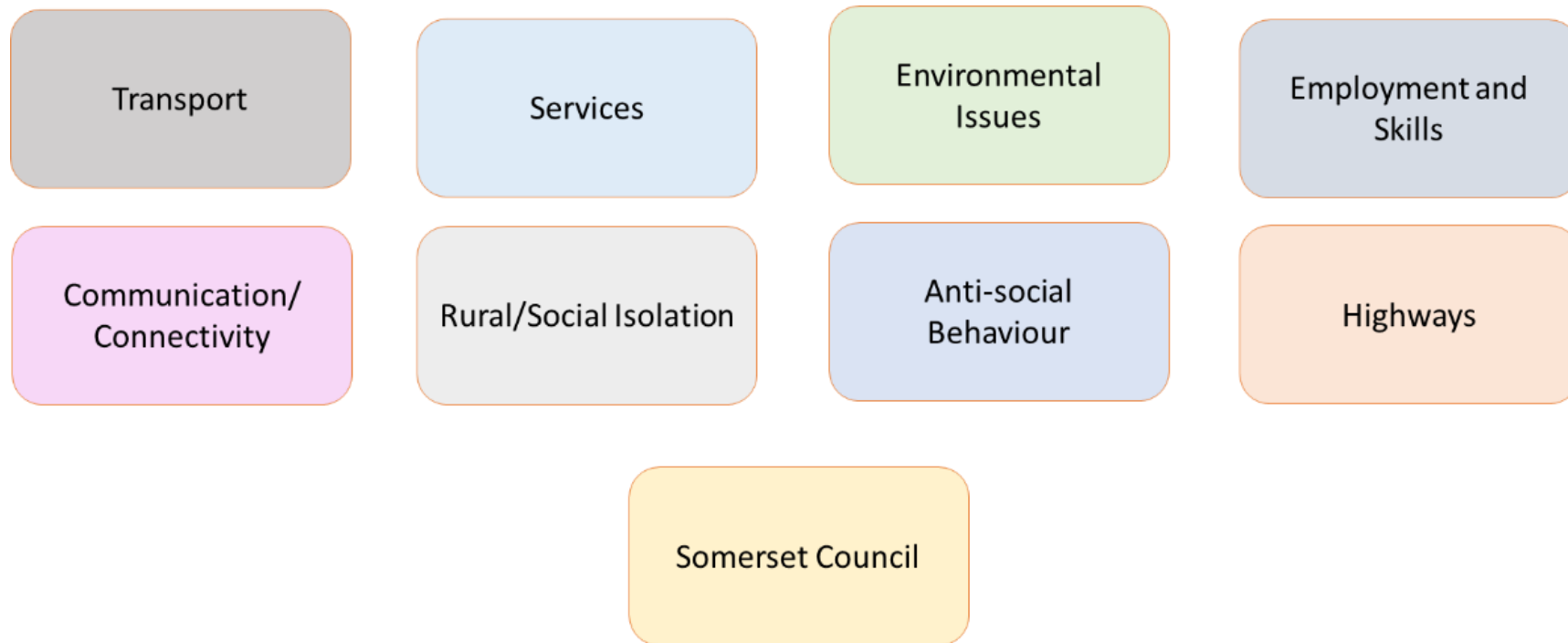


See Appendix B for larger image

Priorities and Ambitions

At the beginning of the LCN year we gathered together to collectively discuss and identify what themes were important for our towns and parishes to tackle in the Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN area.

A set of priorities and ambitions were drawn up. The table (below) identifies these original themes, which became the focus for discussion throughout the first 12 months.



Priorities and Ambitions

The Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN agreed to establish two working groups in their first year. One to consider Active Travel and the other Highways and Traffic.

Highways and Traffic Working Group

The towns and parishes identified several concerns related to traffic and highways, in initial LCN meetings. They included a lack of co-ordination from Somerset Council towards planned works and road closures along with poor or incorrect signage of road closures, potholes and road surfaces, quality and efficiency of work completed, overgrown hedges and verges.

They agreed to establish a Highways and Traffic Working Group which has met twice since an initial meeting with Highways and Traffic team in Crewkerne Council Chamber. The working group has agreed terms of reference and has met with Highways and Traffic colleagues from Somerset Council to discuss matters such as the option of a Highways Steward scheme for the LCN and how it might work in relation to the existing Ilminster Town Steward scheme. They have also started to consider how they will work together to inform highways infrastructure projects and address other issues raised by members of the LCN.

Positive outcomes have been achieved already, with one parish council getting confirmation/permission to maintain and improve green spaces within their parish. Having reviewed planned works and proposed diversion routes during this time, the working group has also liaised with highways colleagues to agree more suitable alternatives.

Active Travel Working Group

The Active Travel Working Group has had two virtual meetings. During the first meeting the group was tasked with sharing priorities and concerns that they felt were relevant for the LCN area. The second meeting discussed in more depth the priorities and who else to include/invite to support the working group.

Priorities included improving paths and working with planning colleagues to get path improvements and/or new paths in new developments which are more accessible for cyclists and walkers. Another priority is working with colleagues in Somerset Council and other organisations to improve a cycle path route that sits on the border of this LCN and another, running between Chard and Ilminster.

Priorities and Ambitions

Flooding and Resilience

The LCN is looking to set up a Flooding and Resilience Working Group following a very successful presentation from the Civil Contingency Unit at Somerset Council. The presentation talked about the importance of establishing Emergency Plans and how to successfully write that plan to support our communities.

A series of workshops, led by the Civil Contingency Unit and Somerset Rivers Authority staff, working with town and parish councils will be set up to help develop local flood plans which will meet the needs of their communities. This group will work across LCN borders and neighbouring LCNs to support them with managing emergencies, working with them to create funding applications for equipment, and encouraging synchronised approach.

This LCN area has suffered with an increase in flash flooding - this causes a real problem for parishes and towns as it happens so quickly. Working together, and with a more detailed approach, it is hoped we can be more reactive and have all the resources and information needed to support the community during such incidents.

This working group may develop more into a Resilience Working Group, covering other emergencies which may arise in future.

Financial Emergency impacts

The Financial Emergency declared by Somerset Council was announced at a very early stage of the LCNs development. These decisions and discussions impacted the agreed schedule of meetings and their topics, resulting in less progress than anticipated in the discovery phase of priority-setting for the LCN.

However, the LCN forum did at least provide an effective and useful space for the towns and parishes to share information, hear more about the actions proposed to mitigate the financial impacts, and to discuss local solutions.

Reflections

As a result of the establishment of the Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN there is improved communication between the parishes, local stakeholders, partners and Somerset Council across the Crewkerne and Ilminster area.

The main LCN meetings have always had good attendance from the parishes and partner agencies but would benefit from wider participation over the coming year (Year Two) with a focus being on the engagement of voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector organisations, along with businesses.

The first 12 months has seen the LCN supported by an interim staff team. The appointment of a dedicated Link Officer for 24/25 will provide the capacity and continuity to enable the LCN to build momentum and further develop actions plans to address the priorities of the local area, its towns, parishes, people and businesses.

Nathan Turnbull

**LCN Link Officer
Crewkerne and Ilminster**

Contacts

Email: CrewkerneandIlminsterlcn@somerset.gov.uk Website: www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/

South East Somerset LCN: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/crewkerne-ilminster/>

Appendices

Appendix A – Core Membership

Parishes

Ashill
Broadway
Chaffcombe
Chillington
Chiselborough
Crewkerne
Cricket St.Thomas
Cudworth
Dinnington
Donyatt
Dowlish Wake
Haselbury Plucknett
Hinton St.George
Horton
Ilminster
Ilton
Kingstone
Knowle St. Giles
Lopen

Parishes

Misterton
North Perrott
Norton Sub Hamdon
Merriott
Seavington St.Mary
Seavington St.Micheal
Shepton Beauchamp
South Petherton
Stocklinch
Wayford
West and Middle
Chinnock
West Crewkerne
Winsham
Whitelackington

Electoral Divisions

Coker
Crewkerne
Ilminster
South Petherton
and Islemoor

Organisations

Avon and Somerset Police
Spark Somerset
NHS
Devon and Somerset Fire and
Rescue
Education
Society Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
Somerset Association of Local
Councils (SALC)
Somerset Activity Sports Partnership
(SASP)
Community Council for Somerset
(Village Agents)
Citizens Advice
Department of Work and Pensions
Somerset Rivers Authority
Somerset Local Nature Partnership

Appendix A - continued

Other Partners and Stakeholders

Alliance Youth Service

BIIG

Somerset Foundation Trust

Crewkerne Community Church

WellBe Link (Adult Mental Health)

Community Health and Wellbeing Team

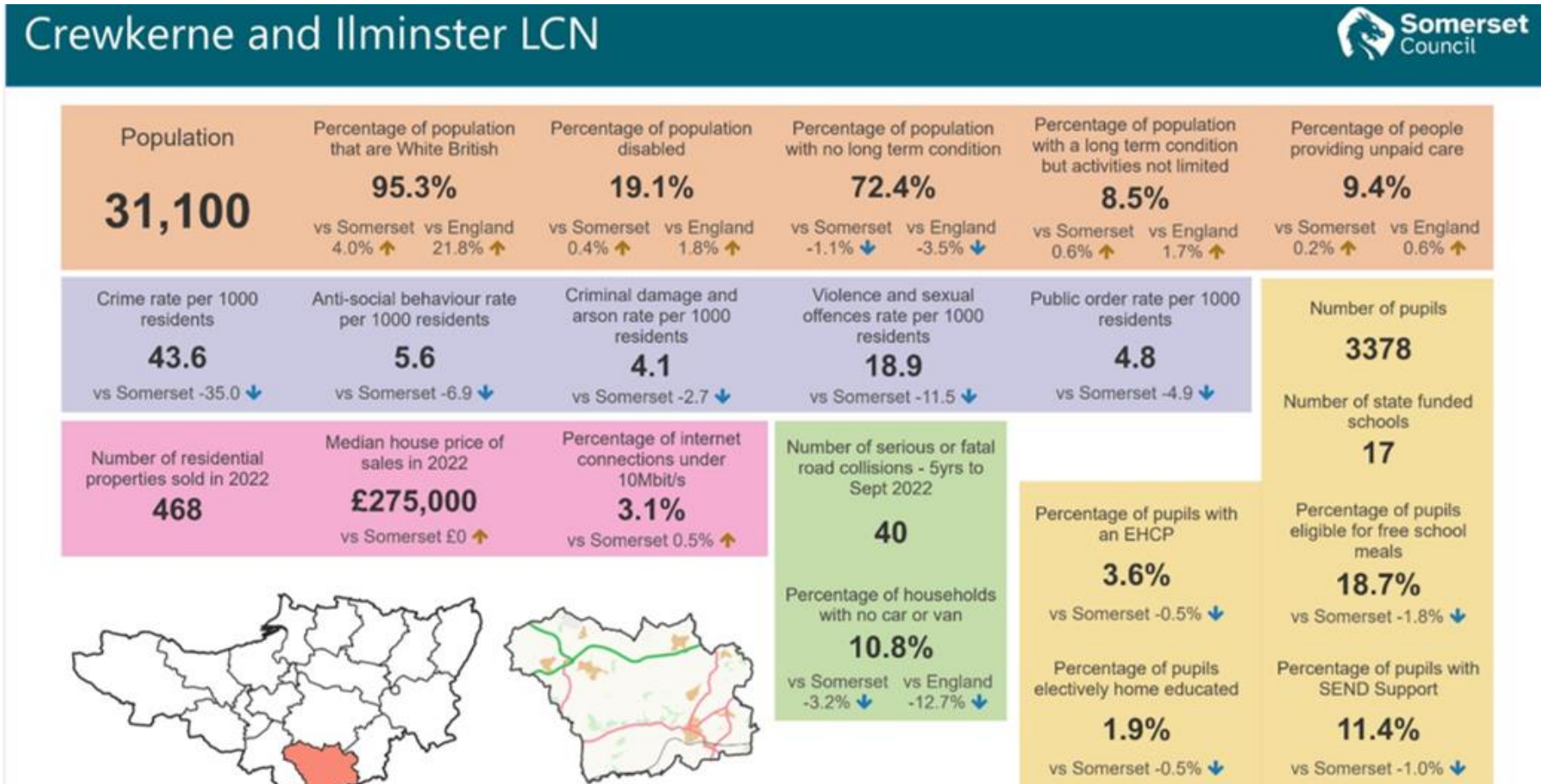
The David Hall

Church View Surgery

Young Farmers

Crewkerne Small Business Group

Appendix B – Data



Appendix C – Meeting dates, talking points, plus link to the minutes

To browse meeting minutes visit: <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=890>

15th June 2023

Donyatt Village Hall, Donyatt

- Appoint Chair
- Appoint Vice Chair
- Discussion - What is important to our residents and how do we know that?

21st September 2023

The Henhayes Centre, Crewkerne

- Highlights of themes discussed at the last meeting.
- An introduction to the LCN data
- Talk from Highways and Traffic

15th November 2023

Shrubbery Hotel, Ilminster

- Somerset Council Financial Emergency update
- Updates from Highways
- Discussion on future topics

18th January 2024

Donyatt Village Hall, Donyatt

- Update and discussion on Local Asset and Service Devolution
- Updates from Highways
- Active Travel Workshop

21st March 2024

The Henhayes Centre, Crewkerne

- Presentation from the Civil Contingency Unit
- Update from Highways and Traffic Working Group
- Table discussions on Highways and Traffic and Active Travel