



Local Community Network

Yearly Report 2023/2024

Burnham



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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/



Burnham LCN



Burnham LCN comprises eleven parish councils; Berrow, Bream, Brent Knoll, Burnham Without, East Brent, East Huntspill, Lympsham, Pawlett, Puriton, West Huntspill, Woolavington and one Town Council Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge.

Burnham-on -Sea and neighbouring Highbridge is the main centre of population for this LCN.

The area sweeps from its southern end close to Bridgwater up through the coastal areas of Burnham-on-Sea, Berrow and Bream.

The coastal areas are very popular with tourists and there are many caravan parks and holiday resorts.

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

Chair and Vice Chair



Chair: Cllr Suria Aujla

Suria has been a Somerset Councillor since 2021 and a Bridgwater Town Councillor since 2019.

She is a previous parliamentary candidate with a legal background in personal injury and professional negligence.

She hopes the interaction of the LCN will allow all parts of the region to flourish and support its residents.

Vice Chair: Cllr Kevin Bray

Kevin is Chairperson of East Brent Parish Council.

A retired Director of Architecture and Engineering, he specialised in global healthcare design and expert witness reviews.



Chair's Introduction

"I have been pleased to see the interest that Burnham LCN has attracted from local residents, parishes, organisations, and businesses.

There is no doubt that this year has been financially challenging for Somerset Council, however, the consistency I have seen in attendance has allowed the LCN to delve further into the issues that are affecting the local area and I appreciate how well everyone is working together.

I understand that no two parishes are the same and so I am grateful for the attendance of local parish councils, helping to ensure residents are well represented and all topics are considered.

I have been encouraged by the healthy debate amongst attendees and hope to see that continue in future meetings.

Thank you all for taking time to be a part of this LCN because it does not work without you and as we look forward, I hope to see more people join us at future meetings and initiate real change from this network."

Cllr Suria Aujla
Chair, Burnham LCN

Priorities and Ambitions

Data

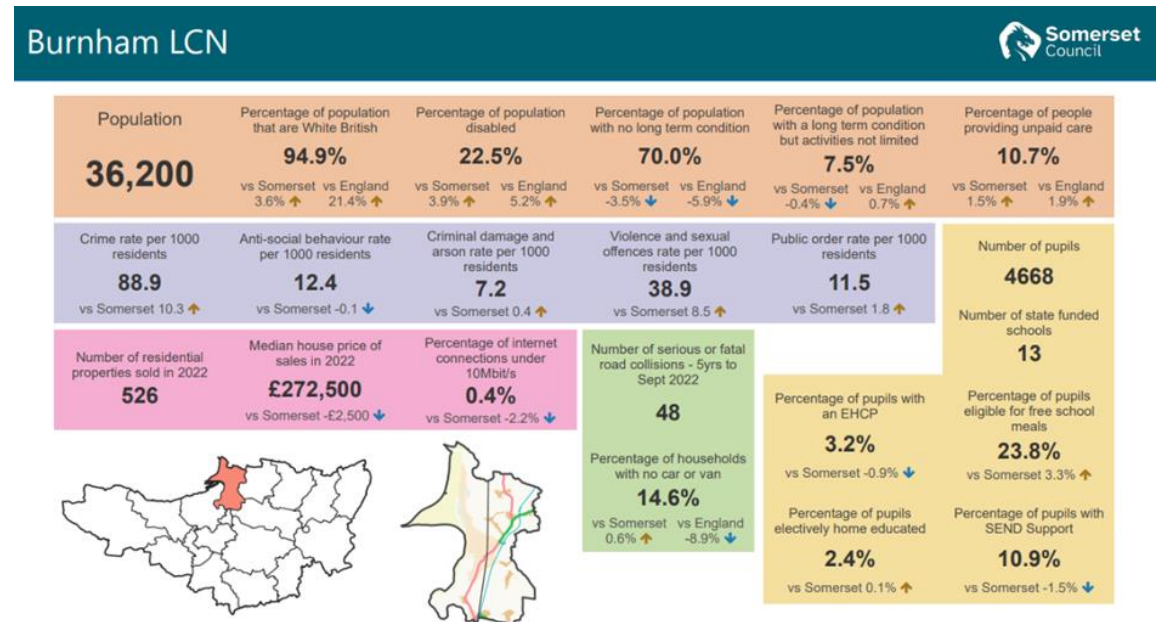
At the initial Burnham LCN meeting, attendees were shown a data set (see below). It provided useful statistical information aimed at generating initial thoughts and discussions.

Those present at the LCN were asked to consider what this data meant to them in relation to their specific knowledge of the area.

They were asked to consider what they felt was important to their community, residents, and local businesses.

The answers from the data set discussions were grouped into themes.

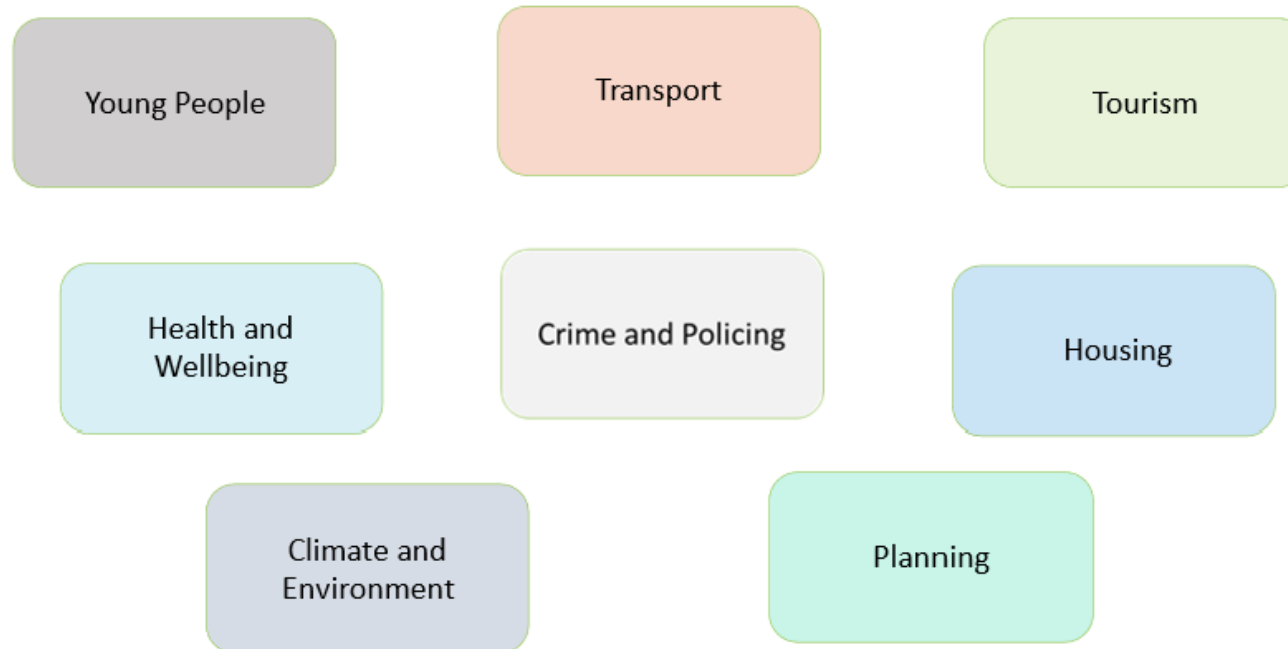
You'll find a larger image of the data set at Appendix B of this report.



Priorities and Ambitions

Themes

The answers from the data set discussions were grouped into themes. These themes were then used to generate future 'to do' topics and eventually led to the initiation of working groups (and sub groups) to carry out any actions needed, and agreed.



Summary of LCN Meetings

This LCN has good attendance from most parishes and Burnham and Highbridge Town Council serving as a valuable space to share information across the tiers of local democracy. The Financial Emergency of Somerset Council is a particular example of how the LCN has enabled communication between parish/town councils and Somerset Council to understand local concerns relating to the potential impacts and begin to explore opportunities to work together to navigate changes in levels of service. This will continue over the coming months and years.

The LCN has used a number of venues across the LCN Area with the Princess Theatre in Burnham-on-Sea, East Huntspill Village Hall, Puriton Village Hall, Morland Community Hub and Pawlett Pavilion hosting meetings, and a hybrid option for members who are unable to attend in person. This has worked well and has enabled greater attendance at meetings. The halls used this year have been spread across the LCN area with the hope of connecting with the smaller parishes. The LCN is always open to using a range of meeting places across the LCN area especially for working groups to allow as many local people as possible to be involved in its work.

The Financial Emergency facing Somerset Council meant that the third meeting in January was focussed on engaging the LCN with the implications of the situation and discussing opportunities for the devolution of services. It was very valuable to be able to work with the LCN to understand concerns and feed these back into the Council.

There was a short presentation on the Highway Steward Scheme that was part of the LCN pilot in Exmoor. This scheme gives Town and Parish Councils an option to buy the services of a Highway Steward from the Somerset Council's Highways Maintenance Contractor, Kier to deliver local enhancements to routine highways maintenance services.

Summary of LCN Meetings

Larger parishes and Burnham on Sea and Highbridge Town Council were concerned about the scope of services they may need to consider taking on. Smaller councils raised issues relating to having a limited staff resource such as part time clerks and much smaller precepts to afford buying in services.

All councils were concerned about the implications of employing staff, contract management, insurance, health and safety and legal support for drawing up contracts. Somerset Council has listened to these concerns and identified financial resources which will be utilised working with the sector to put in place strategic mechanisms to assist with the devolution of services where parish/towns wish to take them on.

The meeting decided to invite a Highways colleague to give a more detailed presentation on the various options available to parishes/towns at the next meeting.

The March meeting had a focus on the priority theme of transport with presentations and discussion from Highways colleagues. Four options were discussed that councils could consider when devolving Highways Services.

These were:

- Highways Steward
- Local self-delivery
- Parish Price List
- Buying back services

Summary of LCN Meetings

The LCN also received a presentation from Somerset Council officers leading on Rights of Way. The meeting concluded with agreement to set up a Highways Working Group to look at ways to work together on devolution of services where parishes/town wished to take these on.

In April, the LCN continued to explore priorities and had presentations from community projects to inspire discussion. These were Morland Community Hub and the Waffle Hub Community Café.

The discussion identified three key points:

- Really listen to what people want
- Both organisations clearly identified need
- Collaboration is vitally important

Understanding what funding is available is also key. The meeting concluded that the LCN needed to recruit more local organisations and those providing support and services to the community. As part of this plan the LCN agreed to support a community event with King Alfred's School to broaden engagement.

Working Groups

Burnham LCN has two working groups; they are Young People and Highways.

Young People Working Group

The Young People's Working Group has seventeen members including representatives from Burnham on Sea and Highbridge Town Council, local parishes, the Police, the Voluntary and Community Sector and children's organisations such as Barnardo's and In Charley's Memory.

The group agreed that its scope would be children and young people up to the age of seventeen. The first task would be to understand what the provision was for young people across the LCN area. The next key issue would be to understand what the needs of young people are within the area by consulting them.

The first step was to send a proforma to all parishes/towns to see what current provision there was for young people in the LCN Area. Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge seem to have good provision whereas some of the smaller parishes have more of a challenge. In order to explore how members of the working group can assist smaller parishes to support young people the group have invited members of the LCN to a workshop in September.

In order to expand local knowledge of provision for children and families the LCN has supported the Community Breakfast at King Alfred's School Academy alongside Connect Somerset, building on our networks to invite community leaders and those providing support and services children and families. The focus will be to celebrate what support is available in the community, identify gaps in services and support and collaborate to find solutions. This event provides a wealth of valuable information to the LCN ensuring that the current needs of the community are at the forefront of action.

Working Groups

Highways Working Group

The Highways Working Group also has seventeen members. The Highways team are supporting this group. To date they have provided some useful information about how the different services within Highways work. They have created a better understanding of the options for parishes and the town council to increase reactive maintenance through the Highway Steward scheme for example, and how this could work across the LCN area.

Each parish and the town council are working to identify the top three priorities for their area to decide on action needed working with Somerset Council.

In addition, the group is exploring what their local needs may be for some enhancements to local delivery of reactive highways maintenance in order to decide which of the options such as a Parish Price list or clubbing together to employ a Highways Steward is most appropriate.

Reflections

The LCN has had good representation from parish and town councils which has been of particular value with regards enhancing dialogue with Somerset Council, especially in relation to the Financial Emergency (Nov 2023).

The Young People's Working Group has drawn in a number of partners across the spectrum of local town/parishes and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The Community Breakfast at King Alfred's School Academy is another such opportunity for the LCN to extend its reach and engage with a much broader range of community leaders and is an exciting prospect for developing joint working in the coming year.

The Highways Working Group has enhanced relationships and understanding between Somerset Council officers and the local councils. There now is the opportunity for focussed discussion not just to address local issues of concern but to provide local influence on the development of key strategic plans such as the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

The challenge and focus for the next year is to continue to broaden representation on the LCN. The development of working groups by other LCNs around key priorities has been shown to be a very successful mechanism to draw in a wide range of partners who have not been visible at the main LCN meetings thus far. Bringing together working groups around priorities will be a valuable way forward for the Burnham LCN and will enable focussed working in between the main LCN meetings.

The LCN will need to ensure that it identifies ways to maximise opportunities to address challenges that arise through cooperation and collaboration recognising the central role of local representation through town and parish councils and Somerset Council but actively working to involve a spectrum of local actors and organisations to improve local quality of life.

Julie Cooper

Interim LCN Link Officer, Burnham

Contacts

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

Bridgwater LCN: www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/burnham

Appendices

Appendix A – Core Membership

Parishes

Berrow
Brean
Brent Knoll
Burnham on Sea and Highbridge
Burnham Without
East Brent
East Huntspill
Lympsham
Pawlett
Puriton
West Huntspill
Woolavington

Electoral Divisions

Brent
Burnham on Sea North
Highbridge and Burnham South
Huntspill

Organisations

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

Appendix A - continued

Other Partners and Stakeholders

In Charley's Memory

Pantry

Baptist Church

Food Bank

AONB

Connect Somerset

Well Being Link (adult mental health)

First Aid for Mental Health Instructor

General Public

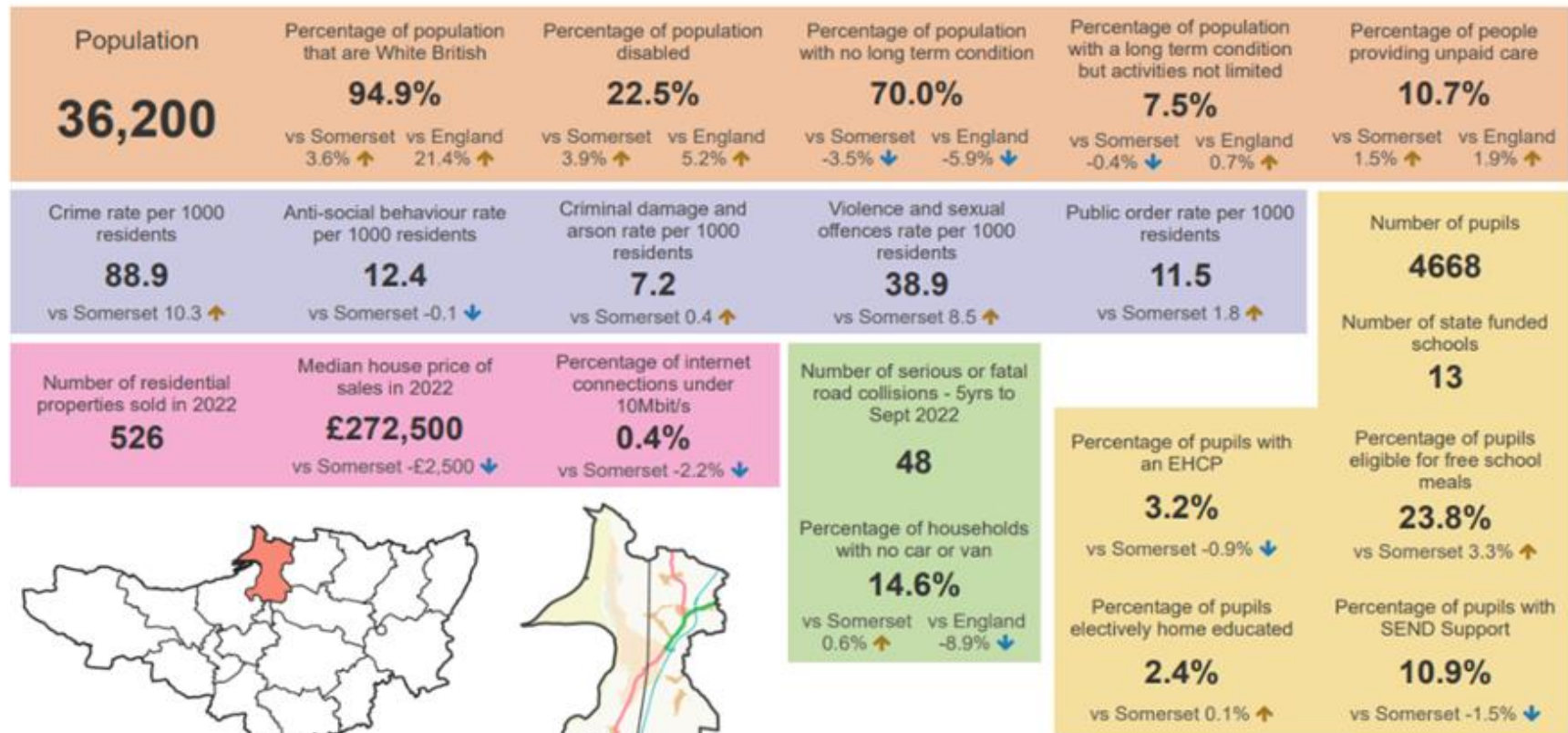
Morland hub

HPC Community Fund

Somerset Community Foundation

Appendix B – Data

Burnham LCN

Appendix C – Meeting Dates and Notes

Browse Burnham LCN minutes here: <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=905>

August 2023

- Elect Chair – Councillor Suria Aujla
- Vice Chair – Councillor Kevin Bray
- To determine priorities and areas of focus for the LCN over the next twelve months
 - Young People
 - Transport
 - Tourism
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Crime and Policing
 - Housing
 - Planning
 - Climate and Environment

October 2023

- Data Summary presented and discussed.
- Activity to prioritise themes.
 - Planning, Young People and Transport top priorities.
- LCN agreed to create a Young People's Working Group to explore young people's access to activities.

January 2024

- Discussion around Financial Emergency and potential for devolution of services.
- Short presentation on the Highway Steward Scheme that was part of the LCN pilot in Exmoor.

March 2024

- Focus on the priority theme of transport with presentations and discussion from Highways Colleagues including Rights of Way.
- The meeting concluded with agreement to set up a Highways Working Group.

April 2024

- Presentations from community projects to inspire discussion.
 - Morland Community Hub
 - The Waffle Hub Community Café
- Discussion identified three key points: really listen to what people want; both organisations clearly identified needs; collaboration is vitally important.