



Local Community Network

Crewkerne & Ilminster LCN meeting notes – 10th December 2025
Online 6:00pm – 7:15pm

Attendees:

Vice Chair: Cllr Julie Archer - West Crewkerne Parish Council

Cllr Steve Ashton, Somerset Council
Cllr Jo Roundell Greene – Somerset Council
Cllr Paul Maxwell – Crewkerne Town Council
Cllr Hugh Williams – Haselbury Plucknett Parish Council
Cllr Nick Jones – Lopen Parish Council
Cllr David Shilibier – Merriott Parish Council
Cllr Nicky Handley – Dowlish Wake Parish Council
Cllr Phil Clifton – Misterton Parish Council
Cllr Judith Hall – North Perrott Parish Council

Helen Graham – Clerk to Hinton St George Parish Council
Julie Earp – Clerk to Ilminster Town Council
Clare Paul – Clerk to South Petherton Parish Council

Matt Day – Chair of C&I LCN Active Travel Group
Ingrid Edginton – Connect Somerset
Lilly Keeley Watts - Somerset Association Local Councils
Julie Chant – Space 4 Crewkerne

Cllr Andrew Plumbly – Beercombe Parish Council (observing as not part of LCN area)

Michelle Brooks - LCN Link Officer, Somerset Council
Chris Booth - LCN Link Officer, Somerset Council
Kate Hellard – Locality Development Manager, Somerset Council

Apologies received:

Chair: Cllr Mike Best – Somerset Council
Cllr Oliver Patrick – Somerset Council
Cllr Billy Vance – Ilton Parish Council

Martin Himlin – Clerk to Chiselborough Parish Council
Kim Duller – Clerk to West and Middle Chinnock Parish Council

1. Introductions (including any apologies for absence)

Cllr Julie Archer (West Crewkerne Parish Council) introduced the meeting and welcomed all attendees. Chris Booth was also welcomed as new LCN Link Officer for Crewkerne & Ilminster LCN.

Apologies were received as noted above.

2. Agreement of notes from previous meeting (AGM)

Chris Booth summarised the AGM held on 11th June 2025, with focus areas including increasing engagement from smaller parishes, ongoing work with the Highways and Active Travel Working Groups, and persistent concerns about local flooding. The need for improved contact with Somerset Council was raised, especially regarding directory access for parish councils.

Kate Hellard explained ongoing efforts to create work with colleagues in the Contact Centre to improve access to information for Parishes and requested to report specific issues to help improve access. Chris Booth offered to collate issues for the LCN through meeting with the various parish councils. The Group voted to agree the previous meeting's actions and meeting notes, with the addition of the below:

Nick Jones, Lopen PC, requested an addition to the notes: There was a discussion about the possibility of councillors and especially clerks having a more direct way of contacting (by phone or mail) Somerset Council services rather than wasting time on hold on the general contact number or even a directory of contacts for specific services. LCN Link Officers can help facilitate contact and resolve issues where appropriate.

Post-meeting: Having previously expressed an interest, Haselbury Plucknett PC, who expressed a firm desire to be part of the flood warden pilot at the AGM, have now decided that what they really needed was some work done to the highway to stop it flooding in the first place and have decided not to go ahead with the pilot for now.

3. Highways Working Group

Chris Booth provided an update from the last Highways Working Group meeting held 23rd October 2025, covering actions on volunteer highways maintenance training (notably Chapter 8 training), IT security measures, and the ongoing problem of blocked drains and gullies. Julia Boland had raised concerns about unresolved gully blockages in Clapton, with photos and correspondence sent but no active response from highways. Chris Booth agreed to follow up directly. The next Highways meeting is scheduled for 22nd January 2026.

A discussion followed regarding of Chapter 8 training for parish volunteers, especially regarding litter picking and the use of Speed Indication Devices (SIDs). Kate Hellard clarified that Chapter 8 is only required for work involving road closures, while general volunteer litter picking does not require it if parishes have suitable insurance and risk assessments. Suggestions included organising joint Chapter 8 training sessions for multiple parishes to reduce costs and administrative burden. Chris Booth agreed to coordinate interest for a shared training session.

Action: to identify interest in a Chapter 8 training course and consider facilitating one in the C&I LCN area.

4. Active Travel Working Group

Matt Day presented updates from the Active Travel Working Group, highlighting the group's four main priorities:

- Improving safety and connectivity between Ilminster town centre and Southfields roundabout
- Improving the Chard–Ilminster shared path
- Creating a safe and direct shared path from Crewkerne quayside to the town centre
- Promoting walking in the area

Key successes included collaboration with National Highways (who are conducting a safety audit on the Southfields roundabout as well as the whole route up to Honiton), engaging with planning officers for infrastructure improvements, and developing a 'Friends of the Path' group for the Chard–Ilminster route. Challenges remain, particularly around getting developer contribution to support active travel measures, as well as increasing officer awareness of LCN priorities within Somerset Council. The group agreed to focus more on influencing planning applications and developer contributions to ensure active travel improvements are prioritised. The next Friends of the Path meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 16th December online and the next volunteer working group day is on Saturday 10th January.

5. Small Parish Funding Opportunities (see attached presentation)

Lilly Keeley Watts updated the group on the Community Health and Wellbeing Programme, which has now closed for new grant applications. Sixty grants, totalling over £565,000, have been distributed across Somerset, including both parish and LCN-wide projects. The focus moving forward is to support parishes with populations under 1,000 that have not previously received funding. Support will include project development, community plans, surveys, fundraising, and capacity building, with a small pot of funding available for associated costs. Drop-in sessions and further communications will be scheduled, and parishes are encouraged to suggest topics for support.

6. New Link Officer Introduction

Chris Booth introduced himself as the new LCN Link Officer, covering Crewkerne & Ilminster LCN and Levels & Moors LCN. He invited parishes to contact him for support, visits, and ongoing collaboration.

Action: Chris Booth to visit parishes

7. Future Meetings and Planning

The next full LCN meeting is provisionally scheduled for 11th March 2026, with a preference for an in-person meeting (with a hybrid option for remote attendance). Attendees are encouraged to suggest themes for the next meeting; ideas included updates from planning on the twelve-week 'special measures' project and clarity on election fees and scheduling.

There was discussion and confusion about parish and town council election dates and costs. It was clarified that the next elections are expected in 2027, but more information is needed, especially regarding cost implications for smaller parishes. Kate Hellard agreed to circulate updates from the monthly clerks' meetings and seek further clarity from Somerset Council's Parish Development and Liaison Manager.

8. Thanks and Close

The meeting closed with thanks to Michelle Brooks for her outstanding support and facilitation, and the group extended festive wishes to all attendees.

Actions Summary

- See Annex A