



Local Community Network

**Yeovil LCN Meeting notes
7.00pm Thursday 19th March 2026**

**Tintinhull Village Hall
Chaired by Karl Gill, Yeovil Town Councillor**

Attendees:

Anita Perry	West Coker Parish Council
Beth Poole	Somerset Council (LCN Link Officer)
Cllr Andy Soughton	Somerset Council
Cllr Faye Purbrick	Somerset Council
Cllr Peter Seib	Somerset Council
Emma Gifford	Environment Agency
Fodo Higginson	Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC)
Katherine Beverley	The Octagon Theatre and Westlands
James Moore	Somerset Council (LCN Link Officer)
Karl Gill (Chair)	Yeovil Town Council
Natasha Rand	Somerset Connect / Yeovil Arts Space
Robin Carpenter	Hardington Mandeville Parish Council
Steve Haigh	Radio Ninesprings
Sue Murrison	Closworth Parish Meeting

Virtual Attendees:

Cllr Andy Kendall	Somerset Council
Paul Elliston	Somerset Rivers Authority
Paul Herbert	Brympton Parish Council

Apologies:

Cllr Wes Read	Somerset Council
Sarah Kinnersly	Young Somerset

Summary of key points of discussion and outcomes:

Item 1: Welcome and apologies

Karl Gill, acting Chairperson, welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked them for their patience whilst technical difficulties were addressed. Apologies received. The agenda order has been changed to accommodate speaker availability.

Item 2: Parish Issues and Opportunities: Collaboration and Feedback

Sue Murrison raised funding concerns for parish meetings, which do not have a precept like parish councils. She was signposted to Somerset Association of Local

Councils, and it was noted that support may be available, including advice on raising a precept.

Item 3: Parish Preparedness Survey

Dr Paul Elliston from Somerset Rivers Authority presented findings from the city, town and parish preparedness survey, explaining that it is intended to help Somerset Council understand local risks, identify gaps in community resilience, and better target support.

County-wide results showed that while flooding remains a significant concern, strong winds, power outages and access issues were reported as the highest risks. Average preparedness was lower than overall risk levels, with strengths in community spirit and communication, but weaknesses in emergency planning, equipment, training and local emergency contacts.

It was confirmed that emergency response remains Somerset Council's statutory responsibility and that parishes are not being asked to replace formal responders, although stronger local preparedness is encouraged to help communities manage until support arrives. Grant funding and advice are available to help parishes improve resilience.

Emma Giffard from the Environment Agency gave an overview of the recent flooding across Somerset, noting exceptionally wet weather in January and February, significant flooding impacts, and the challenges of managing flooding in low-lying rural areas. She explained that support is available through the Environment Agency and Somerset Rivers Authority, including grants for resilience equipment and local flood-risk reduction work. In response to questions, she confirmed that the recent flood response is being reviewed, with lessons learned being considered, but stressed that pump deployment and river management are complex and influenced by wider system constraints. It was also highlighted that further information, updates and funding details can be shared with parishes, and that a wider debrief will take place across emergency response agencies.

Item 4: Arts Engagement and Outreach

Katherine Beverley from The Octagon Theatre and Westlands gave an overview of the theatre's arts engagement and outreach work across Yeovil LCN and surrounding areas. She explained that the programme is delivered by a small team through Arts Council England funding, Somerset Council support and additional local partnerships and grants. Since April 2023, the programme has engaged over 3,500 pupils through work with local secondary and primary schools, alongside wider school workshops, careers activity and teacher support. Across the wider Yeovil area, over 121,000 tickets have been purchased for shows and events at Westlands, representing more than 12,000 customers, and over 23,000 participations have been recorded across outreach and engagement programmes.

The programme includes youth theatre, choir, inclusive dance, holiday activities, play days, health and wellbeing projects, school partnerships, talent development, artist support, accessible ticket schemes, buddy support and community productions. It was highlighted that this work aims to improve access to arts and culture for all ages, support wellbeing, reduce barriers to participation and create opportunities for local

people to develop skills and confidence. Katherine also noted that support from parish and town councils helps to strengthen and extend this work within local communities.

Item 5: Community Transport

Community Transport Southwest did not attend and no apologies were received

Item 6: Highways Working Group Update

Beth Poole provided an update on the Highways Working Group, noting that the group had recently reconvened for the first time in some time, with a small attendance at Yeovil Library and input from Highways officers. Partners were encouraged to get involved in future meetings, with flexibility offered around venue and online attendance. Feedback from those present was positive, with attendees reporting that the session had been useful in improving understanding of current highways funding and processes, and in supporting discussion of local project priorities.

Item 7: Future Agenda Items and Speakers

Partners were invited to suggest future agenda items, speakers and topics of interest for upcoming meetings, including the AGM in June. It was noted that the outcome of the community engagement review may influence meeting arrangements later in the year. Attendees were encouraged to share ideas to help shape future agendas and increase participation, with a preference for meetings to be led by the interests of those in the room.

Item 8: Any Other Business?

It was highlighted that Yeovil Town Council is supporting a community gardening project, funded through Somerset Association of Local Councils, to encourage gardening for mental and physical wellbeing, including for people with limited access to growing space. Attendees were also reminded that Somerset Association of Local Councils can still offer support and limited funding for smaller parish projects, events and community engagement activity. A forthcoming roadshow in Chilthorne on Saturday 11 April was promoted, bringing together voluntary organisations and local councils.

It was also noted that Community Transport for Somerset did not attend, but their presentation would be circulated if received. Attendees were informed about the upcoming Yeovil Arts Weekender, a community arts event involving schools, local groups and partners across the area.

A concern was raised about late circulation of meeting details; it was confirmed that agendas are published online and distributed by email, with a note to check whether contact details are correct for future communications.

Future LCN meeting dates:

- 7:00pm Thursday 18th June 2026 (AGM) – The Manor Hotel, Yeovil

Item 9: Close and Networking

Attendees were thanked for their participation and patience, especially concerning audio and technical challenges. The meeting concluded with an invitation for any final questions or comments.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:

1. Partners to send suggestions for future agenda items, guest speakers and topics to Beth Poole to help shape upcoming meetings and the AGM.
2. Attendees to promote future meetings more widely to encourage broader participation and help increase attendance.
3. Beth Poole to circulate any presentation or information received from Community Transport Southwest.
4. Interested partners to contact Sue Wheeler at Yeovil Town Council for more information about the community gardening and shared allotment project.
5. Smaller parishes and community groups to contact Somerset Association of Local Councils if they would like support or small-scale funding for local projects, events, community engagement, or arts activity.
6. Members interested in the Chilthorne roadshow on Saturday 11 April to book a place via Somerset Association of Local Councils or contact them directly for assistance.
7. Beth Poole to share any further information received on flooding updates, grants, or useful links from the Environment Agency and Somerset Rivers Authority.

APPENDICES:

Presentation – LCN: [Click here to view](#)

Presentation – Preparedness Survey & Resilience Dashboard: [Click here to view](#)

Parish Preparedness Survey: [Click here to view](#)

Weblink: [Somerset Flooding 2026 | Engage Environment Agency](#)

Weblink: [Grants - Somerset Rivers Authority](#)

somerseprepared.org.uk/get-support/funding-support/

Presentation – Octagon Theatre Arts Engagement & Outreach : [Click here to view](#)