



Local Community Network

South East LCN

Wednesday 21st January 2026, 7.00pm

Caryford Community Hall, Maggs Lane, Ansford, BA7 7JJ

Actions and Notes

Attendees

Name	Representing
Judi Morison	Co-Chair of LCN and Castle Cary TC
Cllr Nicola Clark	Vice-Chair of the LCN and Somerset Councillor for Blackmoor Vale
Cllr Lucy Trimnell	Somerset Council - Wincanton and Bruton
Cllr Hayward Burt	Somerset Council – Blackmoor Vale
Sue Place	Connect Somerset Champion and Balsam Centre
Emily MacCormack	Spark Somerset
Robin Cave	Abbas and Templecombe PC
Tina Chapman	Abbas and Templecombe PC
Dominic Savage	Abbas and Templecombe PC
Pam Griffiths	Ditcheat PC
Chris Edwards	Ansford PC
Norman Purcell	Lydford on Fosse PC
Jim Frampton	Lydford on Fosse PC
Andy Keys-Tozer	North Cadbury PC
Fiona Harvey	Stoke Trister and Bayford
Howard Ellard	Wincanton TC
Susan Ekmann	Somerset Bus Partnership
Lily Keeley-Watts	SALC
Phillippa Biddlecombe	Castle Cary TC
Tim Adams	Compton Pauncefoot and Blackford
Katherine Beverley	Arts and Engagement Manager, Octagon Theatre
James Moore	Somerset Council – LCN Link Officer
Beth Poole	Somerset Council – LCN Link Officer

Apologies received

Name	Representing
Councillor Tom Power	Wincanton and Bruton
Tim Carty	Milborne Port TC
Alan Ward	Rural Practice Network
Tim Archer	Charlton Horethorn

1. Welcome to Castle Cary/Ansford and apologies

Members and attendees welcomed to Castle Cary / Ansford, including those joining both in person and online. Thanks were extended to attendees for travelling in difficult weather conditions.

Apologies for absence were reported from those unable to attend, including colleagues who had notified the organisers in advance. Best wishes were formally recorded for our co-chair, Tim Carty.

2. Highways Working Group Update

Notes of the Highways Working Group circulated with these notes. Please contact South East LCN@Somerset.gov.uk for any questions

The last meeting of the Highways Working Group was prior to Christmas and that the initial meeting had been well attended. Members were advised that a document containing key highways contacts had been circulated to parish clerks following that meeting, and it was confirmed that this information would be re-issued to ensure all relevant contacts were included.

The next meeting of the Highways Working Group was confirmed as taking place on 3 March, to be held in Castle Cary. Members were advised that the Assistant Highways Manager for the area would be attending plus other Highways colleagues, providing an opportunity for direct discussion of ongoing and emerging highways issues affecting the South East LCN area.

It was noted that, at the time of the meeting, the A357 through Templecombe was the only item formally listed on the agenda. However, members were encouraged to submit additional items for consideration, either in advance of the meeting or directly via the LCN team, to ensure that a wider range of local concerns could be addressed.

Discussion highlighted the importance of using formal reporting mechanisms for highways issues, including reporting defects and concerns through the Somerset Council system. Members were advised to retain reference numbers and to forward these to the South East LCN inbox if responses were delayed, enabling officers to follow up issues directly with highways colleagues.

The Highways Working Group is a key route for escalating concerns and seeking progress on persistent issues. Attendees were encouraged to make full use of the group to raise matters affecting their communities and to engage collaboratively with highways officers to help secure practical outcomes

3. Katherine Beverley, Arts Engagement and Outreach Manager, Octagon Theatre

Presentation given from Katherine Beverley, Arts Engagement and Outreach Manager, Octagon Theatre. The slides are attached with these notes.

Katherines' presentation was around the Arts Engagement and Outreach Programme operating across Somerset. She explained that the programme is funded through a combination of Somerset Council support and Arts Council England investment, and is designed to take arts activity out of Yeovil and into communities across the county, with a particular focus on areas of need and opportunity, including the South East LCN.

Katherine set out a flexible offer to parishes, centred on partnership working rather than fixed programmes. She explained that where communities can demonstrate need, interest or a clear opportunity, her team can work with parishes to design activity, identify suitable artists or

facilitators, and explore appropriate funding routes, including Arts Council England and other sources.

She also outlined a strong practical delivery offer, including access to professional artists, facilitators and creative practitioners who can deliver projects locally. This ranged from children and family activity to older people's wellbeing, neurodiversity-friendly activity, health-related creative programmes, and community events. Katherine emphasised that this support could extend beyond performance to include workshops, participatory projects and community-based creative development.

In addition, Katherine highlighted access and inclusion measures that parishes can actively promote to residents, including low-cost ticket schemes, subsidised participation through bursaries, buddying support for those lacking confidence to attend alone, and assistance for schools with transport costs. She encouraged parishes to act as local connectors, helping ensure residents are aware of opportunities already available while also shaping future provision through dialogue with her team

Katherine highlighted Wincanton as one of the four core focus areas for the Arts Engagement and Outreach Programme, making it a significant beneficiary rather than a peripheral location. She described sustained delivery in Wincanton over multiple years, including summer and winter play days, arts participation activity, and health-related creative programmes. These activities were framed as free or low-cost, highly accessible, and designed to reach families, children and residents who might not otherwise engage with arts provision

Wincanton was also referenced as a location for arts-for-health interventions, notably the *Time Together* project delivered in partnership with the Balsam Centre and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. This programme supports parents and babies through music-based activity and was described as having drawn participants from surrounding communities, including across the South East LCN area. Katherine emphasised the preventative and wellbeing impact of this work and its strong links with local health and community partners.

4. Rural Practice Network Note: On the day apologies received from Alan Ward, PCN Operations Manager for the Rural Practice Network

In Alan's absence, an overview was provided by the Judi Morison and supporting colleagues, drawing on recent engagement with the Network and its developing priorities across the South East LCN area. The discussion positioned the Rural Practice Network as an important conduit between primary care, community services and wider wellbeing activity.

A key focus of the update was the neurodiversity-friendly pilot being developed in Castle Cary and Ansford, linked to Millbrook Surgery. The initiative was described as moving beyond formal training towards a more practical, community-shaping approach, supporting shops, services and local organisations to become more accessible and inclusive for neurodivergent residents. Particular emphasis was placed on simplifying language, improving awareness, and fostering understanding across everyday community interactions.

The discussion also highlighted the Network's work on women's health, including menopause support, and its role in taking some health-related activity out of clinical settings and into community venues. This was framed as a positive shift, enabling preventative, educational and peer-support approaches to reach a broader audience while relieving pressure on GP practices.

Attendees also noted the scale of unmet need, particularly among younger people and adults newly diagnosed with neurodivergent conditions, and reflected on the significance of these figures for relatively small rural communities. The Rural Practice Network was recognised as being well placed to identify trends across patient populations and to work collaboratively with community partners, including LCNs, to respond to emerging needs

5. Local Plan Timetable

Somerset Council are preparing a new Somerset Local Plan, looking ahead to 2045. This is taking place against a backdrop of significant national planning reform, including a new government-set 30-month plan-making timetable once we formally enter that process.

5a. Key Dates and Milestones

- **8 April 2026:** Local Plan timetable report considered by the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee.
- **By 30 June 2026:** Publication of the Notice of Intent – formally launching preparation of the Somerset Local Plan and confirming the overall timetable.
- **Summer 2026:** Scoping Consultation – seeking views on the scope of the Plan, evidence base, and how the council should engage with communities.
- **Spring 2026:** Publication of initial Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment results from the call for sites.
- **Autumn 2027:** Draft Local Plan consultation, including spatial strategy options and the first draft list of potential site allocations.
- **Spring 2028:** Final proposed plan consultation prior to submission for examination.

The first formal public milestone is **by 30 June 2026**.

By this date, the council intends to publish a **Notice of Intent**. This is not a draft plan and it does **not** include site allocations.

What it does do is:

- formally signal that work on the Somerset Local Plan is underway, and
- set out the overall timetable for plan preparation.

This is the point at which councils, communities and stakeholders will clearly see the route map ahead.

5b. Summer 2026 – Scoping Consultation

Immediately following the Notice of Intent, we move into the **Scoping Consultation**, planned for **summer 2026**.

This is the **first key engagement opportunity** for town and parish councils.

During this consultation, we will ask for views on:

- **how the council should engage** with communities throughout the plan-making process, and
- **what the Local Plan should cover** — its scope, themes and evidence base.

It is important to be clear:

☞ **This stage does not include site allocations.**

Instead, it is about shaping *how* the plan is prepared and *what strategic issues* it should address.

6. Town/Parish/Other Items

6a. Lily Keeley Watts (SALC)

Lily announced that the SALC grant programme has officially closed, having distributed £565,000 across sixty grants ranging from £600 to £35,000, supporting both small parishes and larger LCN projects.

Despite the closure of the grant programme, Lily and her colleague Fodo remain available to support parishes with community engagement, fundraising, grant writing, and project development, with a small pot of funding available until September.

Lily emphasised the intention to support smaller parishes with populations under 1,000, offering assistance with community plans, environmental projects, and other local initiatives, encouraging participants to get in touch for support.

Contact: Lilly Keeley Watts: hwbadmin@somerset-alc.org.uk

6b. Emily MacCormack (Spark Somerset)

Emily MacCormack introduced herself as working for Spark Somerset and outlined her role within county-wide health and wellbeing programmes. She described Spark's involvement in partnership working with Somerset Council and the NHS, particularly in supporting preventative and community-based approaches to health.

Emily also provided an update on the Volunteering for Health programme, identifying Spark Somerset as a key delivery partner in a national pilot being implemented locally. The programme aims to strengthen connections between health services, voluntary organisations and communities, with a focus on reducing social isolation and improving wellbeing outcomes. The South East LCN area was highlighted as one of the places where this work is being developed through local partnerships and testing new models of engagement.

In wider discussion, members noted Spark Somerset's contribution to youth and community capacity-building, particularly through its role in supporting the Youth Work Alliance. Spark was recognised for helping to grow the local youth workforce and strengthening pathways for young people into youth work and community roles, supporting longer-term resilience across communities in the LCN area.

Contact: Emily MacCormack: emily.maccormack@sparksomerset.org.uk

6c. Somerset Bus Partnership/Public Transport issues

Public transport and bus services were discussed as a significant concern across the South East LCN area, particularly in relation to access to services, evening activities and community facilities. Attendees highlighted ongoing challenges following the loss or reduction of bus routes, including difficulties for residents accessing colleges, GP surgeries, theatres and evening events.

Particular issues were raised around the lack of evening and return services, which continues to limit participation in cultural, social and health-related activities across the area. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of integration between bus and rail timetables, notably where mainline rail services pass through the area without reliable bus connections to stations.

Attendees noted that poor coordination between modes of transport further exacerbates rural isolation and limits the benefits of existing rail infrastructure. While some improvements and potential new services were referenced, attendees emphasised the need for better alignment between bus and rail services to maximise accessibility for communities.

The work of the Somerset Bus Partnership was acknowledged, alongside calls for continued engagement with transport providers and Somerset Council to address gaps in provision. Members agreed that public transport remains a key enabling factor for community resilience, access to services and economic participation, and that transport issues should continue to be raised collectively through the LCN to strengthen advocacy and coordination across parish, town and county levels.

6d. Christmas TRO for Christmas road closures across the LCN

Specific concern was expressed about the cost and complexity of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), particularly for events such as Christmas road closures. Discussion around **joint or coordinated approaches** between towns (e.g. Bruton, Castle Cary, Milborne Port and others) could reduce costs and duplication. All agreed to discuss this with relevant parishes/towns.

7. Ongoing Consultations and Opportunities

Information given about the below items:

- Beyond the Precept online event – finding solutions for smaller parish and town council: Book here: [Beyond the Precept: Funding solutions for smaller parish and town councils](#)
- Somerset Food Survey: [Somerset Food Survey - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#)
- Domestic Abuse Strategy [Domestic Abuse Strategy Public Consultation - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#)
- Charitable Collection Licensing Policy: [Charitable collection licensing policy - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#)

Advised that the 'Beyond the Precept' online event has a fee to attend.

8. AOB/Dates for the Diary

8a. Dates for Diary

Event	Date
Highways Working Group	Tuesday 3 rd March 2026
Full LCN	Thursday 7 th May 2026
Highways Working Group	Tuesday 2 nd June
AGM	Wednesday 15 th July 2026

8b. AOB

Attendees noted challenges where decisions (such as road closures or transport changes) occur outside Somerset boundaries but have direct impacts locally. It was agreed that the LCN inbox should be used to flag cross-boundary issues so officers can help coordinate responses with neighbouring authorities.

Suggestions for future agenda topics, including planning policy, food resilience, policing and transport, to help shape forthcoming meetings.