

Local Community Network

Burnham and Highbridge LCN meeting notes Tuesday 16th December 2025 Pawlett Village Hall.

Attendees:

Alan Sharp, Chair & Woolavington PC
Cllr Theo Butt Philip
Cllr Bob Filmer & Brent Knoll PC
Cllr Tony Grimes
Cllr Lesley Millard, Burnham & Highbridge TC
Robin Leveridge, Lympsham PC
Margaret Sims, Pawlett PC
Lilly Keeley Watts, Somerset Association of Local Councils

Gill Keniston-Goble SC LCN Link Officer
Anne Shilton, SC LCN Link Officer
Callum Davey SC Tech Support

Virtual attendee:

Sally Diaz Puriton PC
Simon Langley Puriton PC

Apologies:

Sam Warren, Pawlett PC
Niamh Hutchinson, Brean PC
Insp. Charmaine Dyne, Avon & Somerset Police
Hayley Bullock, SASP
Alex Lyons, SASP
Victoria Boorman, The Space
Selina Keedwell, Somerset Youth Theatre
Dawn Carey, In Charleys Memory
Jane Macpherson Morland Hub, Highbridge
Shona Stone, LiveWest
Suzanne, Lisa and Jenn from Young Somerset

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies.

Alan welcomed everyone to the meeting and did the housekeeping before asking those present to introduce themselves.

2. Actions from the last meeting.

The actions from the last meeting were discussed as per the table below.

3. Devolution – Cllr Theo Butt Philip

Background and Drivers

Key drivers for the devolution programme:

- Creation of the unitary council, which envisaged significant devolution to city, town, and parish councils.
- Financial emergency declared by Somerset Council in 2023, creating urgency for cost-saving measures.
- Allowing local communities where they wanted, to take greater control over the facilities and the services within their community.

Current Focus and Progress

Programme has prioritised larger conurbations (Yeovil, Bridgwater, Taunton Town Council) due to financial impact.

Estimated savings: approx. £1.2 million (likely an underestimate).

Focus areas: open spaces, public toilets (mainly towns), street cleansing, and specific projects (e.g. Yeovil theatre).

Community Involvement

Original call for expressions of interest received responses from smaller parishes, but capacity constraints delayed progress.

Commitment to clear backlog and enable smaller communities to take responsibility for local facilities (parks, playgrounds, etc.).

New expressions of interest can be submitted via devolution@somerset.gov.uk.

Budget and Service Delivery

Annual letter from Council Leader sent to parishes (recently issued).

No significant service changes expected in current budget round; no need for parishes to precept for additional responsibilities this year.

Devolution remains voluntary – Somerset Council will not force responsibilities onto parishes.

Financial Adjustment

Change in precept payment schedule: moving from upfront annual payment to two tranches, saving Somerset Council money.

If this causes genuine hardship, parishes should contact Theo or Bill for assistance.

Key Message

Devolution is about empowering communities, not just saving money.

Somerset Council will maintain minimum standards but encourages parishes to enhance services where possible.

Questions and Comments Raised

Highbridge Town Council: Concern over Somerset asking parishes to pay for repairs on assets still under Somerset's responsibility (e.g., Marine Cove Gardens fountain).

Theo acknowledged financial constraints and difficulty in funding non-safety issues.

Highways and the Enhanced Scheme:

Lack of communication on enhanced highways scheme; parishes need clarity for budgeting.

Theo agreed to raise this with colleagues.

Health and Safety Concerns:

Examples of hazards (e.g., sand build-up on Grove Rd footpath, barbed wire) due to lack of budget and manpower.

Emergency contact for urgent public safety issues: 0300 123 2224.

General Frustration:

Limited resources for maintenance and repairs; parishes may consider taking on responsibilities voluntarily.

4. Community Emergency Plan Workshop

Nicola Dawson (Head of Emergency Planning) offering workshops for parishes to develop local emergency plans.

Burnham & Highbridge Town Council already engaged; other parishes encouraged to express interest.

Workshops will cover broader risks beyond flooding (e.g., power outages).

Emphasis on collaboration across parishes within LCN for consistency and shared resources. There are a couple of Parishes within the Dovesborough LCN that are interested in a workshop.

5. Working groups update;

Highways

Key Points

Communication delays on emergency works due to reliance on utility companies. Use of One Network tool recommended for parishes to track planned closures and receive alerts.

Issues raised:

Poor coordination and late updates on road closures.

Coast Road deterioration and subsidence – medium-term fix anticipated, potential Hinckley funding.

Unauthorised signage – enforcement concerns; suggestion to explore LCN role in supporting enforcement.

Reporting system flaws: cases marked “closed” prematurely; lack of detailed feedback on decisions.

Agreed actions:

Push for software improvements for better tracking.

Quarterly meetings with Highways reinstated.

Bridge at Highbridge railway station – ongoing subsidence issue; legal dispute over responsibility between Somerset and Network Rail.

Young People

Key Points

Link officer spoken to Selena and invited to attend in March 2026.

Link officer attended the Community breakfast at King Alfred's school with the CONNECT champion. New youth club will be opening in Burnham based in Methodist Church as part of the Waffle Hub for 8 to 14 year olds, the launch is Wednesday the 17th Dec, start back on the 7th of January 2026. Working with SASP, which is Somerset Active Sports Partnership to provide activity during the holidays.

SASP have been into King Alfred to do some research around areas in Burnham and Highbridge. They asked four questions and had over 500 responses. Link

officer spoke to SASP since the meeting, and they agreed the PowerPoint could be shared. Alex and Hayley from SASP, have been invited to the meeting in March.

6. Information and Signposting – any updates

Coastal Navigation Project: Economic development initiative linked to health determinants; update expected in March.

Waste Not Somerset: Grant awarded to Western Hospice Care for recycling/upcycling project in Burnham-on-Sea charity shop.

SALC Update: £565,000 distributed across 60 grants, benefiting 169 parishes. Remaining small grant pot for parishes under 1,000 population; contact SALC for support. Community Health and Well-being Programme: Ongoing support for project development, fundraising, and planning.

7. AOB

Morland Hub – Trusted Carers Project: Linking micro-providers with people needing care. Funded through Accelerated Reform Funding from central Government; village agents involved.

Attendance Concerns: Low representation from parishes and councillors. Suggestions were made to encourage attendance, consider daytime meetings, short survey to identify barriers and preferences.

8. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 10th March, 6:30–8:30 pm.
Venue TBC

Proposed topics:
Children and young people.
Coastal Navigation Project update.

Date		Action	Responsibility	
30/09/25	1	Invite Selina Keedwell, Somerset Youth Theatre, to present findings of CYP working group to December LCN meeting, for further discussion about working group continuing.	Link officer	Ongoing – Link officer met with Selina and extended the invite
	2	Invite Caroline Bullock from King Alfred's School to attend next meeting.	Link officer	Caroline invited to join March meeting with a view to sharing her presentation from the Community Breakfast.
	3	Parish clerks to contact Streetworks at SC to ensure their contact details are correct	Parish clerks	No updates but just a reminder to ensure that clerks need to confirm their contact details are correct.
	4	List or guide of prices for enhanced highways tasks for parish councils from highways dept in time for precept setting.	Link officer/ highways dept.	Action within HW's group update
	5	Requests for new signage to be submitted ASAP	Parish clerks	Action now finished
	6	December theme – broadband & connectivity. Also CYP, as above.	Link officer	Complete
	7	Invite PCC to future LCN meeting	Link officer	Invite extended to the June AGM as guest speaker. Please let the Link officer know if there is anything you would like her to focus on?
	8	Consider topics/themes/issues for LCN to address and submit to link officer at any time	All	Ongoing
	9	Invite Somerset Council Planners	Link officer	Ongoing – in discussion with planning management. Idea suggested that we consider an overarching question such as ' What is the strategic view from a planning perspective?
	10	Social Value for Hinkley/Agratas	Link officer	Chair attended a meeting on behalf of the LCN with Simon Langley from Puriton about the impact of the Hinkley Workforce uplift and what mitigation

				activities were being put in place. Set of meeting notes which can be distributed to the LCN members.
16/12/25	11	Share notes from the Hinkley meeting	Link officer	Attached
	12	Share ppt from SASP in preparation for the March meeting	Link officer	Attached
	13	Investigate the possibility of a survey to go out to Parishes and Elected members within the LCN area to discuss attendance.	Link office	Survey being written
	14	Enhanced Highways Scheme	Cllr Theo Butt Philip agreed to raise with colleagues.	Ongoing
	15	Small parishes and devolution – if you have already expressed an interest and not heard anything contact either Cllr Theo Butt Philip or Cllr Bill Revans	Parishes	Ongoing