

Bridgwater LCN meeting notes Monday 2nd December 2024, held at Victoria Park Community Centre

Attendees:

Cllr Diogo Rodrigues, Chair of the LCN
Cllr Leigh Redman, Somerset Council
Cllr Brian Smedley, Somerset Council
Cllr Lance Duddridge, Somerset Council
Cllr Dawn Denton, Somerset Council
Iwona Medraia, CCS – Village agent
Tim Mander, Bridgwater Town Council
Kate Lang, Bridgwater Without Parish Council
Gary Perrett, Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign
Candida Leaver, The Old Vicarage Hotel
Peter Starling, The Old Vicarage Hotel
Roger Smith, Bridgwater Chamber of Trade
Matthew Ruddle, Chamber of Commerce
Kate Gardner, Purple Spoon
Nathan Slaw, SL-ATE
Anne Shilton, LCN Link Officer
Emily Window, LCN Project officer

Virtual attendees:

Cllr Hilary Bruce, Somerset Council
Tash Astill, Bridgwater College
Kate Hellard, LCN Development manager
Emmaline Kay, LCN Link Officer
Jane Knowles, SASP

Apology:

Bryan Kennedy

1. **Agree the notes of the last meeting**

The chair of the LCN, Cllr Diogo Rodrigues, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and gave a short explanation on housekeeping. Cllr Diogo Rodrigues asked for comments on the notes from the previous meeting; none were given so the notes were agreed.

1a. Vice Chair – interim/temporary position

An interim vice chair was sought due to the absence of Councillor Gill Slocombe. Jane Knowles from SASP offered to help with the active travel and transport subgroup, and Candida Leaver from The Old Vicarage Hotel, volunteered for the interim vice chair position but was not eligible due to her

organisation not being in the core membership.

It was suggested that the request for an interim vice chair be circulated to all core members for consideration after the meeting.

2. Updates from working groups

Business support working group

Roger from the Chamber of Commerce provided an update on the business support working group. The group has been working on a survey designed to gather responses from the business community across all sectors within the LCN.

The survey faced some delays but is now planned to be sent out this week. The Chamber of Commerce will send it to its 200 members in Bridgwater and an additional database of 600 people.

The survey aims to identify the support requested by the business community, rather than pre-determining support packages. The responses are expected by in the new year, and a meeting is scheduled for January to review the responses and develop support packages accordingly.

Bridgwater College will also send the survey to its database, focusing on specific post code areas to keep it Bridgwater-focused. The working group is eager to have more businesses or business representatives join and support their efforts.

Active travel & Transport

Gary Perrett, the chairman of the Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign, provided an update on active travel and transport. He emphasized the importance of infrastructure and safe routes for active travel. Gary mentioned that the Bridgewater LCN and other groups within Somerset are keen on promoting health and well-being through active travel.

Gary highlighted the need for corridors that connect different areas, such as the corridor on the west side of Bridgwater, which has been successful in facilitating safe travel. He also mentioned the importance of community hubs, working with schools, and ensuring safety and security for cyclists.

The discussion also touched on the collaboration between different LCNs and the need for a dedicated active travel and transport working group within the Bridgwater LCN. Due to the ill health of Vice Chair Gill Slocombe, who would have lead this group, there has been no update. Gary called for volunteers to lead the active travel and transport working group.

Highways – Burnham LCN

A potential highways working group was discussed. Given the number of highways projects in Bridgwater, it was felt that some representation from Bridgwater on a highways group would be advantageous. Neighbouring Burnham LCN already has an active highways group and a representative from Bridgwater would be welcomed, rather than setting up an entirely new group in Bridgwater.

The group usually have afternoon meetings, often face to face. A representative was not appointed during this meeting but the opportunity would be circulated afterwards to the wider membership. The focus of the

highways working group is on infrastructure and ensuring safe routes for travel within the community. A representative from the Somerset Council's highways department is usually present to respond to enquiries.

3. **Presentation from Fodo Higginson, Community Health and Wellbeing officer, from SALC**

The discussion primarily revolved around a presentation by Fodo Higginson, the Community Health and Well-being Officer at Somerset Association of Local Councils. The key points include:

Funding for Health and Well-being Projects:

Fodo introduced funding available for health and well-being projects, which is open to town councils and other collaborative entities. The funding is aimed at encouraging councils to prioritize community health and well-being on their agendas.

Types of Grants Available:

Seed Grants: Up to £1,500 for scoping out ideas.

Small Grants: Typically ranging from £1,000 to £2500, but can go up to £5,000.

Large Grants: Up to £35,000, with one large grant already given to Southeast Somerset LCN.

Eligible Projects:

- Projects must focus on community health and well-being.
- Examples include youth outreach, chatty hour clubs for older residents and allotment projects.

Collaboration and Application Process:

Parish councils can collaborate with organizations, but the parish/town council must manage the funds. There is a finite amount of money, so councils are encouraged to apply soon.

Questions and Comments:

There were questions about whether funding is available for workplace well-being projects through the Chamber of Commerce.

Discussions about Bridgwater Town Council's plans for funding, including a culture and heritage trail and street art.

The discussion highlighted the importance of community health and well-being projects and the various funding opportunities available to support these initiatives. It also emphasized the need for collaboration and timely applications to secure funding.

4. **Presentation from Dawn Denton – Frome Town Centre**

The discussion began with Dawn Denton presenting insights from Frome, a town that has been a point of interest for Bridgwater. Dawn, a community champion from Frome, shared her experiences, which emphasizes the importance of community and collective growth. She highlighted Frome's

history, its market town origins, and its evolution into a thriving community with a strong focus on trade and local markets.

Dawn discussed the strengths of Frome, including its well-connected transport links, proactive town council, thriving art scene, and strong social enterprises. She also mentioned the challenges, such as the high cost of living, parking charges, and the need for better skills development and business support.

The discussion also covered the threats and opportunities for Frome. Threats included the cost of living, bus cuts, and a shrinking voluntary sector. Opportunities included tourism, lottery funding for the Cheese and Grain venue, and the potential for more festivals and community projects.

Dawn concluded by emphasizing the importance of turning threats into opportunities and weaknesses into strengths. She encouraged the community to ask what they need and to focus on what works. The session ended with a summary and a call to action to begin implementing the discussed ideas.

5. Any other business

Boundary changes and possibility of other parish council areas joining Bridgwater LCN and the Core membership review – possible working group

The core membership of the Bridgwater LCN and its boundaries were discussed, with an emphasis on reviewing these aspects well before the next AGM. There was a proposal to set up a working group to look at the boundaries and the possibility of other parish councils joining. The working group would also review the core membership to ensure the right people and groups are included to reflect those who attended meetings or made a contribution.

Kate Hellard mentioned that there is interest from neighbouring parishes in joining the Bridgwater LCN and discussed whether the current boundary supports the work of the Bridgwater LCN. The idea of setting up a working group to discuss these issues was supported, and it was agreed to plan a meeting in February to have a conversation around boundaries and core membership.

Brian Smedley raised concerns about duplication of efforts, noting that the town council will set up a working party to take part in the current boundary review. The meeting concluded with a consensus to set up a working group and plan a meeting in February to discuss the boundaries and core membership.

6. Date and Venues of future meetings

Monday 3rd March 2025 – Westfield Church (Lower Hall)

Monday 2nd June 2025 (AGM) – Bridgwater Town Hall

Date	Action	Completed by
02.12.24	Email out to all core members an ask for a interim vice chair to be circulated	Link officer. 12/12/24
02.12.24	The need for more volunteers to support the working groups were emphasized.	Everyone
02.12.24	Decision on keeping the active travel working group, if so a lead needs to step forward?	Everyone
02.12.24	An ask for someone to represent the Bridgwater LCN at the Burnham LCN highways working group	Everyone
02.12.24	Bridgwater Town council have already contacted SALC and have some funding for health and wellbeing, can the LCN help with this, is there a possibility to add to this? Bridgwater town council can put in for 2 grants with one being under the LCN the other the work they are already doing.	Bridgwater Town Council
02.12.24	An ask for the LCN to come forward if they would like to be involved in a boundaries and core membership working group.	Link officer 12/12/24