



# Local Community Network

## Cheddar and Axbridge LCN meeting notes – Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024, Online

### Attendees:

Adrian Jones  
Cllr Pauline Ham  
David Champion  
Fodo Higginson  
Grahame Paine  
Isobel Beacom  
Jacky Farley  
Jane Birch  
Jenny Blackshaw  
Kate Spooner  
Lina Curiale-Hopkinson  
Lindsay Baker  
Lindsey Baker  
Paul Fineran  
Russell Spooner  
Steve Mewes  
Sue Unwin  
Tony Unwin  
Val Bullen  
Will Human  
Megan Harnedy  
Natalyia Wills

Weare Parish Council  
Somerset Council  
Mark Parish Council  
SALC  
Axbridge Action Group  
Wedmore Parish Council  
Wedmore Parish Council  
Community Council for Somerset  
Avon and Somerset Police  
Badgworth Parish Council  
Village Agents  
Wedmore Parish Council  
Wedmore Parish Council  
Cheddar Parish Council  
Badgworth Resident  
Avon and Somerset Wildlife Trust  
We are Axe Vale  
We are Axe Vale  
Rodney Stoke and Draycott Parish Council  
Mark Parish Council  
LCN Link Officer  
LCN Link Officer

### Notes

#### 1. Introductions

Apologies were received from Heather Shearer, Tony Grimes, Bob Filmer, and Delia MCarthy.

The aim of this meeting was to explore ways of assessing the current community service and infrastructure needs of our area, to enable us to constructively influence place making with a strong evidence base.

## 2. Updates from Working Groups

### a. Highways

Val Bullen gave an update from the last Highways Working Group, which took place in November. The meeting covered speeding and road safety, covering the new and remote technologies being used to catch offenders, even if not at the physical site of the offence.

A Kier representative was present to give more detail around the Enhanced Highways Maintenance Scheme and how we could share services and resources.

The group will next meet in February, we are hoping to hear from the project manager of the A38 MRN scheme for updates.

### b. Climate

Kate Spooner introduced the idea of a new Climate and Nature Working Group, set up following discussions had at our last LCN meeting.

The subcommittee aims to support parishes on climate and nature issues and contribute to Somerset County Council's efforts, ensuring local voice is heard in policy making. Kate encouraged participants to find interested individuals in their parishes to join the subcommittee.

TOR's have been drafted and will be discussed and agreed upon at the first meeting of the group.

Kate emphasised the importance of linking with local groups and involving passionate residents in the group.

The first meeting will be organised early next year to finalise the groups goals and actions. An agenda will be shared widely to encourage participation.

Action: if you know of any existing groups that would like to engage in joined up working or residents with an interest, let Kate or Megan know. Kate can be contacted at [katespooner.pc@outlook.com](mailto:katespooner.pc@outlook.com), Megan at [Cheddarandaxbridgelcn@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Cheddarandaxbridgelcn@somerset.gov.uk)

Action: issue an agenda and meeting invite to the climate and nature group, as well as a flyer/poster that can be shared with other groups and residents (Megan and Kate)

### c. Access to Services

Since our last meeting, a community services template has been sent out. Some responses have been received. A meeting will be arranged in the coming weeks to discuss how we can collate these responses and move forward, recognising that this level of mapping can be challenging, and we may need to re-assess the process.

Action: Invite Grahame to join access to services discussion (Link officer).

### **3. Community plans and preparing for the local plan:**

#### **a. Presentation from the Community Council for Somerset (CCS)**

Jane Birch gave a summary of the work of CCS, covering their village agents, work on community buildings, diversity and inclusion, as well as neighborhood plans and community reviews.

Jane discussed various tools for community engagement and consultation, such as neighbourhood plans, housing needs surveys, and community reviews. She emphasized the importance of hearing from the community to guide decision-making and improve connections within the community. The evidence gathered through consultation can form the basis of funding applications and be used to drive, justify, and shape place-making in our local areas. It was noted that engagement and consultation can take many forms and most of us carry this out as part of our daily lives, but it can be useful to formally collate and turn into evidence. It is also useful to think about the different groups you regularly come into contact with and how you could reach those that have a different experience of living in the same place.

It is often our first thought that these views should impact planning decisions, which has been seen to vary, but these reviews can encourage engagement in community lie and give steer to other projects or needs in an area, which could be useful to LCN development too.

#### **Neighbourhood Plans**

Neighbourhood plans were discussed, with many agreeing that they were rarely listened to and were a lot of work for not much reward beyond the extra CIL/106 funds they leveraged.

Jane clarified that they must sit within the local plan and cannot conflict with it, so can't reduce the scale of development but should be about shaping development based on local views. This means that until Somerset Council has completed their local plan (2028) it may be difficult to change or make a neighbourhood plan as there is nothing to base them on.

It was noted that there will be an opportunity to engage with the local plan team early in 2025. This could be an interim LCN meeting as the engagement will take place from January-March.

Community consultation forms a significant part of developing a local plan, so while there may not be an opportunity to create a plan right now, consultation exercises could be useful in other ways and allow us to offer local evidence to those putting the plan together.

Action: set-up a further meeting with the local plan team and share invite and details (Link officer)

## **Housing Needs Surveys**

Introduced as a way to identify local needs for affordable housing. These surveys can provide evidence for planning decisions and lead to small-scale affordable housing developments for local people

Surveys are conducted by consulting the entire community, including local businesses, to gather comprehensive data on housing needs. The surveys focus on identifying the need for affordable housing for people with local connections. They involve consulting the entire community, including local businesses, to gather comprehensive data on housing needs. The surveys focus on identifying the need for affordable housing for people with local connections. This evidence can be used in planning decisions or highlight a need for locally built and managed affordable housing.

It was shared that developers often go against the results of the needs survey and avoid their responsibility to provide affordable housing. There have also been challenges in finding registered providers to take on the affordable houses built for social rent. The question of who occupies the housing over a longer period of time was also raised, as homes are often built for those with local connection, but swaps can take place through the registered provider and the specified local connection system by which tenants are chosen expires after a short amount of time. Jane mentioned that rural exception sites and community land trusts can function differently and may be a way to provide housing for local need, as they do not enter the local housing stock.

This highlighted the difference between need and aspiration when conducting a housing survey, as they are different in reality, and needs change over time.

Action: follow up with rural housing enabler (CCS) and planning team (SC) to understand how rural housing can be kept local and affordable (options for community land trust etc).

## **Community Reviews**

Community reviews are a way of establishing the non-land use based aspiration and needs of your area, to create a plan and action steps for improving specific elements of living in a place. They are conducted by a steering group and can give a little more detail on what the needs or wants within a certain category of place are, this could relate to community facilities and how people want to use them, how people would like to use public transport, or what community services they feel the area needs.

The resulting action plans outline both short- and long-term projects, which can help us prioritize improvements, funding, and parish capacity appropriately. Jane shared examples of the kinds of projects reviews had led to across Somerset, these can be found in the slides.

CCS has previously had funding to support community reviews, which could well be extended, but have also produced resource packs training and support to enable groups to carry them out independently.

Community reviews can be carried out by parishes of any size and can cover more than one parish if appropriate. They have been around under different names, community plans, village design plans etc. but their essence has remained the same.

Action: contact CCS if your parish/ group of parishes would be interested in developing a community review.

### **Wards and how they are different to LCN boundaries**

Tony from Axe Value queried the ward division boundaries and how they cross over with LCNs. Wards are electoral districts, based on the number of electors within an area, whereby a Somerset Councillor is elected to represent a small area within Somerset. The current boundaries can be seen [here](#).

The Local Government Boundary Commission are consulting on changes to be made to the Ward boundaries, and our number of councillors is likely to reduce. This is open until the 20<sup>th</sup> of January and can be found [here](#).

Wards are separate from LCNs, which are not based on the number of electors, but were based around the natural flows of people and characteristics of an area. LCN boundaries may cross many wards. Somerset Councillors are part of LCNs and due to this cross-over may be part of more than one.

#### **b. Discussions around infrastructure and community service needs, including library services (7:40-8pm)**

Discussion was started based around the potential move to look for alternative sources of funding/support for Cheddar Library (this is unconfirmed). The library services all of our communities and is the only one in our area, so if there is a shared concern for its future any funding or support could be pooled across the LCN. It is run by the Cheddar Library Committee, Pauline plans on attending a meeting and reporting back on the exact situation.

It was considered that the library does more than just provide books, but these services may not be widely advertised.

The mobile library service was raised, as this is also not well-known, and if these services are to be cut too then Cheddar Library will become even more important.

Information on the mobile library service and its 2025 route can be found [here](#).

Action: contact library services team to update the information around Cheddar Library and the services it offers on the council website and if these could be better publicized (Link Officer)

Action: Pauline to update on the library situation at next meeting or in-between if necessary (Pauline)

#### **4. SALC health and wellbeing programme, looking at how this links to assessing community and infrastructure needs (8pm)**

Fodo Higginson (SALC Health and Wellbeing Officer) presented information about the SALC Community Health and Well-being Fund, which offers grants for community projects. These projects can be wide ranging and cover multiple aspects of health and wellbeing. Projects funded must be revenue based, rather than capital, and should be run or supported by the Parish or Town Council. The council can work in partnership with those delivering the project (for example a youth project worker).

There are multiple levels of grant funding available, to cover a scoping exercise and project delivery, the need or want for a programme needs to be evidenced, so understanding community need is the first step. The project should be sustainable and therefore accounted for in the budget of the receiving council. Projects can be delivered in partnership with other councils (across and LCN area, for example) but the funds would be held by one. Fodo emphasised that not having the general power of competence should not be seen as a barrier to applying for funding as there may be ways around this, such as delivery with a partner.

Fodo encouraged participants to identify local needs and apply for funding to support health and well-being initiatives in their communities, if the funding is not used it will be returned to Somerset Council.

Examples of how the grant has been used were given, including Moorland Foodbank, where a seed grant has been given to fund a foodbank project coordinator to fully set-up the foodbank and its operations. This was supported by the LCN.

Fodo is very keen to work with Parish Councils to see how this grant could be used. There are regular free training sessions and a variety of support available. Contact Fodo at [HWBSupport@somerset-alc.org.uk](mailto:HWBSupport@somerset-alc.org.uk) and find out more about the programme [here](#).

#### **5. Dates for future meeting**

13<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

There will be an interim meeting arranged to engage with the local plan team. Further information will be shared and plenty of notice given.

## 6. Actions from this meeting

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Send details of any climate or nature groups, or residents with a keen interest to Kate or Megan	All	ASAP
Arrange a meeting of the climate and nature committee, share invite and agenda widely using leaflets and social media	Kate and Megan	January
Invite Grahame to join access to services discussion and regroup, share details of group more widely and arrange a meeting for new year to re-establish aims	Megan	January
Set up LCN meeting with local plan team, share further details.	Megan	ASAP
Contact CCS if interested in working with parish/group of parishes to create community review/plan	All	Ongoing
Follow up with rural housing enabler (CCS) and panning team (SC) to understand how rural housing can be kept local and affordable (options for community land trust etc).	Megan	ASAP
Contact library services team to update the information around Cheddar Library and the services it offers on the council website and if these could be better publicized	Megan	ASAP
Attend Friends of Cheddar Library meeting and update at next LCN meeting	Pauline	March/ongoing
Share thoughts and ideas on how to best use March meeting with Megan and Jacky	All	ASAP