

Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN meeting notes – Wednesday 25th September 2024, held at Clapton and Weighford Village Hall

Attendees:

Steve Ashton – Somerset Council
Jo Roundell Greene – Somerset Council
Leanne Taylor – Ilminster Town Council
David Shilibier – Merriott Parish Council
David Aslet – Merriott Parish Council
Nicky Handley – Dowlish Wake Parish Council
Lindi Ric – Winsham Parish Council
Julia Borland – West Crewkerne Parish Council
Jill Tompson – Wayford Parish Council
Michael Fox – Crewkerne Community Kitchen
Ben Heath – Wessex Internet
Fodo Higginson – SALC
Nathan Turnbull – Somerset Council – Link Officer
Michelle Brooks – Somerset Council – Link Officer
Emily Window – Somerset Council – LCN Project Officer

Virtual attendees:

Beatrice Gain
Hinton St George – no name given
Martyn Hamlin – Chiselborough Parish Council
Nick Jones – Lopen Parish Council
Winsham Parish Council – no name given
Kate Hellard - Somerset Council

- 1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair:** Leanne Taylor, proposed Vice Chair of the LCN, announced that due to insufficient attendance for voting, the election of the Chair and Vice Chair for the local Community network would be postponed to the next meeting. Leanne Taylore and Cllr Mike Best expressed willingness to stand for the positions again but also opened the floor for new volunteers.
- 2. Wessex Internet Update**
Ben Heath, representing Wessex Internet, provided a comprehensive update on the company's expansion into rural communities, highlighting the transition from wireless to full fibre broadband, the surpassing of 9000 customers, and the benefits of full fibre over traditional copper wiring. The update also

covered ongoing and future projects aimed at improving connectivity in rural areas.

Company Expansion: Wessex Internet's representative, Ben, announced the company's expansion into Ilminster and Crewkerne, with a recent contract win for North Dorset and Somerset Type B, signalling future growth into additional villages and parishes.

Transition to Full Fibre: The transition from a wireless network to full fibre was highlighted, emphasizing the technological advancement and the surpassing of 9000 customers, marking a significant milestone for Wessex Internet.

Benefits of Full Fibre: Ben elaborated on the advantages of full fibre broadband, including ultra-fast connectivity, consistent speeds without dropouts, and a range of speed options catering to various needs, contrasting with the limitations of fibre to the cabinet and copper wiring.

Future Connectivity Projects: Details of ongoing projects like Connecting Devon, Somerset, and Project Gigabit were shared, showcasing efforts to deliver ultra-fast broadband to rural and hard-to-reach areas, with maps indicating covered areas and plans for further expansion.

Community Engagement: Ben discussed engaging with local landowners and parish councils for network expansion, using rural routes for cost-effective and less disruptive installations, and offered to connect with parishes in need of better broadband services.

3. Health and Well-being Funding

Fodo Higginson from SALC presented a funding initiative backed by public health through Somerset Council, designed to assist councils and communities in implementing health and well-being projects, emphasizing the importance of collaboration.

Grant Opportunities: The program offers grants ranging from seed grants for scoping ideas to larger grants for substantial projects, with the potential for funding up to £35,000 for collaborative efforts that demonstrate long-term health benefits.

Project Sustainability: The focus is on sustainable projects that have a lasting impact on community health and well-being, encouraging innovative ideas and activities that bring people together, such as shared food initiatives or support for young people.

Collaborative Approach: Higginson stressed the importance of collaborative projects between councils and local groups, suggesting that councils engage with community organizations to develop new health and well-being

initiatives.

Grant Application Process: Details on the grant application process were provided, including the need for collaboration, potential match funding requirements, and the availability of support from Higginson's team for those interested in applying.

4. Future Meeting Agendas

The meeting concluded with a call for input on future meeting topics to generate more interest in the LCN, with a reminder that the agenda for the December meeting is already set but input for 2025 meetings is welcomed.

5. Date and Venues of future meetings

Monday 9th December 2024 – postponed to 30 January 2025

Wednesday 19th March 2025

Wednesday 11th June 2025 – AGM

Date	Action	Completed by
25/09/2024	Consider collaborative projects for health and wellbeing funding opportunities	All
25/09/2024	Gather community feedback for topics to discuss in 2025 LCN meetings	All