



Local Community Network

Yearly Report 2023/2024

Avalon and Poldens



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Local Community Networks (LCNs)

Purpose

“To be the focus for community development, engagement and partnership working at local level; improving the outcomes for residents through establishing strong connections between Somerset Council, our communities and partners.”

Map

There are 18 LCNs in total.

They cover every city, town, and parish within the local authority area.

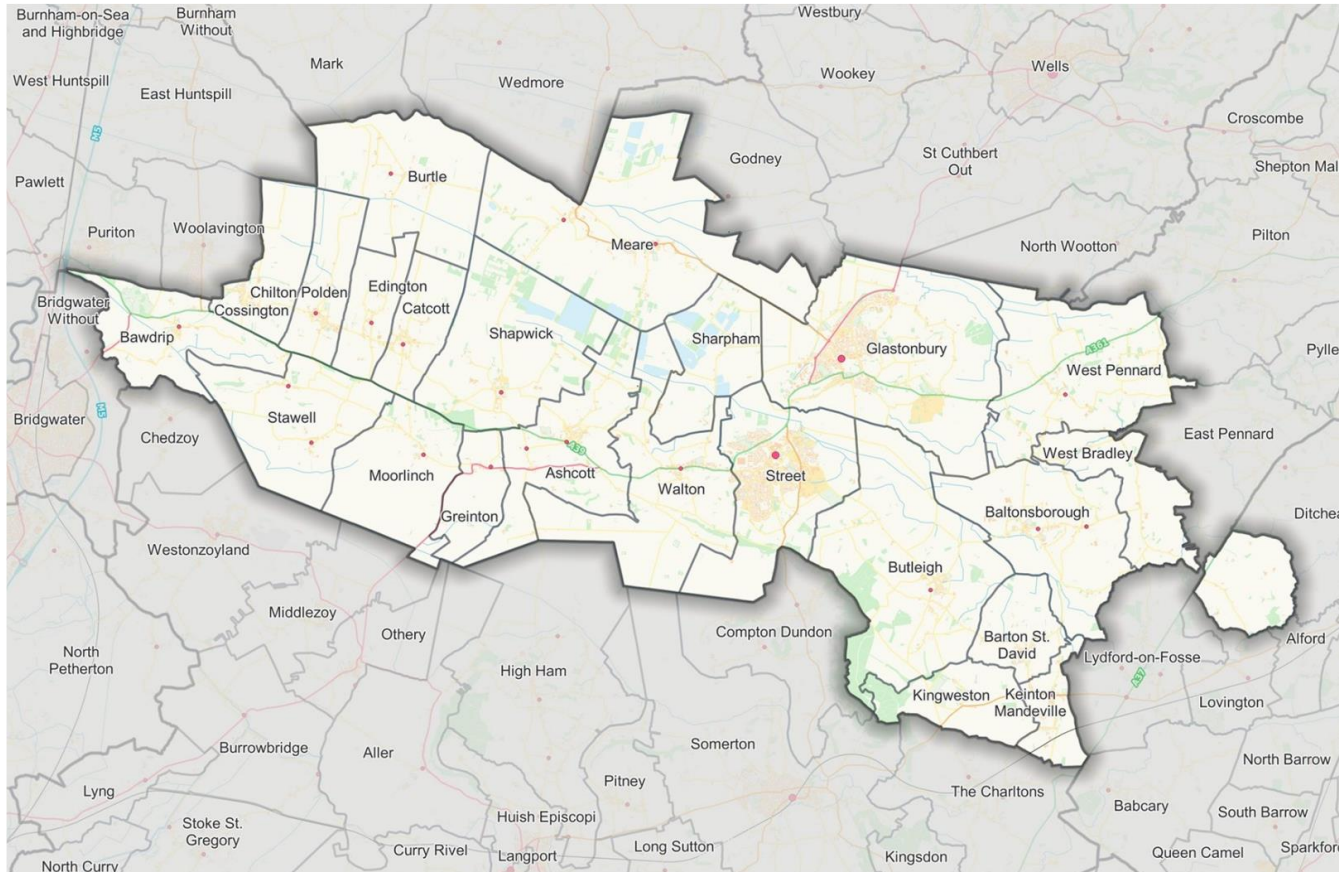
Full details of each LCN, including their demographics, characteristics, agendas, and meeting dates, can be found online.

Please visit the following webpage:

www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/



Avalon and Poldens LCN



There are 23 parishes in the Avalon and Poldens LCN, which has a combined population of approximately 34,800.

The Polden Hills sit within this area, forming a long, low ridge extending for 10 miles. They are separated from Mendip Hills by the Somerset Levels - a marshy track. The Hills stretch from Puriton near Bridgwater in the West of the county to Street in the East.

The major industries in this LCN are agriculture, hospitality, retail, and tourism.

Pictured left: Map showing the full extent of the LCN area, Avalon and Poldens

Visit: www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/avalon-the-poldens/

Chair and Vice Chair



Chair: Avalon and Poldens

Cllr Matt Martin lives locally in Westhay. He can often be found at village events on the Walton playing fields, at Meare Church Rooms, or in a quiet corner of the Bird in Hand public house!

In addition to teaching Computer Science and ICT, Matt has taught excluded students in Sheffield, adult learners, council employees, and was employed by the PICTA prison education system to provide specialist Cisco networking tuition to the prisoners in HMP Bristol. Teaching in prison was one of the greatest, most challenging, and thoroughly rewarding periods of Matt's professional career.

When not involved in working for his local communities or representing Somerset Council, Matt spends his time in the Godney workshop, building and repairing electric and acoustic guitars, or enjoying the the Somerset countryside on his Triumph motorcycle.

Vice Chair: Avalon and Poldens

Cllr Bryan Knickerbocker hails from Canada. He was recently re-elected as Chair of Street Parish Council for 2024-25.

Bryan strongly believes in public service and the importance of giving back to the community. His approach is rooted in common sense, effective communication, and uniting people to make a positive impact for the residents of Avalon and Poldens.

As a local business owner and volunteer, Bryan is committed to bringing a fresh perspective and dedicated new voice to the Local Community Network.



Chair's Introduction

“Over the past year, we have worked towards the successful coming together of a range of partners and our Town and Parish Councils, united by a shared vision of enhancing our local community. This collaborative effort has helped to lay the foundations for a new chapter of working together in our communities and across our county.

The establishment of Avalon and Poldens LCN has endeavoured to provide a dynamic platform for open dialogue and joint working. In fostering an environment of mutual respect and shared purpose, we hope to be able to empower the strengths of each member to benefit the whole community.

I am proud of the steps we have taken in our first year. We began with a focus on healthcare and transport, with an intention to shine a light on the gaps in service provision, to work towards reducing them and to bring partners together to improve the outcomes of our towns and villages. The knowledge that has been shared in these areas shows great promise, and I hope that the network of partners we bring together will continue to collaborate to help highlight the importance of local services and to support organisations in a progressive and inclusive community.

Overall, the outcomes of the many discussions we've had have proven to be both practical and impactful, demonstrating the value of local debate and collaboration. What it also highlighted is the potential web of strong partners and organisations in the LCN area who are already doing so much for our communities, and we should strive to support and promote these - and the work they do - as this LCN goes into its second year.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to Avalon and Poldens LCN in its inaugural year. As we look forward to the next exciting 12 months, I'm confident that we will continue to build on our achievements and explore new opportunities for growth and improvement.”

Cllr Matt Martin
Chair, Avalon and Poldens LCN

Priorities and Ambitions

Data

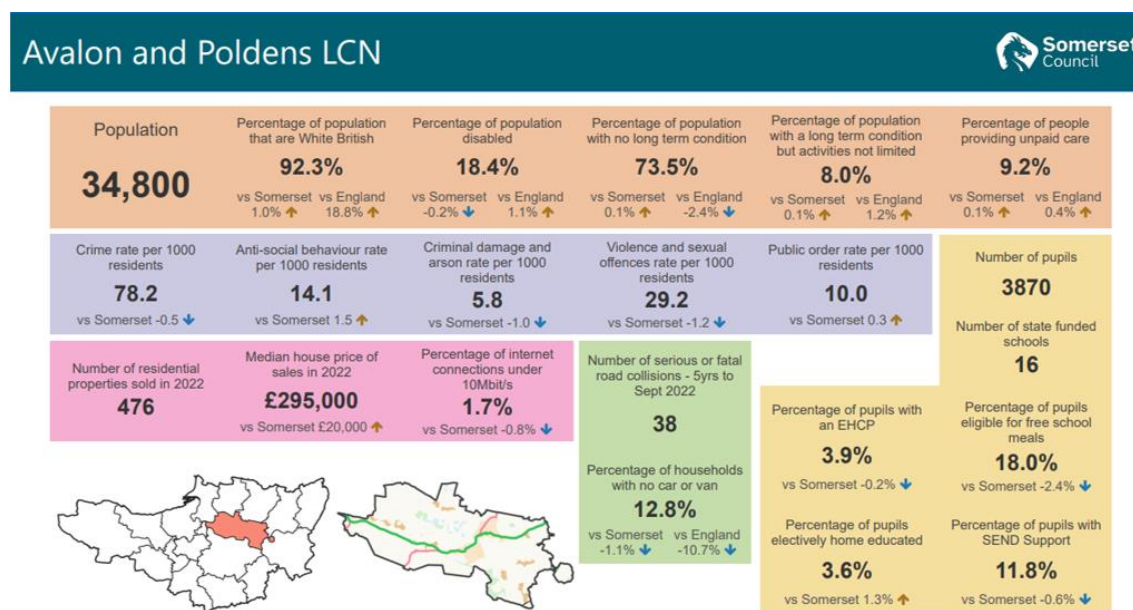
At the initial Avalon and Poldens LCN meeting, attendees were shown a data set (see below). It provided useful statistical information aimed at generating initial thoughts and discussions, unique to the local area.

Those present at the LCN were asked to consider what this data meant to them in relation to their specific knowledge of their communities.

They were asked to consider what they felt was important to their residents, local businesses and visitors.

The answers from the data set discussions were grouped into themes.

You'll find a larger image of the data set at Appendix B of this report.



Priorities and Ambitions

Themes

At the beginning of the inaugural LCN year, group discussions were held with the aim of discovering what the attendees felt needed special attention in their particular Towns and Parishes.

These discussions led to the identification of key priorities and ambitions that Avalon and Poldens LCN planned to focus on, going forward.

The range of issues and ideas are featured 'at a glance' in the graphic below.



Working Groups

From the ambitions and priorities agreed during LCN meetings, working groups have been developed. Avalon and Poldens LCN has two working groups: the *Highways and Traffic Working Group* and the *Health and Wellbeing Working Group*. These are in their infancy and will grow in the course of time.

Highways and Traffic

The Highways and Traffic Working Group have met twice since the initial meeting with Highways Officers at Somerset Council. The Council's Highways team are supporting this group and to date have provided some useful information and learning about the Highway Stewards scheme and how it can work across the LCN. The working group are currently identifying their priorities and are discussing this with the main LCN group. Some of the discussed topics so far include potholes, condition of roads, visibility of signs, approved routes, drains and reporting mechanisms. These will be discussed in more detail at the next working group.

Health and Wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing Working Group has had three virtual meetings. During the first meeting the group was tasked with sharing priorities and concerns they felt were relevant for the LCN area. In the second meeting we talked in more depth about priorities and who else we could include/invite to support the working group. Priorities included improving communication and knowledge between Primary Care Networks (PCNs) within the LCN. We have created a population map which shows how many people are connected to each PCN. We'll be getting all the PCNs together to discuss in more detail what they do individually for the covered areas, as well as inviting organisations and groups to share their expertise and knowledge. We are also creating two case studies which will highlight social isolation. The case studies will be of a child and an adult. Once completed we can cross reference the information and find ways to improve services within the LCN. This will also highlight other organisations we can bring to the group.

Reflections

The geographic layout is a challenge within this LCN, but there are also great opportunities to build relationships, improve services and create a fantastic forum for open engagement.

The meetings have provided a valuable space for Town and Parish representatives to come together with other partners to consider the needs of residents, across the area, and start to identify priorities. Going forward one of the main aims is to build momentum within the LCN. This will be key for the LCN to grow and be successful. As will getting more organisations and groups involved will also bring more depth and knowledge to the LCN.

The Financial Emergency of Somerset Council was declared at a very early stage of LCN development in November 2023. This has clearly impacted the nature of conversations which have had to take place within the context of identifying efficiencies and devolving services.

The LCN has proved to be a very effective vehicle for information sharing and for facilitating early consideration of the impact on service delivery and potential mitigation. This is an ongoing, complex, two-way process with details of service reductions and future service standards emerging over time. The LCN has provided a space for representatives in particular Town and Parish reps to share the approach that is taken to setting precepts etc.

The Financial Emergency, plus lack of officer capacity, has frustrated progress somewhat. For example, the working groups we established have not reached their full potential. However we are optimistic that with a dedicated LCN Link Officer now in post, there will be greater impetus to drive working groups and our other priorities forward in 2024/25 - and that many goals will be achieved to the benefit of all who live, work and visit this special LCN area.

Nathan Turnbull

LCN Link Officer, Avalon and Poldens

Contacts

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Avalon and The Poldens LCN: www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/avalon-the-poldens/

Appendices

Appendix A – Core Membership

Parishes

Ashcott
Baltonsborough
Barton St. David
Bawdrip
Burtle
Butleigh
Cattcott
Chilton Polden
Cossington
Edington
Glastonbury
Greinton
Keinton Mandeville
Kingweston
Meare and Westhay
Moorlinch
Shapwick
Sharpham
Stawell
Street
Walton
West Bradley
West Pennard

Electoral Divisions

Bridgwater East and Bawdrip
Glastonbury
Huntspill
King Alfred
Mendip South
Mendip West
Somerton
Street

Organisations

Avon and Somerset Police
NHS
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue
Education
Spark Somerset
Society Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC)
Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP)
Community Council for Somerset (Village Agents)
Citizens Advice Somerset
Department of Work and Pensions
Somerset Rivers Authority
Somerset Local Nature Partnership
Chamber of Commerce

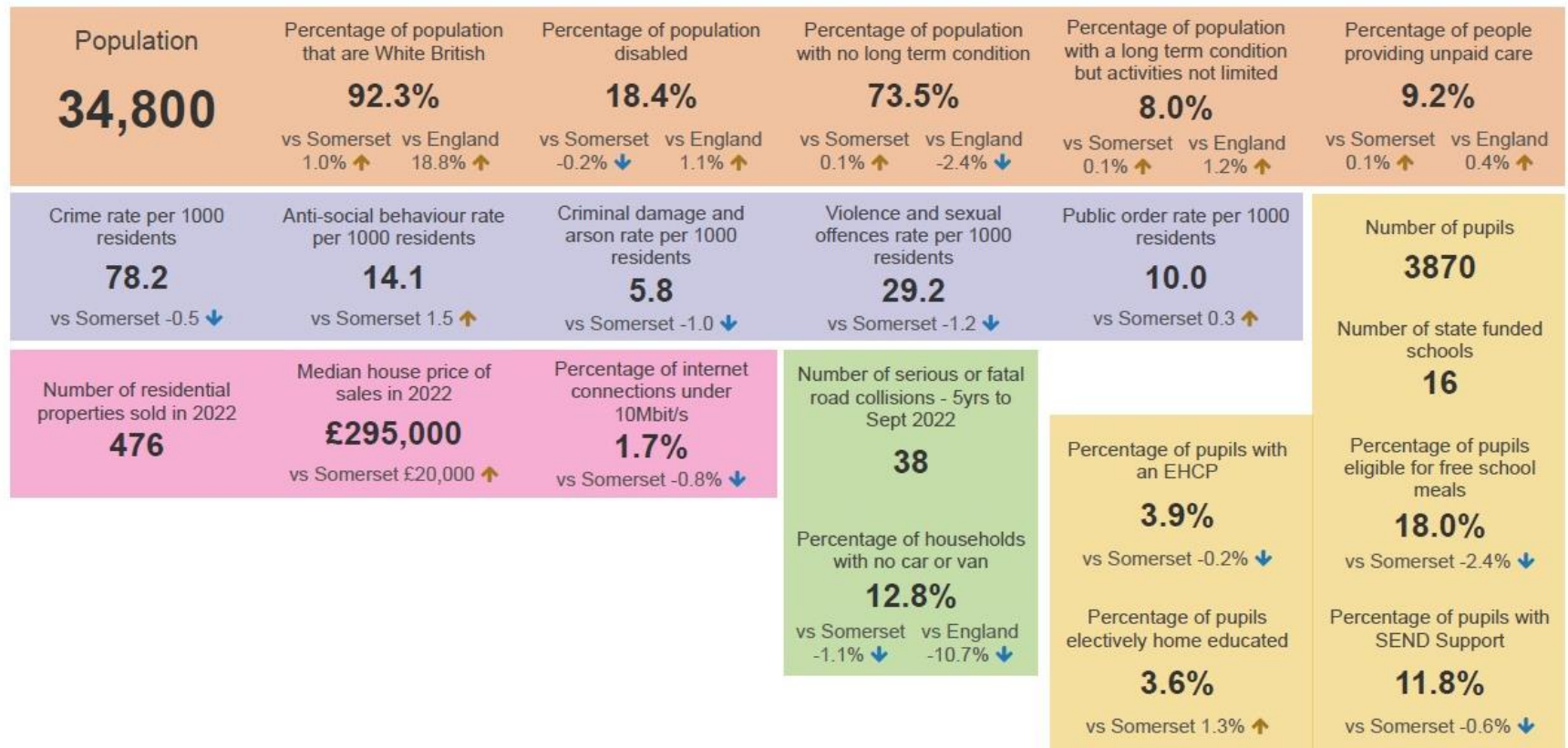
Appendix A - continued

Other Partners and Stakeholders

WellBe Link
Street Neighbourhood Watch
Somerset Foundation Trust
Connect Somerset
The Volunteer Network

Appendix B – Data

Avalon and Poldens LCN

Appendix C – Meeting Dates and Agenda Items

For more information about Avalon and Poldens LCN meetings please follow the link below:
democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=900&Year=0

19 July 2023 – Crispin Hall, Street

- Appoint Chair
- Appoint Vice Chair
- Discussion - what is important to our residents and how do we know that?

9 October 2023 – Stawell & Sutton Mallet Village Hall, Stawell

- Highlights of themes discussed at the last meeting
- An introduction to data
Discussion topics – health, roads, footpaths, transport, active travel and planning

27 November 2023 – Shapwick Pavillion, Shapwick

- Somerset Council Financial Position Update
- Updates from Health Working Group
- Discussion on future topics

29 January 2024 - Tor Sports and Leisure, Glastonbury

- Our LCN purpose and mission
- Discussion on Local Asset and Service Devolution
- Action and next steps

27 March 2024 –Shapwick Pavillion, Shapwick

- Presentation from the Volunteers network
- Table discussion on Highways and Traffic
- Working Groups update