

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network – Minehead & Watchet

Date: Thursday 9 January 2025

Time: 6:30pm to 8:50pm.

Location: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Chaired by: Cllr Mandy Chilcott (Somerset Council)

LCN Core Membership Attendance:

Name:

Cllr Hugh Davies
Cllr Andy Hadley
Cllr Christine Lawrence
Cllr Rosemary Woods
Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker (Vice Chair)
Cllr Tony Brooks
Cllr Geoff Williams
Cllr Jan Swan
Cllr Mark Phillipson
Cllr Peter Payne
Paul Matcham
Cllr John Irvén
Cllr Loretta Whetlor
Neal Gossage (clerk)
Wayne Stokes (Village Agent)

Representing

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Carhampton PC
Crowcombe PC
Old Cleeve PC
Sampford Brett PC
West Quantoxhead PC
Williton Parish Council
Minehead Eye / Connect Somerset
Watchet Town Council
Somerset Association of Local Councils
West Bagborough PC
Community Council for Somerset

Other attendees

Name:

Cllr Sue Smith
Cllr Wendy Philipson
Michelle Francis (clerk)
Kevin Francis
Cllr Ian Aldridge
Kerry Westcott
Martin Stevens

Representing:

Carhampton PC
West Quantoxhead PC
Williton PC
Williton Business Chamber
Member of the Public
NHS / Primary Care Network
Watchet Coastal Community Team

Kate Williams
Tracey Skinner
Fodo Higginson
Fiona Toms
Zara Aitken
Maureen Smith

Watchet Coastal Community Team
Member of the Public
SALC
Minehead People & Place Partnership
MCDT
West Somerset Community Land Trust

Officer Attendance:

Sam Murrell (LCN Link Officer), Emily Window (LCN Project Officer), Anne Shilton (LCN Link Officer) Fern Pearce (LCN Link Officer)

Summary of discussion:

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies from Christine Boland (Magna HA), Ray Tew (MCDT), Cllr Marcus Kravis, PCSO Supervisor Katherine Williams, John Richards and Craig Palmer (Minehead Town Council).

Some new participants were welcomed to the room including Fern Pearce (LCN Link Officer) and Neal Gossage (clerk to West Bagborough and Lydeard St Lawrence).

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

These were agreed by those present as a true record of the meeting. Only point of correction was that Cllr Ian Aldridge requested that he was recorded as a Member of the Public and not as a representative of Williton PC.

3. Matters arising (not part of later agenda items)

Coastal Protection Group: There was a significant discussion about the Coastal Protection Group. It was noted that the group had not been active, and Cllr John Irven was keen that efforts were made with Somerset Council to re-energize it.

Cllr Loretta Whetlor suggested that councils along the coast join the NALC Coastal Protection Group to benefit from shared knowledge and resources. The link can be accessed here: [National Networks](#)

Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker said she would follow up on her previous correspondence with Chris Hall, Executive Director for Community, Place and Economy. She highlighted that the Environment Agency had expressed interest in connecting with the Council to discuss coastal protection. She suggested inviting the Environment Agency to present their coastal strip plans at a future meeting.

4. Avon and Somerset Police Update

Avon and Somerset Police colleagues had tendered their apologies for this meeting. The local neighbourhood beat team newsletter would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

The Police could be contacted if there were issues or concerns from the parishes and they would endeavour to be present at face-to-face LCN meetings at least 30mins before the commencement of the meeting. A notice was also given that the Avon and Somerset Police Crime Commissioner would be attending (in person) the Exmoor LCN meeting on Thursday 16 January at the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe. It was requested that the online meeting details be circulated to the Minehead and Watchet LCN members.

5. Local Government Boundary Commission Electoral Review

The meeting discussed the ongoing consultation for the electoral review, which aims to reduce the number of councillors and redefine ward boundaries.

The Somerset Council consultation response had been circulated prior to the meeting and would form part of the discussion of the Constitution and Governance Committee extraordinary meeting on Tuesday 14 January 2025. (The link with joining details had also been shared).

There are two phases of consultation, and the current phase (phase one) closes on the 20 January 2025. Members were encouraged to submit their comments before the deadline. The Boundary Commission will review all feedback and may have their own suggestions, which could be different from the feedback received. The suggested boundaries for the new divisions are expected to be released in June 2025.

The review aims to reduce the number of councillors from 110 to 95, with three divisions having two councillors and the rest being single-member wards. The Boundary Commission generally favors single-member wards. The goal is to ensure equality in the number of electors each councillor represents, with each ward having approximately 4867 electors, allowing for a 10% variance.

There was a concern raised by Cllr Rosemary Woods about the potential impact of the review on her division, which currently has two councillors. It was clarified that the new boundaries would not simply split the current divisions but would be redrawn to ensure the target number of electors per ward. Members were encouraged to review the Somerset Council submission and provide their feedback.

6. Magna Housing

Christine Boland had tendered apologies on behalf of Magna Housing and was unable to attend the meeting. Sam will be writing to Magna to express disappointment and providing the next meeting date (10 April) requesting their attendance.

7. Children and Young People

Paul Matcham (Minehead Eye / Connect Somerset) circulated a slide presentation pack highlighting current initiatives and their work with young people, including youth clubs, education programs, and well-being support. He highlighted the importance of mental health support and the collaboration with Kerry Westcott from the Primary Care Network.

The discussion on children and young people focused on several key areas:

- a) **Youth Engagement:** There was a significant emphasis on increasing youth engagement in local activities and decision-making processes. Participants discussed various strategies to involve young people more actively in community projects and events.
- b) **Educational Support:** The meeting highlighted the need for better educational support for children and young people in the area. This included discussions on improving access to educational resources and providing additional support for students facing challenges.
- c) **Mental Health Services:** The importance of mental health services for young people was a major topic. Participants acknowledged the growing need for mental health support and discussed potential collaborations with local health services to address this issue.
- d) **Recreational Facilities:** There was a discussion about the availability and quality of recreational facilities for children and young people. Participants considered ways to enhance existing facilities and create new opportunities for recreational activities.
- e) **Safety and Well-being:** Ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people was a priority. Participants discussed measures to improve safety in public spaces and create a supportive environment for young people.
- f) **Connect Somerset** - Paul introduced the Connect Somerset initiative, which aims to connect various services and support early help and resilience for families. The initiative involves collaboration with education, social care, health, and community services.
 - **Collaboration Importance:** Paul emphasized the importance of collaboration among different services and organizations to provide comprehensive support for families. He highlighted the need for upskilling local people to ensure sustainable support in the community.

- **Early Help Focus:** The Connect Somerset initiative focuses on providing early help and support to families, addressing issues such as well-being, isolation, and access to services. The goal is to build resilience and prevent problems from escalating.
 - **Progress and Challenges:** Paul discussed the progress made by the Connect Somerset initiative, including successful collaborations with schools and health services. He also mentioned the challenges faced, such as limited resources and the need for continued support from local councils and organizations.
- g) **Funding** - At the present time, Minehead Eye and the Primary Care Network are jointly funding a young person's mental health coach, but the resource is finite, and other opportunities need to be explored if this is to continue. They currently provide counselling, resilience programs, and support for young carers and home-educated children.

SALC do have Health and Wellbeing money available but this needs to be drawn down via a town/parish council. It was requested that a meeting was set up between interested parties to explore the various options. (LCN Link Officer and Paul Matcham to implement).

8. Highways Working Group

Notes of the meeting held on Monday 2nd December) were circulated with the agenda.

- **B3191 Re-routing:** Brenda provided an update on writing to Chris Hall about the B3191 re-routing. She mentioned that the response was not positive, and there were issues with the temporary closure legislation. Brenda is awaiting a reply from Chris Hall.
- **Rights of Way Issues:** Brenda discussed concerns about rights of way, including the lack of a regulation committee to determine modification orders.
- **Active Travel Route:** Brenda mentioned the active travel route from Dunster to Carhampton, which had been delayed due to various issues. Some of the money had been diverted to fund another part of Somerset and she was lobbying hard to get this returned.
- **Road Safety and Signage Issues:** Ian raised concerns about the state of double white lines on the A39 towards Bridgwater. Details about the online portal were circulated in the chat with links to the "Report it" function. This is a useful tool for reporting all sorts of safety defects.
[Report a problem on the road](#)
- **Road Safety Team:** Nick Cowling (Somerset Council) and PC Dan Cox (ASP) would be attending the next Highways working group at the request of Old Cleeve PC. Data recorders had been set up in the parish over the Christmas period to assess the vehicle movements and speed.

9. AOB

a) Local Plan Engagement Events – Upcoming events and how to participate:

Presentation from the LP team and workshop – Dowsborough LCN Meeting

Dowsborough LCN meeting date

Wednesday 29 January 2025

St Mary’s Church Centre, Nether Stowey TA5 1LJ

(Will include Local Plan Presentation and Workshop) Members of the Minehead and Watchet LCN are invited to attend).

Exploratory session including a short presentation, followed by structured discussion.

Councillors Early Engagement Workshop:

In person only – West Area:

Monday 24 February 2025, 4-6pm in the JMR Deane House, Taunton

To include Town and Parish Representatives.

A hold the date invitation has been sent. Representatives are requested to register their attendance using the online link or QR code.

The public consultation will take place later in the year.

b) Update on West Somerset House

The building was now closed for refurbishment and would re-open as the library and children’s centre, hopefully at some point in April. It would no longer be a publicly accessible building with a customer services desk. Customers could access services via a Video Assistant Link (VAL), which would operate during the library opening hours. The Chair advised that this system was currently in use in Minehead Library, if residents wanted to see how VAL operates.

c) Update on SC Transformation Programme

The staff and union consultation had now closed and Somerset Council was reviewing the feedback. All staffing changes needed to be implemented before the start of the new financial year, so redundancies and service reductions would be made known soon.

d) Future Agenda Items:

- **Update on the PCN** – possibility of future agenda item to include Kerry Westcott and Minehead Hospital work.
- Invite the Environment Agency to give a presentation on coastal protection at a future LCN meeting.

10. Dates of future Minehead & Watchet LCN meetings (Venues to be confirmed)

- **Thursday 10 April 2025**
- **Wednesday 16 July 2025 (AGM)**

11. Future meeting dates for the Highways Subgroup

- **Thursday 13 March 2025 (Road Safety attending)**
- **Tuesday 24 June 2025**

To commence at 10am and be held in a suitable space. (Most likely Beckett House, Enterprise Centre, Williton)