

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Yeovil

Date: Monday, 29 April 2024

Time: 7.00 pm - 8.30 pm

Location: The Manor Hotel, Hendford, Yeovil BA20 1TG

Chaired by: Cllr Mike Hewitson, Somerset Council

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:	Representing
Andy Kendall	Somerset Council
Tony Lock	Somerset Council
Graham Oakes	Somerset Council
Wes Read	Somerset Council
Peter Seib	Brympton Parish Council
Paul Herbert	Closworth Parish Meeting
Sue Murrison	East Chinnock Parish Council
Duncan Goodes	West Coker Parish Council
David Neal	Yeovil Without Parish Council
Rob Stickland	

Officer attendance:

Name:	Representing
Nathan Turnbull	Somerset Council
Emily Window	Somerset Council

Other attendees:

Name:	Representing
Alan Graham	
Peter McNaughton	First Bus Group

Virtual attendees:

Name:	Representing
Karon Lavelle-Sullivan	Community Council for Somerset
Cllr Oliver Patrick	Somerset Council
Leona Drayton	Montacute Parish Council
Cllr Richard Wilkins	Somerset Council
Jo Morris	Somerset Council
Dave Peters	Odcombe Parish Council
Linda Snelling	
Lewis Clarke	
Terrance James	

Summary of discussion:

Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome: Action by: item:

Item 37: **Apologies for Absence**

Somerset Councillors Andy Soughton, Evie Potts-Jones and Faye Purbrick
Anita Perry, West Coker Parish Council
Robert Halls, Hardington Mandeville Parish Council.

Item 38: **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest from Somerset Councillors present at the meeting.

Item 39: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 7 March 2024 were approved as a correct record by those present.

Item 40: **Public Question Time**

There were no questions received from any members of the public.

Item 41: **Update from Highways and Traffic Working Group**

Nathan Turnbull advised that a meeting of the Highways and Traffic Working Group was held on 4 April which was attended by 7 LCN representatives. There were several Highway Officers in attendance from the traffic, street works and engineering teams. It was a good opportunity for everyone to raise concerns and questions.

The minutes of the Working Group were due to be circulated shortly to the Yeovil LCN circulation list. The minutes would include highway officer contact details and email addresses.

A couple of members of the LCN who had attended the Working Group said that it had been a very interesting and positive meeting.

Going forward it was the intention for the Working Group to meet with Highway Officers every three months with the Working Group also meeting in between. Members of the LCN were encouraged to attend subsequent meetings. One of the items for the next meeting would be to agree the Terms of Reference.

With regard to the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group, it was noted that a meeting was yet to be held. It was suggested that representatives from local businesses and shops and the Yeovil Crime Reduction Partnership should be invited to attend.

Item 42: **Presentation / Talk from First Bus Group**

The Chair welcomed Peter McNaughton, Transport & Operations Manager of First Bus Group Somerset & Dorset to the meeting. He referred to there being issues with the buses in the area and said that he was working to address these issues. He was looking at the current picture, the failures and improvements required to make things better in the future.

He referred to the under threat services 54 (Yeovil to Taunton) and 58 (Wincanton) and advised that the 58 was now being run as a commercial service and the 54 was being partially funded

by Somerset Council. There were still some issues with reliability, punctuality and timetables which were continually being reviewed and monitored. He said that passenger numbers were increasing across the board and the initial threat of not being able to operate these services was no longer an issue.

Peter McNaughton advised that he was continually looking for extra funding opportunities to improve services and was working with the Bus Partnership and local businesses in the Yeovil area. He was also keen to engage with the local community.

Following the presentation there was an opportunity to raise questions and comments. Some of the responses made by Peter McNaughton included the following:

- The £2 bus fare was expected to run until the end of December 2024 and would then be reviewed by the Government.
- Marketing of the £2 fare with the help of Somerset Bus Partnership had greatly increased patronage.
- Within the next 6 weeks there would be improvements to GPS tracking technology to allow the whole network to be reported.
- There were no threats to rural services.
- He was hoping to make improvements to services in and around Yeovil. It was noted that input from the Highways and Traffic Working Group could be useful.
- Discussions were taking place in relation to the possible use of S106 monies and the upgrading of fleets.
- He was hoping that there would be further funding opportunities for zero emission buses.

Somerset Councillor Richard Wilkins, the lead member for Transport and Digital commented that Somerset Council were currently putting together its next BSIP Plan, but this was not a funding document. He referred to the issues in Yeovil and commented that as the second largest town in Somerset bus services were vital and he would continue to work hard to make improvements.

The Chair thanked Peter McNaughton for attending the meeting.

Item 43: **Discussion: To better understand potential issues and priorities in Rural Areas and how these relate to issues within the Town**

In discussion groups, attendees were asked to consider the following questions:

1. What do we know about the Rural communities and what is important to their communities?
2. Who are the Partners to help us better understand the issues?
3. How do the issues that our Rural communities are facing reflect to the town issues, are the priorities the same?

A summary was then given from each of the Groups as follows:

Group 1

- The big issues were transport, connections and connectiveness and lack of leading to isolation.
- Significant food poverty and significant fuel poverty and a lack of understanding about rural poverty.
- Perception that if you live in large houses, you have lots of money which wasn't necessarily the case.
- Organisations that could support or provide more information included local shops and pubs, schools, libraries, churches and housing associations.
- The role of village agents – further information needs to be obtained around the funding of village agents in the Yeovil area and why it is different to other areas.

Group 2

- Some of the rural parishes are large geographically but have small numbers of parishioners.
- Smaller parishes take a DIY approach to helping itself out when it needs to.
- Apathy for local government involvement.
- Border parishes – no 'Berlin wall' between counties.
- Minimal public facilities and services.
- Public transport – not likely to get due to lack of numbers and service not being viable.
- Opportunities to look for demand responsive transport.
- Rural parishes rely on visiting services e.g. post office, library

van.

- Enforcement issues - landowner responsibilities particularly after heavy rain and flooding. Keeping ditches clear so that routes are passable. How do you ensure that landowners know their responsibilities.
- Rural crime/anti-social behaviour and vandalism - causing damage to livestock and agricultural machinery.
- With devolution of services, how do the rural communities who cannot provide these services manage? Partnerships with other parishes for priority services may work for a few things.

Group 3

- Funding has to be broad to include all adjoining parishes.
- Everyone who lives in the rural villages all use Yeovil facilities. Everyone should be funding these services, or they could be in danger of being lost.
- Priorities are the same - services benefit all.
- The town are more concerned about the devolution of services and properties.
- Smaller parishes don't have the same ability to raise revenue to look after themselves as much as the larger villages and towns.

Item 44: **LCN Going Forward**

The LCN was asked what it wanted at future meetings. The following suggestions were made:

- Presentation on the Yeovil Refresh Project
- NHS Ambitions for the future
- Community Safety including the role of the new community wardens and the rural crime team.

Members of the LCN were asked to email any further suggestions to YeovilLCN@somerset.gov.uk.

Item 45: **Date of future meetings**

The Chair advised that the Yeovil LCN AGM would be held on Monday 13 June 2024 at 7.00pm at the Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

Contact officer for meeting: LCN Team lcnsomerset@somerset.gov.uk