



Local Community Network

Taunton LCN meeting notes – 10 April 2025 via Microsoft Teams 6.30 – 8.45pm

Virtual attendees:

Chair: Cllr Dawn Johnson, Somerset Council

Vice Chair: Graham Withnell, Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council

Somerset Council:

Michelle Brooks, LCN Link Officer

Robert Downes, Regeneration Lead Specialist

John Perrett, Service Manager, Transporting Somerset

Mark Stanistreet, Project Manager

Cllr Norman Cavill, Somerset Councillor

Cllr John Hunt, Somerset Councillor

Laura Batcha, Taunton Town Council

Glenn Gapper, Trull Parish Council

Marcus Prouse, Taunton Town Council

Tony Taylor, Bishop's Hull Parish Council

Ray Tully, Taunton Minster / Taunton Town Council

Tilly White-Christmas, Taunton Town Council

Jim Chapman, Taunton LCN Active Travel SG representative

Fran Hicks, Citizens Somerset

Fodo Higginson, Somerset Association of Local Councils

David Northey, Somerset Bus Partnership

Nigel Pearce, Taunton Town Chamber

Andrew Pritchard, Mind in Somerset

Beth Ridler, Young Somerset

Apologies received:

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, Somerset Councillor

Cllr Fran Smith, Somerset Councillor

Cllr Lee Baker, Somerset Councillor

Cllr Bev Fernandes, Taunton Town Council

Cllr Martin Straus, Taunton Town Council

Shona Stone, Live West

1. Introductions (including any apologies for absence)

The Chair, Somerset Councillor, Cllr Dawn Johnson introduced the meeting, and welcomed the online attendees, explaining the use of Microsoft Teams for the first time and requesting feedback on the format.

Discussion:

- **Online Meeting Format:** Cllr John Hunt expressed his preference for face-to-face meetings over online meetings, citing the importance of personal interaction and the ability to make good local connections. The Taunton LCN Vice Chair, supported this view, highlighting the importance of face-to-face meetings for better interaction and understanding.

The Taunton LCN Chair thanked all for their contribution and discussion and asked that feedback regarding the meeting format be fed back to the LCN Link Officer.

Apologies were received as noted above.

2. Agreement of notes from previous meeting – 13 January 2025

The Chair reviewed the notes from the previous meeting, and reported that most actions from the previous meeting had been completed, highlighting ongoing actions below:

- **Highway maintenance scheme packs:** the packs were found useful by many LCNS as they provided an upcoming picture of highway works
- **Chair Workshop and LCN engagement:** evolving and developing the LCNS, including website development, use of social media, and wider membership engagement, The Chair read a statement from Sara Skirton, Service Director Partnerships, Localities and Culture, regarding LCN Review & Scope:

'In line with the commitment to review LCNs at the two year point, and reflecting the recommendations from the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge, a review of all our community engagement and development activity is currently being scoped. Fundamental to this review will be engagement with all LCNs to inform the recommendations. More detail on the scope, timeframe and engagement plan for the review will follow after Easter'.

The notes from the previous meeting were agreed by all present, with an action for the LCN Link Officer to contact Highways Officers regarding the production of Highway maintenance schemes packs.

3. Update on Working Groups

Highways Working Group

Graham Withnell, Chair Taunton LCN Highways Working Group provided an update on the Highways Working Group and meetings held, including the proposal to have joint meetings with Hestercombe LCN Highways Working Group, and the dates for upcoming meetings:

- **Taunton and Hestercombe LCNs Joint Meetings**
The Chair, Taunton LCN Highways Working Group proposed that Taunton LCN Highways WG and Hestercombe LCN Highways WG hold joint Highways WG meetings on the below dates:
 - 14 May 3-5pm
 - 3 July 3-5pm
 - 11 September 3-5pm
 - 13 November 3-5pm

The Taunton LCN meeting agreed to hold Joint Taunton LCN and Hestercombe LCN Highways WG meetings.

Discussion

- **Highways Volunteer Training for Minor Works:** the ongoing need for volunteer training offered to Parish Councils in September 2024, to enable Parish Councils to carry out works following Somerset Council devolution and the extra work taken on Parish Councils - Taunton LCN meeting requested that Somerset Council provide a definitive answer on the delivery of highways volunteer training
- **Traffic Flow modelling:** discussion on the presentation from Jon Fellingham, Service Manager Highways Assets, and what considerations are taken into account when planning new developments
- **Bus stops in new developments:** new housing developments consideration of bus stop placement and access to bus routes from the new developments and how can the Council facilitate conversations input from communities – potential active travel item for the Highways WG on how to facilitate help in conversation bus operations and operators
- **Chapter 8 Training providers:** LCN Link officer to provide a list of providers

The meeting requested that the LCN Link Officer contact Highways and Transport colleagues to request information regarding the delivery of the volunteer training.

Tony Taylor, Chair Bishops Hill PC to write the LCN Link Officer regarding Highways volunteer training.

Young People's Working Group

The Taunton LCN Chair read a statement from the Chair, Young Peoples Working Group, Bev Fernandes, highlighting the recent presentation by Somerset Council Service Director Education, Amelia Walker, on school inclusion and alternative provision. The group discussed the need for better engagement between schools and voluntary groups.

- **Future Plans:** as an outcome of the meeting, Liz Smith, Somerset Council Taunton locality team will be invited to the next Young Peoples WG meeting to explore ways to engage voluntary groups with Somerset education and support schools in connecting with these groups.
- **Look to continue the group:** stakeholders involved and suggestions for exploration i.e. youth groups in PC area

Cross LCN Active Travel Steering Group

This group aims to coordinate active travel routes and initiatives across Somerset.

Active Travel Representative: Jim Chapman volunteered to take on the role of Active Travel Representative for the Taunton LCN

The LCN Link Officer to coordinate with Jim regarding upcoming meetings.

4. Taunton Transport Hub

The Taunton LCN meeting received a presentation, via PowerPoint, from Robert Downes, Somerset Council Regeneration Lead Specialist and Mark Stanistreet, Somerset Council Project Manager.

The project is scheduled to be completed by April 2026.

- **Taunton Transport Hub:** presentation of the plans for the Taunton Transport Hub, including the layout, facilities, and challenges, with the emphasis on the importance of creating a hub that serves more than just bus services, incorporating active travel and public realm improvements
- **Challenges:** key challenges include ensuring the viability of the site, securing funding for operational costs, managing traffic flow, and addressing the needs of various stakeholders. The project aims to be operational by April 2026, with potential delays due to paving and other factors

Discussion

- **Congestion:** Concerns about road priority and congestion in specific areas, especially drop off and pick up
- **Concession stand:** consider a café or concession stand for passenger / customer refreshments
- **Active travel considerations:** the practicalities active travel can be incorporated, there was a suggestion to invite an active travel officer to the Highways Working Group to explain how section 106 and CIL contributions can be used in new developments (road improvement lines, cycle paths, footpaths etc). Joined up thinking and approach

- **Safety of push bikes:** the safety of bikes was a key concern during the meeting, with the emphasise on having CCTV where the bikes are parked to ensure their safety, also highlighted the need for clear bike routes to / from the transport hub
- **Public areas:** the importance of having shady trees in the public area to provide shade during hotter summers, that consideration be given to the bus shelters having automatic doors to protect against the elements and keep the waiting area warm
- **The integration of county buses with the hospital services:** the importance of connecting county buses to Musgrove Park Hospital and integration, reliable and efficient services between county buses and town bus services that go directly to the hospital, there was a suggestion that park and ride services should be integrated with county buses to ensure a seamless connection to the hospital.

5. Bus Service Improvement Plan:

John Perrett, Somerset Council Service Manager, Transporting Somerset via PowerPoint presentation, provided an overview of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, detailing the changes to bus services in the Taunton area, including evening services, new timetables, and the introduction of electric buses.

Discussion

- **Electric Buses:** the introduction of electric buses on several routes, improve service reliability and reduce emissions
- **Operational and Security Concerns and Challenges:** there were concerns about the security at the park and ride sites, particularly at Silk Mills, and the costs associated with dealing with incursions - with new protection measures, including a new height barrier currently being worked on
- **Integration with Falcon Service:** there was a discussion about integrating the Falcon service into the Gateway Park and Ride., work is ongoing to obtain planning permission to pursue this operating service.
- **Timetable Adjustments Challenges and Concerns:** there were concerns about the impact of the new timetable adjustments on service frequency and journey times
- **Slinky Service:** new booking system and that there are plans to introduce new vehicles for the Slinky service by the end of the year.

6. Taunton Together Event

Laura Batcha, Culture Officer Taunton Town Council and Tilly White-Christmas, Community Lead Officer Taunton Town Council introduced the Taunton Together event, via PowerPoint presentation, highlighting:

- The Taunton Together event is scheduled for the 27 September 2025
- The event aims to celebrate the community, showcasing Taunton's cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, arts, and various activities. The theme for this year is the River Tone, focusing on various aspects related to the river
- **Stakeholder Meetings:**
 - Regular meetings on the first Wednesday of every month, both face-to-face and online
 - Community groups can apply to participate through the provided application form
- **Community Lead Update:** the role includes overseeing community development, outreach, youth provision strategies, and antisocial behaviour plans, highlighting the UK pack system to support local businesses in tackling antisocial behaviour

The Chair thanked everyone for attending, for the informative presentations and valuable comments and questions reflecting the various concerns and suggestions from the attendees.

7. Date and Venues of future meetings / Actions

All meeting attendees agreed that the Annual General Meeting of the Taunton LCN be in person only

7 July 2025 – Annual General Meeting
venue to be confirmed 6.30 – 8.30pm

Date	Action	Who	Completed by
10/04/25	Meeting format: feedback regarding the online meeting format be fed back to the LCN Link Officer.	All	
10/04/2025	AGM meeting venue: Research, book and advise all of venue for July AGM	LCN Link Officer	

10/04/2025	Highways Working Group Meeting: look to Invite Active Travel officer to the next highways working group meeting to discuss the practicalities of incorporating active travel initiatives into new developments and obtaining /using section 106 and CIL contributions	LCN Link Officer	
10/04/2025	Taunton Together Event: Share the "Save the Date" poster and event details with surrounding parishes to encourage participation and awareness.	LCN Link Officer	
10/04/2025	Young People's Working Group: Invitation to attend the next Young People's Working Group meeting to discuss youth engagement and anti-social behaviour strategies	LCN Link Officer	
10/04/2025	Bus Service Integration: update the Taunton LCN on the possibility of integrating the Falcon service into the Gateway Park and Ride	John Perrett	
10/04/2025	Bus Stops for New Developments: look into and find relevant officer(s) to explore how bus stops are integrated into new developments and facilitate conversations with bus operators regarding this issue	LCN Link Officer	

10/04/2025	Volunteer Training for Minor Works: Write an email to Somerset Council regarding frustration of Parish Councils regarding the delay in volunteer training for minor works	Tony Taylor, Chair Bishop's Hull Parish Council	
10/04/2025	Volunteer Training for Minor Works: Follow up with the head of Highways and the head of the LCN Team regarding the progress of the volunteer training for minor works and provide an update an update to Parish and Town Councils	LCN Link Officer	
10/04/2025	Highways WG: Send out Highways WG dates with agreed times	LCN Link Officer	
10/04/2025	Draft notes: draft and circulate notes from 10 April Taunton LCN meeting	LCN Link Officer	
10/04/2025	Cross LCN Active Travel SG: liaise with and inform the Taunton LCN representative	LCN Link Officer	