

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Local Community Network - Taunton

Date: Monday, 7 October 2024

Time: 6.30pm

Location: St Lukes Centre, Cotford St Lukes

Chaired by: Dawn Johnson

Attendance:

Name:	Representing
Lee Baker	Somerset Council
Mike Rigby	Somerset Council
Federica Smith-Roberts	Somerset Council
Fran Smith	Somerset Council
Andy Sully	Somerset Council
John Hunt	Somerset Council
Bev Fernandes	Taunton Town Council
Glenn Gapper	Trull Town Council
Graham Withnell	Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council
Miles Orr	Bishop's Lydeard & Cothelstone Parish Council
Fran Hicks	Somerset Citizens, Climate Action Taunton
Vicki Phillips	YMCA Taunton
Fodo Higginson	SALC
Lisa Birch	Cotford St Luke Parish Council
Stuart Haskins	SALC

Virtual attendees:

Name:

Caroline Ellis	Somerset Council
Richard Wilkins	Somerset Council
Dixie Darch	Somerset Council
Tom Deakin	Somerset Council
Mike Ginger	Taunton Area Cycling Campaign
Marion Nieuwenhuizen	Taunton Area Cycling Campaign
Andrew Pritchard	Mind in Somerset / Connect Somerset
Sam Bushen	Avon and Somerset Police
Nigel Pearce	Taunton Business Chamber
Alex Mountain	Link Officer, Somerset Council

Apologies

Name:

Tony Taylor	Bishops Hull Parish Council
Rhoda Cook	Citizens Advice
Phil Durban	Bishops Lydeard Residents Action Group
Dixie Darch	Somerset Council (attended online)

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

Item 1 Introductions (including any apologies for absence)

The Chair, Somerset Councillor, Cllr Dawn Johnson introduced the meeting and welcome room and online attendees.

Apologies were received as noted above.

Item 2 **Agree Notes from the previous meeting – July 2024 AGM**

The notes of the previous Taunton LCN meeting were agreed as an accurate representation of the meeting held 3 June 2024.

Item 3 **Transport Presentation**

Josephine Paterson, Service Manager Transport Schemes, by use of a PowerPoint presentation, provided information and an update on the Taunton Transport Hub, including:

- **The concept of a transport hub:** its components, and the specific proposals for the Taunton Bus Station site, including bus stops, real-time information, and pedestrianised areas.
- **The plans and progress:** including the vision for the Taunton Garden Town and the funding received for the project, the aim to create a more sustainable and connected community and that the vision underpins the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the development of the transport hub.
- **Proposals:** including accessibility, six drive-in drive-out bus stops, each with its own shelter, five layover bays for buses, real-time information, an indoor waiting room, public toilets, and a large pedestrianised area with outdoor seating and planting.
- **Site Complexities:** The Taunton Bus Station site is complex due to its location within the bounds of the old Castle and Taunton, making it a scheduled ancient monument with significant archaeological and heritage constraints. The main building is locally listed, and the site includes the Castle Green Conservation Area.
- **Funding and Timing:** including the significant funding received and the need for additional funding for certain features, and the target completion date of September 2025.
- **Consultation and Design Changes:** the consultation process and potential design changes, emphasising that the fundamental layout is set, but details can be adjusted based on feedback, that the online consultation concluded last month, and the team is reviewing the feedback received. They will respond to the public on how the information will be incorporated into the design.
- **Design Adjustments:** While the fundamental layout of the bus movements is relatively set, there is flexibility to adjust details based on the consultation feedback. This includes aspects like pavement widths and site accessibility.

John Perret – Service Manager Transporting Somerset, by use of a PowerPoint presentation, provided an update and overview of bus services, including:

- **Bus Services Overview:** the types of services, funding, and the role of the Traffic Commissioner.
- **Funding:** that funding for bus services comes from various sources, including the local authority and neighbouring authorities. The level of commercial viability varies, with more commercial services in the north of the county.
- **Bus Fares and Concessions** how bus fares are determined, the impact of the national bus fare cap, and the concessionary travel scheme for residents.
- **Park and Ride Services:** including the current fare cap, passenger numbers, and planned security improvements at the sites.
- **Slinky Service:** eligibility criteria, booking process, and fare structure, emphasizing its role in providing transport for those without access to public bus services.

Discussion:

- **The Taunton Hub Consultation:** the public consultation, review, circulation of responses and input into the final design, population growth, bus usage and capacity of the hub.
- **Cycle Parking and Car Clubs:** cycle hire / secure cycle parking and lockers, the link to wider wheeled transport plans for Taunton and how can people travel between the bus station and railway station, the potential for car clubs at the hub,
- **Signage:** to inform people i.e. bus numbers / directions / challenges in design / work with Somerset Council regeneration team to link together.
- **Silk Mills park and ride:** user / signage improvement and security measures.
- **Electric buses** target for delivery and operation

NHS Operations:

Jo Paterson responded to a question about the NHS COVID operation at the site, indicating that commercial conversations are ongoing and alternative arrangements are being considered.

Hinkley Buses:

Jo Paterson addressed concerns about Hinkley buses crowding Castle Green, stating that discussions are ongoing to manage their parking.

Bus Reliability:

John Perrett addressed concerns about bus reliability, noting improvements in driver staffing and ongoing efforts to adjust timetables and manage road issues.

The Chair thanked the Somerset Officers for their attendance, presentations and sharing the helpful update, information and knowledge and thanked all at the meeting for their contribution and discussion.

Update on Taunton LCN Working Groups

Highways Working Group

The Chair Taunton LCN Highways Working Group (WG), Graham Withnell, presented the previously circulated Highways report and provided an update.

The below recommendations from the Taunton LCN Highways WG held 11 July 2024, were considered by all present:

Recommendations to the Taunton LCN Meeting

- To adopt the Taunton LCN Highways Working Group Terms of Reference
- To schedule further Highways Working Group meetings for the 2024/25 municipal year, to sit between the main Taunton LCN meetings.
- To agree the Taunton LCN Working Group Membership, as below:
 - **Bishops Hull PC**
 - **Bishops Lydeard PC ~ and Cothelstone PC**
 - **Cotford St. Luke PC**
 - **Norton Fitzwarren PC**
 - **Taunton Town Council**
 - **Trull PC**
 - **Nigel Pearce Taunton Business Chamber**

Discussion:

- **Taunton LCN Highways Working Group representation:** consideration of the addition of a Unitary Council representative.
- **Taunton LCN Highways Working Group meeting times:** asked that Somerset Council Highways Services consider holding meetings in the evening once there is officer resource and capacity.
- **Communication:** reporting a problem on the road and communication and updates of works taking place.

The recommendations were agreed by show of hands by all at the meeting, with the amendment that the Taunton LCN Highways WG review the membership at the next meeting:

To review the membership and consider the addition of a Taunton LCN Somerset Councillor to the Taunton LCN Highways WG membership.

Young People's Working Group

The Chair Young People's Working Group (WG), Bev Fernandes, presented the previously circulated Young People's WG report and provided an update, including:

- Details of recently produced Somerset Council reports –
 - Somerset Children and Young People's Plan for 2024 -2030
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/somerset-children-and-young-peoples-plan/>
 - Engagement and Participation for 2023/2024
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-council-ensures-young-peoples-voices-are-heard-for-another-year-2/>
 - Blueprint for Connect Somerset
<https://connectsomerset.org.uk/about-connect-somerset/>

Discussion:

- The availability of information, searchable databases / app, information that's available or not for young people, parents and carers.
- The LCNs that have / are setting up Children, Young People Working Groups and the opportunity to share findings and good practice across LCNS.
- The recent opening of the Orchard Grove Primary School and the opportunity to connect with and engagement schools to help inform the Young People's Working Group.

The Chair thanked Graham and Bev for the reports and thanked all involved in the Working Groups for their fantastic work and the positive outcomes and networking that is being achieved.

Community Emergency Planning

The Chair highlighted the upcoming Community Emergency Planning Workshop, and the importance of having an emergency preparedness plan

Community Emergency Planning Workshop to be held:

21 October 2024, 1-4pm Luttrell Room, County Hall Taunton

- Item 5 **Consider the priorities and areas of focus for the LCN for the next 12 months.**

The Chair invited comments from all present to discuss and review priorities and areas of focus for the Taunton LCN.

Discussion

- Loss of car parking due to sales of assets and influence of the LCN / asset sales in the LCN area.
- Housing and the housing crisis that we face as a LCN area and the impact of homelessness and the lack of social and affordable housing and how we communicate, how the housing system works to individuals
- Tackling deprivation, volumes across the LCN area, both urban and rural and how to support.
- Information sharing across communities / gaining information from residents to influence and inform the LCN / community needs surveys.
- Active travel, missing links in the Taunton area, strategic benefit and investments and linking housing developments and cross LCN boundary routes.

Outcome:

- Continue with the Young People's Working Group.
- Continue with the Highways Working Group.
- Asset devolution focused meeting to inform / make residents aware of devolution decision, how decisions are made, who is involved in / the community assets/buildings to have a meeting focussed on hubs and places of community focus in our area, and what things they specialise in decisions making and can the LCN membership influence decisions.
- Active Travel focused meeting – consideration of active travel routes within the LCN area, consider active travel working group.
- Housing and the housing crisis within the LCN area focused meeting / Housing and asking some of the social landlords/housing associations with assets in Taunton to come and talk about their strategy and plans.

The Chair thanked all in the room and online for their valued contributions and comments and asked that people consider partners and organisations that could contribute and bring their experience and expertise to the relevant focus meetings.

Item 6 Somerset Association Local Councils (SALC) Health & Wellbeing Programme

Fodo Higginson, SALC Community Health and Wellbeing Officer presented the Community Health and Wellbeing Programme, by use of PowerPoint presentation.

The health and wellbeing presentation provided valuable insights into the programme's initiatives, challenges, future plans and details of application requirements for a series of grants. It highlighted the importance of community engagement and the need for effective communication to ensure the success of the health and wellbeing efforts.

Item 7 Date of future meetings / Actions

13 January 2025 –Norton Fitzwarren Village Hall, Station Road, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, TA2 6RS 6.30 – 8.30pm

3 April 2025 – Trull Village Memorial Hall, Church Rd, Trull, Taunton TA3 7JZ 6.30 – 8.30pm

7 July 2025 – Annual General Meeting – John Meikle Room, the Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE 6.30 – 8.30pm

Community Emergency Planning Workshop: 21 October 2024

The Chair thanked all for their attendance, contribution and the positive engagement for future opportunities.

Actions

Action Description	Action by	Action date
Consultation Feedback: Review the information received from the online consultation and provide feedback on how it will be incorporated into the Taunton bus hub project	Jo Paterson	15 November 2024 Consultation feedback will be responded to via Citizen Space and with a dedicated webpage. The webpage will provide details of the scheme and responses to the consultation.
Cycle Parking Provision: Investigate the possibility of providing secure bike lockers at the Taunton bus hub, considering the existing contract arrangements at the park and ride site.	Jo Paterson	15 November 2024 Secure cycle parking is high on the list of components desired at the Taunton Hub. Once detailed design and costings are complete on the layout of the bus area, officers will seek engagement with the Active Travel LCN group to consult around components such as secure cycle parking. This type of component is likely to be constrained by the tight project budget.
NHS COVID Operation: Find out the details regarding the NHS COVID operation at the Taunton bus hub, including their notice period and	Jo Paterson	15 November 2024 Notice period for NHS - It currently anticipated that NHS will vacate in March 2025.

alternative locations for their services		
Hinkley Buses: Discuss with Hinkley buses about their parking arrangements and the possibility of using designated coach stops outside the Taunton bus hub	Jo Paterson	15 November 2024 Hinkley Buses - the project team is communicating with the Hinkley bus operators to determine whether they will be utilising coach space at Castle Way.
Car Club Spaces: Explore the feasibility of linking car club spaces to a nearby car park as part of the wider sustainable transport strategy.	Jo Paterson	15 November 2024 Car club places. There will not be a car club at the hub. Any car club contracts need to consider the wider network and not just be tied to one location. Future car club proposals will be informed by a sustainable transport strategy which will be developed when resourcing allows. There can be wayfinding and information added at a later date at the hub to direct users to future car club locations in and around Taunton.
Bus Service Reliability: Monitor and address any issues related to bus service reliability, including missed runs and late arrivals, and adjust timetables if necessary.	John Perrett	Bus Service reliability – This is an ongoing process, but I can update that lost mileage by First South West remains low at present ranging between 1% to 2% per week on average and the operators recently confirmed that they were now fully staffed. The mileage being lost is now generally either vehicle related or due to things outside of their control such as road closures and weather related issues. Other operators reliability is generally good at present.
Public Awareness of Slinky Service: Increase public awareness of the Slinky service through enhanced advertising and communication efforts	John Perrett	Public Awareness of the Slinky Service – We have been working with our comms team in recent weeks and we are about to commence a campaign

		to raise awareness of Slinky Demand Responsive bus services across Somerset.
Circulate Taunton LCN notes	Michelle Brooks	31 October 2024 completed
Circulate Hwys and YP Working Group report with Notes	Michelle Brooks	31 October 2024 completed
Review Hwys WG TORs	Highways Working Group	17 October 2024 completed
Provide information on the decision to sell Taunton Car park asset	Mike Rigby	completed
Share 'report a problem on the road' link	Michelle Brooks	18 October 2024 completed