

Local Community Network

Avalon and Poldens LCN
Quarterly Meeting Notes
Date: Wednesday, 23rd April 2025
Location: Cossington Village Hall

Attendees:

Cllr Bryan Knickerbocker (Chair)
Cllr Chris Bennetts (Co-Vice Chair)
Cllr Stephen Page (Co-Vice Chair)
Emmaline Kay (Outgoing Link Officer)
Alex Mountain (Incoming Interim Link Officer)
Cllr Geoff Barnett
Cllr Graham Croucher

Cllr Tim Hayne
Cllr David Heale
Cllr Tim Kerley
Cllr Jenny Lawrence
Cllr Harry Munt
Cllr Heather Shearer
Cllr Georgia Terry
Cllr Gus Wans
John Dodson
Julie Welch
Members of the public x 2

Virtual attendees:

Cllr Liz Leyshon
Cllr Ros Wyke
Sabria Lucas
Maureen Purdue
Anne Shilton
Natalie Watson
Reg Williams

1. Welcome and Apologies

Chair of the LCN, welcomed everyone to the meeting, he advised the agenda for the evening and then invited apologies from those who could not attend.

Apologies were made for: - Inspector Sarah Knight, Alex Lyons, Cllr Laura Wolfers.

2. Notes from previous meeting and actions

Table of Actions

Date	Action	Action for
16/10/2024	Parish Engagement: Send an email to all parishes to gauge interest in setting up a flooding or emergency planning working group.	Chair/Link Officer
16/10/2024	Community Flood Action Fund: Circulate information about the	SRA/Link Officer

	Community Flood Action Fund to all parishes and encourage applications.	
16/10/2024	Health and Well-being Grants: Share the link to the SALC website and details about the health and well-being grant program with all parishes.	SALC/ Link Officer
16/10/2024	Watercourse Maintenance: Share the new guidance on farming rules for water and responsibilities with Emmaline for distribution to parishes.	EA/ Link Officer
16/10/2024	Flood Risk and Planning Workshop: Promote the Community resilience day in Bridgwater on November 6th, including the workshop on flood risk and planning.	SRA
16/10/2024	Parish Conference: Promote the Somerset Parish's conference on November 13th to all parishes.	Fodo

All actions were agreed as complete. Emergency planning will be added to future agendas to discuss.

3. Devolution update:

An overview of devolution was provided, focusing on the transfer of assets and services from Somerset Council to city, town and parish councils. This process has seen many assets-such as markets, open spaces and public toilets transferred to local councils across Somerset.

Local devolution continues to progress with further agreements being made, particularly with larger city, town and parish councils. These are being prioritised as they offer the greatest potential for delivering savings or sustaining services and assets that Somerset Council can no longer support due to the ongoing financial emergency.

As of 1st April 2025, several decisions came into effect, with legal instructions issued to enable local agreements.

The devolution team and supporting services will now work closely to deliver these transfers as quickly as possible in the coming months.

In addition, work is underway to establish a process for prioritising expressions of interest from other parishes. Opportunities continue to be explored with sector partners, and further information will be shared once the approach is agreed. The commitment progressing devolution with local councils remains strong, but it's important to acknowledge that limited resources mean it will take time to respond to all requests.

A recruitment process is currently underway for a Local Devolution Lead, who will oversee and drive this work forward.

Localities within A&P LCN

- **Glastonbury Town Council**

- A decision was taken to devolve grounds maintenance operational services and assets on key sites within the town (including market operations, which have already been transferred) to GTC from 1 June 2025, in line with the Council's adopted Asset and Services Devolution Framework.
- This encompasses the maintenance of all areas and all trees on the land. All sites either already have restrictive covenants in place or will have such covenants added as part of the transfer.

- **Street Parish Council**

- The devolution of Street Market has been completed.

Other areas remain under discussion, with agreement reached on the transfer of open spaces and play areas in the village. These are now progressing through the appropriate decision-making processes.

4. Avon and Somerset Police NPT Priorities

Avon and Somerset Police were invited to provide an update on the neighbourhood policing team, but were unable to attend, having sent their apologies on the morning of the meeting.

In their absence, Councillor Heather Shearer, Chair of the Police and Crime panel at Somerset Council, kindly stepped in as an impromptu guest.

Cllr Shearer explained that the Police and Crime panel holds the Police and Crime Commissioner accountable, ensuring that the public's views are reflected in policing priorities and decisions. Cllr Shearer highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by neighbourhood policing, including the long-term impact of austerity and the shortage of experienced officers.

Cllr Shearer also emphasised the importance of community feedback and encouraged attendees to share their experiences and concerns relating to local policing. Building public confidence in the police was identified as a key priority, along with the panel's role in responding to issues raised by the community.

The discussion also touched on the challenges of rural crime and the need for a more visible police presence. Heather noted ongoing efforts to recruit additional officers and the stressed the value of community safety working groups in addressing local concerns.

5. Working group updates:

Health and Wellbeing/Step Ride Thrive Pilot

Updated provided by: Natalie Watson

Project Background: The project was initiated to address the community's need for better transport and access to outdoor natural spaces. The project received funding from SALC (The Somerset Association of Local Councils) through its Community Health & Wellbeing programme and will run until the end of March 2026.

Bus Route Enhancement: Funding was secured to introduce an additional bus stop on the existing #668 route (Street to Cheddar). The new service, launched on 22 April 2025, operates three times per weekday. While there were constraints on adding further stops, a six-month review is planned to assess performance and consider potential timetable adjustments.

Positive Feedback: Initial feedback has been very encouraging, with some residents visiting the Avalon Marshes for the first time. The project aims to gather further input to inform ongoing improvements.

Cycling Initiatives:

In partnership with the cycling charity *On Your Bike*, the project includes:

- 15 school-based sessions for Year 5 and 6 students on bike maintenance and road safety
- 15 community sessions offering free bike checks and maintenance advice

Community Engagement: Parish clerks have been contacted regarding hosting opportunities. The project team welcomes expressions of interest from parishes and plans to develop cycling safety guides and address footpath and cycle path issues.

Evaluation and Future Plans: The project will use ongoing community surveys to evaluate outcomes and guide future initiatives.

Health and Wellbeing Working Group: Current discussions have highlighted challenges around access to health services. GP surgeries and Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are aware of these difficulties, especially in relation to transport across the large and complex geography of the LCN, which spans three PCNs.

Key Focus Areas:

- Community transport has been identified as a priority area.
- Plans are underway to involve PCNs in future meetings for better integration and communication.
- **Jacqui Cross** (Street, Glastonbury, and Wells PCN) has been actively engaged and is helping guide this collaboration.

The group also aims to raise awareness of available services both volunteer-led and state-funded and encourages in-person meetings to foster a positive, cooperative environment. All are welcome to attend and contribute to ongoing initiatives.

Highways Working Group

Joint LCN Highways Meeting:

A pilot joint meeting with **Burnham LCN** is underway, designed to maximise resource use and share insights. The collaboration has proven effective so far, with a joint programme established to address higher volumes of highways issues in more heavily trafficked areas.

Reporting Issues:

The group emphasised the importance of clear and effective issue reporting by parish councils. Improved reporting allows officers to prioritise and resolve problems more efficiently.

Future Focus Points:

- **Behaviour Around Schools:** The next meeting will explore approaches to managing traffic and behaviour outside schools during peak times, with the goal of creating a transferable package for any school or parish.
- **White Line Painting:** Inconsistent white line markings in rural areas were flagged as a concern. Attendees were encouraged to provide photographic evidence to help raise the issue effectively.
- **Working in Clusters:** The concept of cluster-based collaboration was discussed; further work is needed to develop a structured approach.
- **Attendance and Communication:** Continued efforts are being made to improve communication between meetings and encourage wider attendance through sharing agendas and relevant updates.
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Overall Focus:

The working group continues to prioritise collaboration, highways safety, and increased engagement from all parishes.

6. Items for consideration:

- **Annual General Meeting (AGM):**
The AGM is scheduled for **Wednesday 9th July at 7:00 PM at Keinton Mandeville Village Hall**. The group discussed potential formats for the meeting including inviting a guest speaker or using the time for informal networking. Attendees were encouraged to send their suggestions to: AvalonandPoldensLCN@somerset.gov.uk
- **Emergency Plans:**
The idea of developing emergency plans was raised. It was noted that many parishes might not currently have a plan in place or existing plans might need updating. The Somerset Prepared initiative offers templates and support to assist with this process.
- **Community Safety:**
The group discussed interest in pursuing community safety initiatives. If there is sufficient interest, community safety could be included on the next agenda and worked on in the coming year.
- **LCN Branding:** The group considered the creation of a dedicated logo to give the LCN a more recognisable and personal identity. Two draft logos were presented, with the golden/orange version receiving the majority preference.

7. LCN Link Officer Update

It was announced at the meeting that Emmaline Kay would be leaving the Local Community Network team. Emmaline was thanked for her support and contributions during her time as Link Officer. In the interim, Emmaline will be replaced by Alex Mountain, who will support the Avalon and Poldens LCN.

8. Date and Venues of Future Meetings

- **Highways Working Group** – Thursday, 1st May 2025, *Shapwick Pavilion*
- **Health and wellbeing Working Group** – Friday, 23rd May, *Avalon Marshes Centre*
- **LCN AGM** – Wednesday, 9th July 2025, *Keinton Mandeville Village Hall*

9. Table of actions

Action	Details	Responsible
Emergency Plans	Consider updating or creating emergency plans for parishes and express interest if applicable.	All Parishes
Community Safety	Express interest in focusing on community safety for future agendas if applicable.	All Participants
Avalon and Poldens LCN Branding	Review Avalon and Poldens LCN logo and give feedback on choice	All participants
Main LCN Meetings	Consider alternative meeting times or days to improve attendance and participation.	All Participants
AGM meeting	Give suggestions to contents of AGM meeting. i.e. networking, guest speaker	All participants