

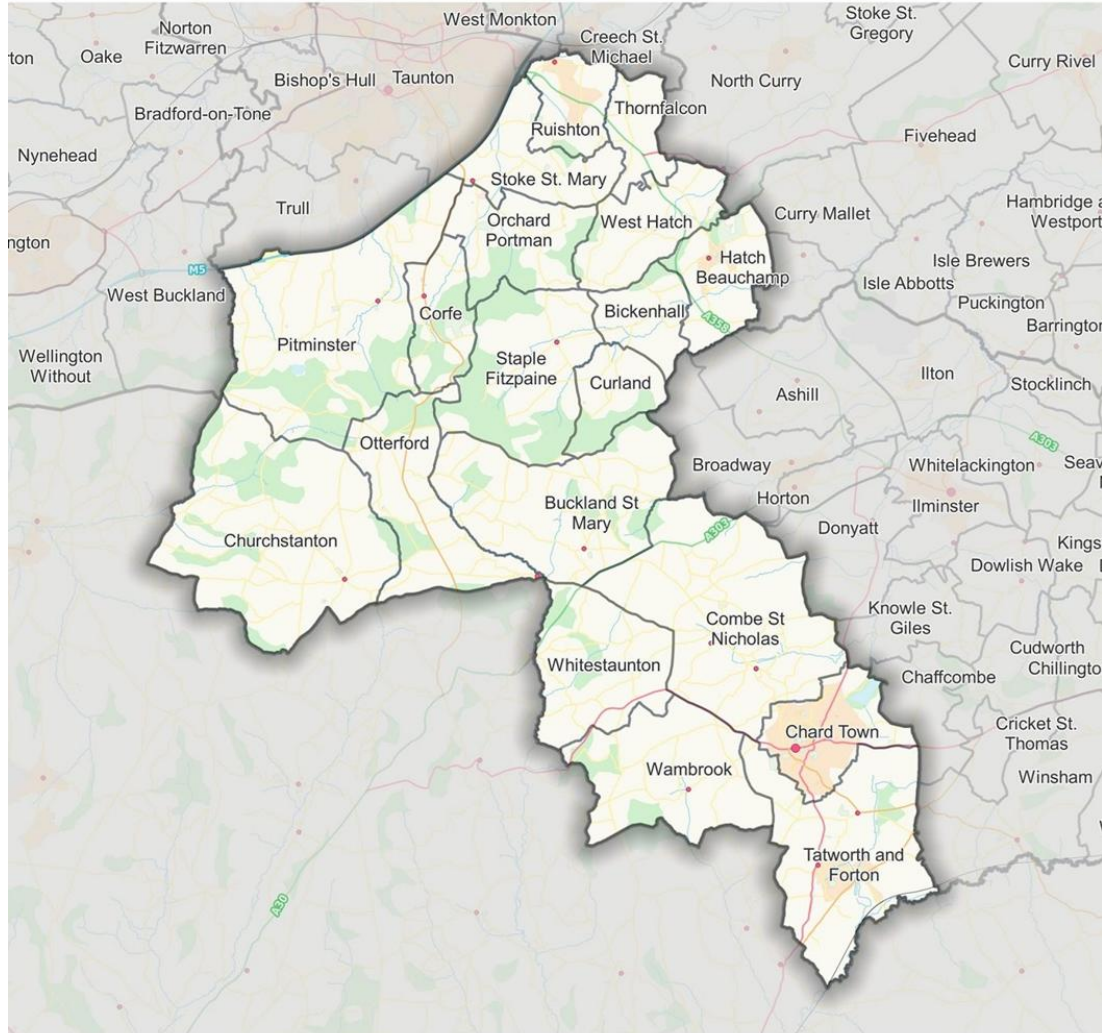
Chard & Blackdowns Local Community Network

Annual Report 2025-2026



Somerset
Council

Chard & Blackdowns LCN Area



The Chard and Blackdowns LCN area covers Chard and the surrounding Blackdown Hills parishes, spanning a largely rural landscape of villages, hamlets and farming communities alongside the market-town centre.

Communities range from more built-up neighbourhoods in Chard to smaller, dispersed villages and hamlets where people often rely on local hubs such as village halls, schools and community spaces.

This varied geography creates different local strengths, challenges, and opportunities, from rural connectivity and access to services to community-led activity rooted in strong parish identities.

Chard & Blackdowns LCN Partners

Core Partners

- Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- Chamber of Commerce
- Citizens Advice
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue
- Education
- NHS
- Society of Local Council Clerks
- Somerset Activity Sports Partnership
- Somerset Association of Local Councils
- Somerset Local Nature Partnership
- Somerset Rivers Authority
- Spark Somerset
- Thrive (previously Community Council for Somerset)

Council Members

- Connor Payne
- Jason Baker
- Jenny Kenton
- Martin Wale
- Ross Henley
- Sarah Wakefield

Electoral Divisions

- Blackdown and Neroche
- Chard North
- Chard South

Towns and Parishes

- Buckland St. Mary
- Chard Town
- Churchstanton
- Combe St. Nicholas
- Corfe
- Hatch Beauchamp
- Neroche Grouped:
 - Bickenhall
 - Curland
 - Orchard Portman
 - Thurlbear
 - Stable Fitzpaine
- Otterford
- Pitminster
- Ruishton and Thorn Falcon
- Stoke St. Mary
- Tatworth and Forton
- Wambrook
- West Hatch
- Whitestaunton

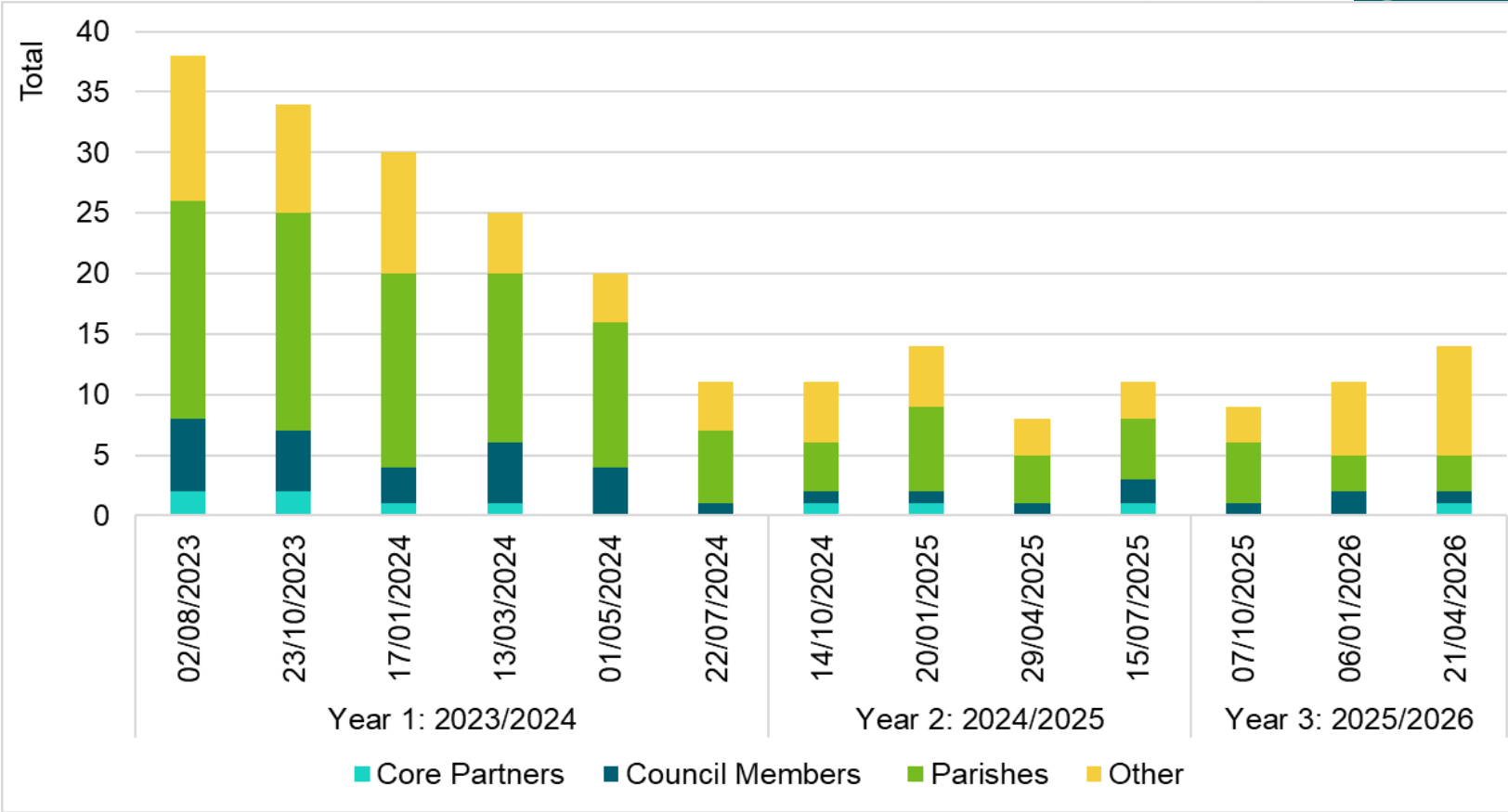


Meeting Participation

This LCN operated without an elected Chair or Vice Chair during the year, so the LCN Link Officer stepped in to provide additional coordination and meeting facilitation to ensure continuity and momentum.

To strengthen accessibility and inclusivity, meetings were hosted in venues across the LCN area, to help different communities participate more easily and bring discussions closer to the places they affect.

This LCN also trialled afternoon meeting times, to widen opportunities for attendance and making it simpler for invited speakers and subject specialists to join and contribute during their normal working hours, supporting stronger engagement and richer, more informed conversations.



* 'Other' includes any organisation or representative not listed as a core partner, council member or town/parish for the Chard & Blackdowns LCN area, including council officers and public.

** Figures include apologies received.

Meetings

Main LCN Meetings 2025-2026

Key themes, discussions and presentations:

Tuesday 7th October 2025, 7pm

Hybrid – Otterford Parish Hall and Online

- Community resilience and parish preparedness
- Environment – draft 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy'
- Highways maintenance
- Somerset Bus Partnership's service

Tuesday 6th January 2026, 2.30pm

Online only

- Indices of Multiple Deprivation Data (published October 2025)
- Environmental Crime
- Highways maintenance
- Consultations and local events/opportunities

Tuesday 21st April 2026, 2.30pm

Hybrid – Churchinford Village Hall and online

- The Octagon Theatre's Arts Engagement and Outreach Programme
- Planned development at Mount Hindrance Farm site, North Chard
- Highways maintenance
- The Parish Preparedness Survey – outcome and next steps
- Storm Choudra recovery and flooding resilience



Focus

Environment

Flooding

Highways

*It's been a good meeting,
information wise.*

Linking Opportunities

The LCN served as the link connecting local councils and communities with grant opportunities such as Somerset Association of Local Council's Health and Wellbeing Grant.



Key awards by SALC included:

- £19,830 for Chard Town Council's KIND Chard, a local Key Information Network Directory due to launch soon [KIND Chard - Chard Town Council](#)
- £600 for Churchstanton Parish Council's sustainable farming project in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.



Case Study: Community Health Checks for High Blood Pressure

Beth supported the Healthy Somerset high blood pressure campaign by turning its targets into practical local action where it could have the greatest impact. Drawing on a combination of data and local knowledge to identify priority neighbourhoods, she worked with the Health Promotion Practitioner, parishes and community groups across the Chard and Blackdowns area to identify the best locations for pop-up health check clinics.

Alongside available data, they used feedback from community networks and partner organisations to focus outreach on communities and areas where people are less likely to come forward for routine checks, and where high blood pressure may be more likely to go undetected. This helped more residents get checked earlier and ensured they were signposted to the right support afterwards demonstrating how the LCN approach can help public health work reach people who might otherwise be missed.

1 in 3 adults in Somerset with high

blood pressure don't know they have it

Find out more

bit.ly/blood-pressure-somerset



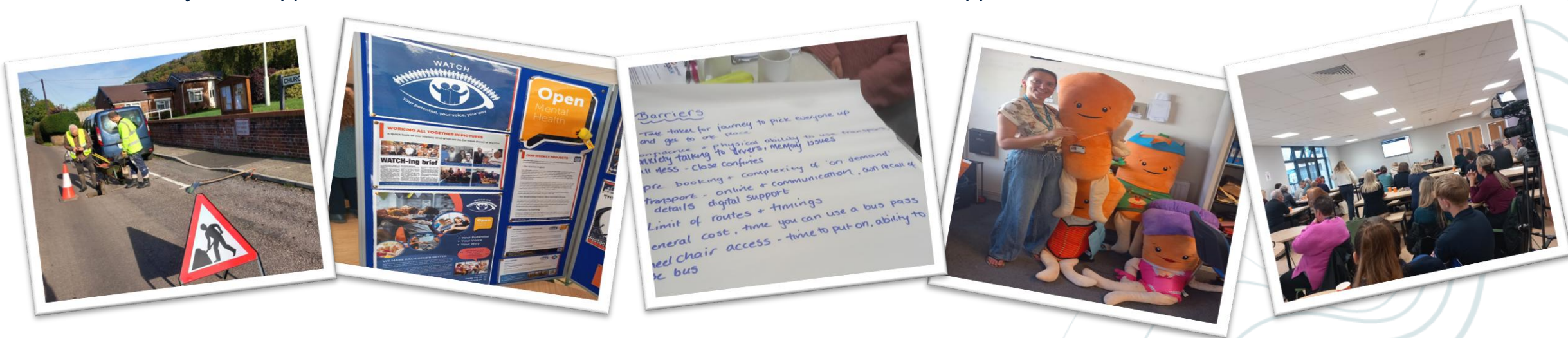
LCN Activity

Chard and Blackdown's Local Community Network Link Officer, Beth Poole, has supported a wide range of community engagement and partnership activity over the past year, delivering the role across two Local Community Network areas alongside evening and out-of-hours commitments.

Within this time, Beth has worked closely with parish councils, community groups and local organisations, responding to enquiries, sharing information and helping local ideas move forward. Partnership work has focused on supporting integrated neighbourhood-led activities through links with organisations such as Connect Somerset and Holyrood School via The Community's Leaders Breakfast.

Beth has contributed to wider conversations about Chard's Community Plan and its vision for the future in co-led meetings between partners. Work with Healthy Somerset has also supported the identification of suitable locations for health check clinics to reach people most at risk and encourage earlier intervention.

Improving access to services has remained a priority, including linking dementia support organisations with local transport to help overcome rural access issues, and contributing community feedback into Abri Housing's 'Octavia' Foundation Strategy to help shape future investment. Alongside this, Beth has developed a local newsletter and continues to promote Somerset Council consultations, champion preparedness and resilience activity, and support communities to make the best use of local resources and opportunities.



Get in touch!

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