

## **Local Community Network Meeting 22 February 2024 Charlton Musgrove Memorial Hall.**

The Chairman introduced Cllr Dixie Darch (Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change) and Kirsty Larkins Service Director for Climate and Sustainability who provided an update and progress report on the potential closure of recycling centres including Dimmer.

During a question and answer type session, Cllr Dixie Darch and Kirsty Larkins provided some responses to points of detail, saying that built into the saving would be additional funding to support any increase in fly tipping in the area and any enforcement that would be necessary to deter this from happening. She added that they cannot determine how much fly tipping will be caused by any possible closures but have historical information from previous closures which they are basing assumptions on. Experience shows the main culprits of fly tipping are mainly rogue traders and not necessarily everyday homeowners. The feeling in the hall was that this would inevitably change.

The aim is to save £1 million on the contract.

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With regard to flooding, during discussion several concerns and frustrations were voiced regarding the lack of 24-hour emergency response and accessible reporting mechanisms available from Somerset Highways, along with support from relevant other authorities regards emergency flooding and the clearing of gullies. Parishes felt more was required from supporting networks such as the Environment Agency, LLFA and the Council to help ensure any issues were quickly and correctly addressed and directed to the appropriate contact.

Tim Cook, Localities Manager, explained that fundamentally reporting around emergency planning had not changed since LGR and the new Somerset Council. He explained the process and emergency services involved and appreciated there may have been some communication problems due to limited resources but that there has always been a continuous 24-hour emergency helpline. He was disappointed to hear this and welcomed parishes to make contact should they encounter these problems again.

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## Highways

Terena Issacs Reported on The Highways Working Group and on information regarding the 'Highway Steward' scheme.

During discussion I raised the issue of community speed watch schemes and the harassment some volunteers had faced. I also spoke about the difficulties and lack of support from both the police and highways authority regarding the possibility of automated speed devices and any data this would provide. Kate Hellard, LCN Service Manager felt this was a good discussion topic for future highways working group and that an action should be taken forward to help facilitate parishes to connect with the appropriate community inspector for their area and advising parishes to contact the police should they have issues regarding harassment of the local people carrying out these speed surveys.

She asked that the contact details of the six representatives of the working sub group be shared with the parishes to help provide contact details for anyone requiring more help and support on the issues raised.

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## Footpaths

Terena Isaacs provided an update on the Footpaths working group. In response to questions raised regarding the responsibility of emptying of gullies, Councillor Richard Wilkins confirmed the Council have a statutory duty to do this. He explained that any additional enhanced works would be at an extra cost and would need to be paid for by the parishes in the future. He referred to the success of the recent pilot 'Highway Steward Scheme' and that parishes would need to buy into this. He could not provide any further details at this stage but could confirm that works would not be reduced for 2024/25 but would be reduced in 2025/26. He voiced his frustrations that this was the case, as the result of the current financial situation and challenges that the Council unfortunately find themselves in.

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## Antisocial behaviour

Avon and Somerset Police were conspicuous by their absence so I was unable to broach the subject of the antisocial behaviour we are currently suffering in our parishes.

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It seems to me that the these LCN meetings are becoming more and more relevant and I would urge all Councillors to attend whenever possible.

The next meeting of the South East Somerset LCN is schedule for

18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at Queen Camel Village Hall.

Andy Keys-Toyer