

Committee: FULL COUNCIL

Date: 18 October 2022

Title: Future of Local Government in Somerset

Purpose of Report

To receive updates and consider how Ilminster will look after vesting day for the new authority on 1 April 2023

Recommendation:

Members to note the report and resolve that officers should investigate the possibility of a working with another authority to develop a Highways Steward role for Ilminster and the surrounding areas

Report:

1. The clerk, Mayor and Deputy Mayor recently attended the LGR conference on the 4 October. Also attending was Cllr Keitch in her County Council and District Council Roles. An email was sent to members with the various presentations that were used throughout the day.
2. One of the key aspects that was looked at was the way in which Local Community Networks have been introduced in other new unitary authorities. These were Buckinghamshire and Cornwall.
3. One consistent message at the conference was that any LCN's (or whatever they may finally be called) will need to be flexible in the way they operate and that however they are set up initially they will need to be able to evolve and develop in the future.
4. Feedback was provided on the three pilot projects and how they are currently progressing. Information on these is contained in the information sent to you and which can be found at the [Somerset County website](#). The three pilots are;
 - a. Frome – Exploring the theme of Children, Young people and Families
 - b. Wincanton, Bruton and Castle Cary who are looking at Rural Isolation and Well-being.
 - c. Exmoor is looking at local street scene and highway services, with town and parish councils. This is through the use of a highways steward.

5. In addition Bridgewater Town Council has been looking at the devolution of assets and services and this has yet to develop fully but is starting to take shape. It was made clear however that many of the services and assets will be transferred in the years following vesting day in 2023.
6. The most promising of the pilots at present would appear to be the way in which the Highways steward scheme has been implemented. This as members will recall, is the one that the clerk has been keeping an eye on as it would appear to be the one that offers the greatest benefits to the Ilminster area and community.
7. The scheme has seen greater autonomy given to the steward to identify and target areas that need remedial works to take place. Some that they themselves can resolve but also that will allow them to raise an increased priority for rectification to take place. **(Appendix 21B)**
8. The costs involved in this project have and will be covered through the central highways budget, meaning that there would be no direct costs involved for Ilminster.
9. Members may wish to resolve to pursue the idea of an Ilminster Steward in partnership with another local town and with surrounding parish councils.

Mark Tredwin
Town clerk
October 2022