

Committee: FULL COUNCIL

Date: 17 January 2023

Title: Future of Local Government in Somerset

Purpose of Report

For members to receive updates and consider how they see Ilminster post unification of the District Councils and Somerset County Council.

Recommendation:



Members to note the report.

Report:

1. South Somerset District Council will cease to be an authority after Vesting day for the new unitary after vesting day on the 1 April 2023 when Somerset County will come into being.
2. A great deal of officer and member time has been consumed with looking at how the proposed Local Area Networks will operate and the draft details of these have now been released ahead of being presented to the County Council's Executive on Wednesday 18 January 2023.
3. The full papers for the Executive meeting are available by clicking [HERE](#)
4. Hard copies of the documents can be found by following the following links (Please note the items are numbered as for the Executive meeting).
 - [View the background to item 7.](#)

Additional documents:

- [Item 7 Appendix 1 Map of Proposed LCN Areas, item 7](#) PDF 2 MB
- [Item 7 Appendix 2 LCN proposed areas with parish and Electoral Division lists, item 7](#) PDF 215 KB
- [Item 7 Appendix 3a LCN Draft Terms of Reference V5 January 2023, item 7](#) PDF 163 KB

- [Item 7 Appendix 3b LCN ToR simplified version V2 January 2023](#),
item 7.  PDF 114 KB
 - [Item 7 Appendix 4 LCN Somerset Equality Impact Assessment 18.01.2023](#), item 7.  PDF 223 KB
5. One of the key aspects to note is that there will be 18 LCN Areas and that that Ilminster has been grouped with Crewkerne, South Petherton and 33 parishes. At present there is a possibility that some of the smaller parishes may find themselves attached to LCN's that are not their preferred option. Whether they will be allowed to make a case to move into a different LCN is yet to be confirmed as far as I am aware.
6. Each LCN will have a core membership that consists of the following:
- a) The elected Somerset Council Councillors representing the electoral divisions covered by the Local Community Network;
 - b) An elected representative from each City, Town or Parish Council within the area covered by the Local Community Network;
 - c) Representatives from the following groups or organisations:
 - I. Local Neighbourhood policing team
 - II. Somerset National Health Service
 - III. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service;
 - IV. Education
 - V. Representatives from Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Organisations
 - VI. Representatives from Businesses or Trade Groups
7. This does mean that there could be upwards of 50 voting members on the Ilminster LCN. On top of this each of the LCN's will be asked to encourage a wider participation from the community with additional attendees potentially coming from:
- Local Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations
 - Local Businesses or Trade Groups
 - Housing Associations or Housing Officers
 - Any other relevant local groups which could include youth groups, cultural organisations, environmental groups, older people's groups, disability groups, etc
8. The purpose of each of the LCN's is to be the focus for the new Council for community engagement and development, within an ethos of local partnership working, looking to improve outcomes for residents through establishing

strong connections between Somerset Council, our communities and our partners.

9. The Local Community Networks will have the following roles and functions:
 - Establishing effective local community engagement and influence;
 - Promote enhanced participation in democracy, active community decision making and scrutiny;
 - Enhance collaboration by bringing together at a local level representatives from partner organisations, town, City and parish councils, community groups and others
 - Ensure local influence over the Council and wider public service activity;
 - Share information, ideas and solutions to enable services to be delivered to help meet local need;
 - To inspire more responsibility for local place shaping;
 - To identify evidence-based community priorities; across Economic, Social and Environmental issues;
 - To create plans to reflect how the priorities will be addressed; and
 - To identify and secure resource opportunities for local projects

10. It is intended that the LCN's will:
 - a) Agree priorities and areas of focus for the local area on an annual basis

 - b) Agree a tailored communication and engagement plan for actively involving residents and other local stakeholders.

 - c) Allocate any funding obtained by the Local Community Network as appropriate, and in accordance with rules and guidance set out by the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders.

 - d) Provide opportunities to ensure that the local community is able to respond to consultations in a timely manner.

 - e) Provide opportunities to ensure good communications and information from Somerset Council, and partners, on local issues.

 - f) Make recommendations to Somerset Council and/or other partners on funding local projects.

 - g) Make recommendations to Somerset Council, and partners, on key local issues.

 - h) Produce an annual report with a self-assessment of success in relation to delivery against the agreed priorities and areas of focus for the local area for the past 12 months.

 - i) Hold an annual meeting to enable residents and local stakeholders to input into setting area priorities for the next 12 months and highlight local issues.

11. There will be a limited amount of funding given to each LCN by the County and possibly other funding partners. Each of the LCN's will be able to be submit bids to other organisations in order to fund opportunities that it wishes to follow. And where appropriate Somerset Council will be the Accountable Body for any external funding. At this point in writing this report I am not aware of what the allocated funding is or if there is a centrally identified budget that each LCN will be able to bid from.
12. Officers will be provided from both the Unitary Council and also from Democratic services with additional officer support being allowed to attend where necessary.
13. More information is available in the documents and each member Ilminster Council is actively encouraged to read the documentation ahead of the meeting. This way any questions you may be answered ahead of the meeting. Please remember this is draft information you are reading and considering and as such changes may well be proposed when it gets to SSC's Executive and beyond ready for the Somerset Council to implement.
14. Members are asked to note the report.

Mark Tredwin

**Town clerk
January 2023**