

Somer Valley AGM Report 2022 - 2023

Bath and North East Somerset

Thank you to all the members and participants of the Forum for their contributions over the past year. All the Forum meetings are open to the public and we're always pleased to see new people joining us at meetings. If there are organisations that would like to become voting members of the Forum, do let us know.

The Forum provides a place for discussion on local issues and through these, ideas and solutions can be developed. By working collaboratively, we can deal with some of the challenges together. *To learn more about the Connecting Communities Forums, please see Appendix 1.*

A review of the year

We have continued to meet regularly both online and in person in 2022 and 2023 covering a very wide range of topics.

At our AGM last year, under a theme of 'Preparing for the Future', we received updates on the £1.5m funding awarded to the Active Travel Social Prescribing Pilot and the £1.4m of funding awarded by West of England Combined Authority's Green Recovery Fund for the Somer Valley Rediscovered project. There was also discussion on the Local Plan and Health & Wellbeing Strategy which Forum members have helped shape and inform over the year. The second part of the meeting was themed around 'Building Community Resilience' with a focus on the cost of living crisis and details of where people might go for support, including the Warm Spaces established by local community organisations. The Council's Emergency Planning Team also gave a presentation on community resilience and the importance of having both local and personal emergency plans.

November saw the Forum participate in the Council's budget engagement which focussed on the impact of the cost of living crisis on residents, businesses and the Council's finances.

For the March 2023 meeting, the Forum received an update on Voter ID in advance of the local elections. We also welcomed Don Morris, Chief Executive Officer with Radstock Co-operative Society, who talked through plans to redevelop their store in Radstock. This was followed by a series of updates on other projects taking place in the Somer Valley including the Radstock Town Centre Regeneration Action Plan; Midsomer Norton High Street Heritage Action Zone and Somer Valley Enterprise Zone. The Forum also continued its engagement on the Local Plan. The main agenda item was a presentation from the West of England Combined Authority on its new Westlink demand responsive travel service.

In July 2023, the Forum met in person for the first time since February 2020 at Radstock Methodist Church. We had updates from Radstock Town Council on its community activities and future plans as well as welcoming local charity, Mercy in Action who are helping to tackle food poverty in the area with their Action Pantries. We were also pleased to hear from volunteers working to restore the Somersetshire Coal Canal. There was feedback to the Forum on progress with the Local Plan as well as a presentation from Val Scrase, Regional Director of HCRG Care Group, on the Health & Wellbeing Strategy which launched in June. The main presentation was on the West of England Combined Authority's Somer Valley Links consultation which aims to make using buses an easier and more pleasant experience.

We have been fortunate to have the Police attending a number of our Forum meetings. We appreciate that they are operational so it's not always possible for them to join us however they continue to provide us with valuable information on crime trends in the area and address concerns raised.

A table at Appendix 2 details the Forum meetings that took place during the year; the topics covered and the links to the online meetings on the Council's YouTube Channel.

Looking ahead

Following the local elections in May, a new B&NES Cabinet Member, Cllr David Wood - Deputy Leader (Council Priorities & Delivery) was given responsibility for engagement. Cllr Wood attended the July 2023 Forum meetings asking for your feedback and ways in which we can make the Forums as valuable to participants as possible. We also welcome suggestions for future Agenda items. Please do get in touch with any thoughts you might have (*contact details at Appendix 3*).

Many of the topics discussed by the Forums over the past year fit into a wider agenda for Place based working approaches being developed within the Council and the Integrated Neighbourhood teams of the NHS.

The Council has assigned to senior officers, geographic areas based on the Forum boundaries. The aim is to improve co-ordination, local knowledge and understanding of community priorities. For the Somer Valley, the Place Lead is Simon de Beer – Head of Planning. We look forward to his regular updates at future meetings.

We also look forward to hearing more from the NHS around their Integrated Neighbourhood Teams approach and how we, as communities, can support this.

Communication is a key part of our ongoing engagement. The Forums play a valuable role in ensuring information about consultations, future developments and community priorities are discussed and shared. We can help each other by staying connected and we would encourage all Forum members to sign up to receive the [Council's e-newsletter](#) and the Connecting Communities Team's [Interagency e-bulletin](#). The Council's [Newsroom](#) also contains its latest press releases.

The Council's website has a '[have your say](#)' section, where you can find out about the latest [consultations](#) and other ways to contribute.

The Council has its own [YouTube channel](#), where you can look back at a range of meetings and webinars.

The Community Engagement Team hold regular [Interagency Meetings](#) which help community groups, charities and others to share information and to network. Again, these meetings are open to all and take place online.

There are three [Parish Liaison](#) meetings per year which allow Parish representatives and Council leaders to engage. Details of how Parish Liaison fits with the Connecting Communities Forums can be found [here](#).

The key to the success of all the above are the people, like you, who participate and engage. We should like to thank you all for your valuable contributions to the Forums, your organisations and communities.

Lynda Robertson (Chair) and Cllr Ron Hopkins (Vice Chair)
and the B&NES Community Engagement Team

Background to Connecting Communities Forums

Our [Connecting Communities](#) programme is designed to help public services and local residents to work better together to address the areas of local concern in our communities.

The 'Connecting Communities' approach has been built around five key principles:

- listen
- prioritise
- join-up
- work with you
- share ideas

To achieve this, the Council has worked with partners, Parishes and communities over many years to establish Area Forums to streamline and simplify local engagement. The current Forums are:

- [Bath Area Forum](#)
- [Bathavon Area Forum](#)
- [Chew Valley Area Forum](#)
- [Keynsham Area Forum](#)
- [Somer Valley Forum](#)

The purpose of the Forums is to:

- identify local issues
- work together to address them
- give feedback to the Council and other partners

The Forums are attended by Bath & North East Somerset Ward Councillors, Parishes, local community groups and residents. All Forum meetings are open to anyone to attend at any time.

The agendas for Forum meetings generally include items the Council and its partners want to share or would like feedback on; items the Forum members themselves wish to discuss and opportunities for local organisations to share information and best practice.

The Forums provide grass roots engagement with residents and community organisations, not only for the Council but also its partners such as the Police, health care providers etc. Feedback from the Forums plays a vital role in helping to shape local services. A 'one size fits all' approach does not always work in the diverse communities across our district which include very rural areas alongside a World Heritage City.

It's also important to recognise that the Forums are not defined by their meetings alone. The knowledge gained and shared, the contacts made and networks created all assist in strengthening our communities.

Connecting Communities Forum Meetings 2022-23

Forum	Date/Link to YouTube	Main Theme/Topic	Presentations and Discussions
Bath Area	06 October 2022 (AGM)	Our Local Plan and Health & Wellbeing Strategy - improving our area to make it easier for people to live healthier lives.	Local Plan Health & Wellbeing Strategy Cost of Living Crisis AGM
	21 November 2022	Liveable Neighbourhoods	Liveable Neighbourhoods Overview Behaviour Change Experience of Lansdown Place West; Southlands and Entry Hill
	20 February 2023	Shaping the future of Bath – the challenges and opportunities	Local Plan Health & Wellbeing Strategy Home for Ukraine Housing Update Public Transport (WECA) Housing Challenges Village Agents Health Inequalities Voter ID Cycle Hangars
	18 July 2023 (Minutes)	Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme	Cabinet Priorities Local Plan Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme Youth Connect South West Transport Consultations
Bathavon Area	05 October 2022 (AGM)	Transport in Bathavon	Local Plan Health & Wellbeing Strategy Cost of Living Crisis Community Resilience

			Developing Liveable Neighbourhoods Transport in Bathavon AGM
	08 March 2023	Community Discussion on Rural Transport	Local Plan Health & Wellbeing Strategy Rural Transport (WECA) Voter ID
	05 July 2023 (Minutes) St Andrew's Community Church, Foxhill	Priorities for the Bathavon Area Forum	Cabinet Priorities Local Plan Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy Somersetshire Coal Canal Grow For Life Village Agents
Chew Valley Area	21 September 2022 (AGM)	Preparing for Our Future and Developing Local Resilience.	Local Plan Health & Wellbeing Strategy Developing Liveable Neighbourhoods Cost of Living Crisis Local Emergency Plans (postponed) AGM
	23 February 2023	Rural Transport - WESTlink	Voter ID Community First Responders Chew Valley Reconnected Local Plan Chew Valley Area Forum Climate and Nature Emergency Working Group WESTlink
	12 July 2023 Chew Valley School	No theme	Cabinet Priorities Community First Responders Local Plan Joint Health & Wellbeing Chew Valley Area Climate and Nature Emergency Working Group

			Chew Valley Reconnected Water Resources and Community Resilience Somerset Valley Links and Bristol - Bath Corridor
Keynsham Area	<u>29 September 2022 (AGM)</u>	Preparing for the Future and Building Community Resilience	Local Plan Health & Wellbeing Strategy Liveable Neighbourhoods. Cost of Living Crisis Warm Spaces Local and Personal Emergency Plans AGM
	<u>22 February 2023</u>	WESTlink	Voter ID Keynsham High Street Heritage Action Zone and Local Cultural Programme Ageing Better – Age UK BANES Housing Challenges Local Plan WESTlink
	6 July 2023 Community Space, Keynsham	No theme	Cabinet Priorities Avon Fire and Rescue Somerdale Shed and Community Garden Community@67 Local Plan Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy Somerset Valley Links and Bristol - Bath Corridor
Somerset Valley	<u>28 September 2022 (AGM)</u>	Preparing for the Future and Building Community Resilience	The Active Way Somerset Valley Rediscovered Local Plan Health & Wellbeing Strategy Cost of Living Crisis Warm Spaces Local and Personal Emergency Plans AGM

	<u>7 March 2023</u>	WESTlink	<p>Voter ID</p> <p>Radstock Co-operative Redevelopment</p> <p>Radstock Town Centre Regeneration Action Plan</p> <p>Midsomer Norton High Street Heritage Action Zone</p> <p>Somer Valley Rediscovered</p> <p>The Active Way</p> <p>Local Plan</p> <p>Somer Valley Enterprise Zone</p> <p>WESTlink service</p>
	<p>4 July 2023</p> <p>Trinity Methodist Church, Radstock</p>	No theme	<p>Cabinet Priorities</p> <p>Radstock Town Council</p> <p>Mercy in Action - Action Pantry Radstock</p> <p>Somersetshire Coal Canal</p> <p>Local Plan</p> <p>Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy</p> <p>Somer Valley Links</p>
All Forums	<p><u>2 November 2022</u> and</p> <p><u>3 November 2022</u></p>	Council Budget Engagement	<p>Special on-line briefings to discuss the impact of the cost of living crisis on residents, businesses and the Council's finances.</p>

Key Contacts

Forum	Chair and Vice Chair 2022-23	B&NES Officer Support
Bath Area	Chair: Nicolette Boater Vice Chair: Vacant	<p>Mark Hayward – Community Engagement Officer Tel: (01225) 396975 Email: mark_hayward@bathnes.gov.uk</p> <p>Dave Dixon – Community Engagement Manager Tel: (01225) 396532 Email: dave_dixon@bathnes.gov.uk</p>
Bathavon Area	Chair: Cllr John Adler Vice Chair: Vacant	<p>Mark HayWard – Community Engagement Officer Tel: (01225) 396975 Email: mark_hayward@bathnes.gov.uk</p> <p>Dave Dixon – Community Engagement Manager Tel: (01225) 396532 Email: dave_dixon@bathnes.gov.uk</p>
Chew Valley Area	Chair: Cllr Heather Clewett Vice Chair: Cllr Lynne Easton	<p>Alison Wells – Community Engagement Officer Tel: (01225) 396539 Email: alison_wells@bathnes.gov.uk</p> <p>Sara Dixon – Locality Manager Tel: (01225) 396594 Email: sara_dixon@bathnes.gov.uk</p>
Keynsham Area	Chair: Cllr Alan Hale Vice Chair: Adrian Inker	<p>Alison Wells – Community Engagement Officer Tel: (01225) 396539 Email: alison_wells@bathnes.gov.uk</p> <p>Sara Dixon – Locality Manager Tel: (01225) 396594 Email: sara_dixon@bathnes.gov.uk</p>

Somer Valley	Chair: Lynda Robertson Vice Chair: Cllr Ron Hopkins	Alison Wells – Community Engagement Officer Tel: (01225) 396539 Email: alison_wells@bathnes.gov.uk Sara Dixon – Locality Manager Tel: (01225) 396594 Email: sara_dixon@bathnes.gov.uk
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Cabinet Member	Cllr David Wood, Bath and North East Somerset's Deputy Leader (Council Priorities & Delivery).	Email: david_wood@bathnes.gov.uk
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