

RE: LOCAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

At the meeting of our Parish Council this week the subject of the Local Community Networks was raised and discussed.

With vesting day almost upon us members raised concerns over not having any information as to how the LCN will be structured or the make up of them and how the representatives will be invited to attend.

Our experiences of the pilot scheme in our area have not filled us with any confidence that they will fulfil what we were led to believe them to be as a forum for bringing local problems at both Parish and District levels to the notice of the new Somerset Council. The pilot scheme meetings have been little more than a way of lecturing councillors on a specific subject often by representatives of organisations who stand to gain from the exposure. The notice of the meetings give no indication of the proposed outcomes and therefor give those attending no chance of pre planning.

A concern was also raised that with the number of Parishes and Town Councils included in the LCN area the number of places capable of accommodating all the representatives will be very limited and result in the smaller Parishes always having to travel quite long distances to take part.

With this large number of representatives at any meeting there would not be time for each to speak and what criteria will be used to guarantee that everyone, both large and small, gets an equal hearing and that all the differing problems of individual communities are treat with equal seriousness. Experience suggests that in this kind of situation the larger councils, with more resources at their disposal, become the dominant bodies.

There is a fear that unless urgent thought is given to how the LCN meetings will be convened and structured, and the results communicated to every organisation that it is envisaged will take part in them then they will result in a talking shop for those who like to hear their own voices and ignored by many as a waste of their valuable time given freely to operate Parish Councils.