

Bath and North East Somerset Council

PARISHES LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 25th February, 2015, 6.30 pm

Bath & North East Somerset Councillors: Paul Crossley, Tim Warren (Bath & North East Somerset Council) and Ian Gilchrist (Bath & North East Somerset Council) (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), David Veale (Bath & North East Somerset Council).

Representatives of: Batheaston, Bathford, Camerton, Chew Magna, Clutton, Combe Hay, Compton Dando, Corston, Dunkerton, Englishcombe, Farrington Gurney, Freshford, Hinton Charterhouse, Keynsham, Monkton Combe, Newton St Loe, Paulton, Peasedown St John, Publow with Pensford, Priston, Shoscombe, Stanton Drew, Timsbury, West Harptree, Whitchurch.

Also in attendance: Tony Crouch (President ALCA)

Officers attending: Andrew Pate (Strategic Director, Resources), Lisa Bartlett (Divisional Director, Development, Planning & Transport), Nick Willmore (Programme Manager – Care Act)

26 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Ian Gilchrist, (Vice-Chair of Council) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

27 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Clerk read out the Emergency Evacuation Procedure.

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

B&NES councillors

Apologies had been received from Councillors Neil Butters, Martin Veal, Nathan Hartley, David Bellotti, Brian Simmons, John Bull, Tim Ball, Charles Gerrish, Sally Davis.

Parish Representatives: Charlcombe, Farmborough, Marksbury, Radstock TC,

Officers: Jo Farrar, Louise Fradd, Mark Reynolds, Thys van Tonder.

29 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

30 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting on 22nd October 2014 were proposed for approval by Peter Duppa-Miller, seconded by Tony Crouch and signed by the Chairman.

31 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CARE ACT

Nick Willmore (Programme Manager – Care Act, Adult Social Care) gave a presentation about the implications of the Care Act. Peter Duppa-Miller asked how he saw the role of Parish Councils in disseminating information about the Act. Nick Willmore replied that the focus would be on using parish and town councils in a signposting role to get information to residents who for example, might be housebound. The Care Act website would act as an information hub for the local community with links to parish council and B&NES website which will be available from April.

The Chair thanked Nick Willmore for his presentation. Nick asked that parishes email any queries about the Act to him.

32 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK UPDATE

Place-Making Plans – update

Lisa Bartlett (Divisional Director – Development, Planning and Transport Development) introduced this item. She reported that the department had many opportunities to engage with parish and town councils during the consultation. The initial consultation was being reviewed to see if any further evidence was needed from the councils.

Housing Development Boundaries Review

Lisa Bartlett informed the meeting that there was to be a formal public consultation in the autumn on this issue when there would be more opportunities for town and parish councils to be involved.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The CIL had been approved by B&NES full Council on 17th February 2015. It will simplify the way that local authorities receive payments from developers to help support our communities and is less complicated than the Section 106 agreements. New staff had been appointed to process the levy. Following a question from the Secretary to the Local Councils Association, Lisa Bartlett informed the meeting that any planning decisions on or after 6th April 2015 will be subject to the levy. Developers and applicants have been made aware of this.

A representative from Englishcombe PC thanked the planners for the work that had been done to link the weekly list to the planning application documents.

The Chair thanked Lisa Bartlett.

33 B&NES COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2015/2016

Andrew Pate (Strategic Director, Resources) introduced this item. He reported that the Budget for 2015 -2016 had been set and balanced successfully. There would be no increase in Council Tax and the grant to parish councils for Council Tax support has been maintained.

Councillor Crossley informed the meeting that it was the 5th year in which B&NES had set a 0% rise in Council Tax. This had been achieved in various ways, for example, the old Riverside building had cost £330K per annum to heat, whereas the new Civic Centre would only cost £30K. There had also been an increase in income-generation including the pooling of business rates with Somerset and North Somerset Council – this generates an extra £300K. Andrew Pate explained how sharing the business rates saves money. B&NES were working closely with North Somerset Council to improve ways of working and better outcomes for residents. Councillor Crossley also mentioned several projects in the rural areas including new classrooms for schools, improved leisure facilities, Saltford Station and the Metro West project. In addition, the use of local procurement with small companies had risen to a total of £50K. Awarding these contracts had been achieved through a rigorous process with due diligence and scrutiny.

Councillor Crossley added that there were plans to develop a 'core' city deal to include Bristol, North Somerset and Somerset which would mean that as an enterprise area, the participating councils could keep 100% of the business rates for 20 years to feed back into the local economy. The clerk to Combe Hay PC asked about the possibility of future grants and was informed that the support grant for this year was still in place, despite a 14% drop in government funding for all local authorities. However, the Council faced a substantial challenge in the next 4 years with proposed cuts of £30-40m which would be 15-20% of the total budget. There would be difficult choices for the new administration.

The President of ALCA, Councillor Tony Crouch, commented that the reduction in the grant could mean a 10% reduction in budgets for larger parish or town councils and may mean that they would need to raise their precepts. He asked that reductions were introduced gradually – Andrew Pate agreed to note his point.

34 PERFORMANCE OF THE PLANNING DELEGATION SCHEME

Lisa Bartlett attended to answer questions on this issue. A representative from Chew Magna PC commented that they often get applications which affect the village conservation area but which do not go to the planning committee and are delegated without full explanations being given. Lisa Bartlett said that the Chair of the Development Control Committee has to put a reason on the form, (based on planning policy) as to why it had been delegated – she suggested that the Parish Council contact the case officer to go through the decision. There is an extra duty concerning conservation areas and there is no hard and fast rule about the impact of development; it's based on judgement and experience. The decisions may go to the planning committee if there are unusual or complicated issues. The monthly reports to the Development Control Committee included all the chair's decisions.

Councillor Crossley added that the planning department had worked hard to regain former levels of public confidence and were now rated as one of the top 10% in the country.

A representative from Chew Magna PC asked whether a parish council could disagree with a decision because they believed that the Chairman had misunderstood the implications of that decision. Lisa Bartlett replied that there was no appeal process at present. The department receives about 3000 applications per year, so they have a challenge to perform within the target times. Applicants are also entitled to receive their decision in a reasonable time. The process was mostly working well and was robust.

A representative from Freshford asked why the department did not appoint more officers rather than increase delegation and was informed that delegation had helped with the timescales, together with the rationalisation of the DC committees. It was not just the increased delegation that had improved performance, it was also due to re-organising teams, improved IT and better communications with parishes. Skilled officers had been appointed, especially within the historic buildings team. There had to be a balance struck between speed and quality of performance.

The Local Councils Association undertook to analyse 2014's 57 Chair referrals which had been delegated to officers and report back to the next Parishes Liaison meeting. Councillor Tony Crouch asked that all the reports are put on the planning website to which Lisa Bartlett agreed. She said that all the reports should be on the site once the decision has been made and that the ward member and/or parish/town council would be informed.

The Chair thanked the officer for her contribution.

35 PROGRESS WITH THE PROVISION OF IMPROVED BROADBAND

The Secretary to the B&NES Local Councils Association introduced this item on behalf of the officer who was meeting with government about the expansion of high-

speed broadband in the B&NES area. As this was too large and complex subject to be dealt with at the Parishes Liaison meeting, he suggested that the Council organise a half-day seminar in the summer when more information was available. Andrew Pate agreed that the information should be shared when a fuller picture is available.

A representative of Newton St Loe PC said that he was happy to make his written questions (which had previously been sent out to the officer) available to other councils. He added that the voucher scheme needed clarification, to which Andrew Pate agreed.

The meeting further agreed to propose the seminar suggestion to the current cabinet member, Councillor Ben Stevens.

36 REVIEW OF THE PARISH SWEEPER SCHEME

The meeting noted the briefing note from Martin Hellyer (Technical Team Leader, Strategy and Contracts). The secretary of the Local Councils Association informed the meeting that Martin Hellyer will be contacting all parish and town councils about the review and also asking what would attract those parishes not currently in the scheme to join.

37 THE ENERGY @ HOME SCHEME

The briefing about the Bath & North East Somerset Energy at Home scheme was noted.

38 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 17th June 2015 at 6.30pm in the Keynsham Community Space.

The meeting noted that Councillor David Bellotti was unwell and wished to record their best wishes for his full recovery.

The Secretary of the B&NES Local Councils Association marked the occasion of Ann Swabey's retirement from the Council with the gift of a bottle of wine.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services