



**Note of the meeting of the Chew Valley Area Forum  
held on Monday, 23rd November, 2015  
in Chew Valley Secondary School - Chew Magna**

**Meeting Attendance**

**In attendance:**

David Hurfadine, Hinton Blewett Parish Council  
Ray Jenkins, Whitchurch Parish Council  
Maria Musins, Cameley Parish Council  
John Harvey, Stanton Drew Parish Council  
Heather Clewett, Stoney Sutton Parish Council  
Richard Ireland, West Harptree Parish Council  
Sandy Bell, Chew Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Ian Bell, Chew Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Andy Matthews, Chew Magna Parish Council  
Dylan Morris, Cameley Parish Council  
Lynne Easton, Chew Magna Parish Council  
Chris Lewis, Local Resident  
Chris Brookes, Bishop Sutton Local resident and business owner  
Nick Baker, Chew Stoke Parish Council  
Andrew Jones, East Harptree Parish Council  
Cllr Tim Warren, B&NES Leader and Ward Councillor  
Cllr Vic Pritchard, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor  
Cllr Liz Richardson, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor  
Cllr Martin Veal, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor  
Cllr Charles Gerrish, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor  
Cllr Andrew Furse, B&NES Ward Councillor

**Officers:** Ashley Ayre, Sara Dixon, Alison Wells, Dave Dixon, Mark Hayward, Andrew Pate, Mark Hayward, Lisa Bartlett, Sarah Chadkiewicz

**1. B&NES Budget Fair including Question and Answer session**

*Several comments were made about the presentation not demonstrating any expenditure within the Chew Valley other than those already committed (Bishop Sutton Primary School). The Council has a new challenge to analysis financial information relating to the Forum areas and will consider how best to present this in the future.*

Question 1 – Why does the Council think that acquiring property is more beneficial than selling it?
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Response – Revenue funding pays for all the services and this is under pressure. Using capital funding to acquire property will enable future income streams to be off set against the revenue expenditure. It is important that the Council grows its income by investing in the right things to give a good return. We have increased our revenue already by £1million.

Question 2 – Do you believe the Council is better at managing property than the private sector?

Response – The Council has a good track of managing commercial property and working with the private sector. Our staff are very experienced, many of whom have private sector property backgrounds.

Question 3 – Does this mean the Council will not sell any of its assets in the future?

Response – The Council continues to review its portfolio of assets and will consider whether it needs to reinvest elsewhere to obtain a higher return.

Question 4 – How does the Council protect itself through interest rate rises?

Response – The Council is able to get very competitive rates and any borrowing is based on a fixed rate. A review of the Council's existing loans has been completed and a better rate is now been realised.

Question 5 – A reference was made to £2.25 million investment into super-fast broadband. Will the Chew Valley benefit?

Response – This investment in Bath will create an opportunity for income generation to the Council. BT were committed to improving 90% of the coverage, unfortunately they were unable to deliver on their commitment.

*(Comment from Chris Head – The Forum will be hosting a discussion about Broadband in February. This was identified by the Forum as a priority issue in their Action Plan. Andrew Pate said that the feedback from this meeting would be very helpful.)*

Question 6 – The Council has reduced the Parish Council grants. As this will impact on our budgets, will the Council be freezing or capping the precept rates that parish councils' receive?

Response – Over a number of years' parish council grants were subsidised by the Council. This was due to the implementation of a new system of council tax support which created a shortfall in grants. The subsidies have been reduced on a sliding scale. The Council does not have the power to freeze or cap the rate of council tax

collected. This decision will be made by the Government.
<p>Question 7 – Why is planned expenditure increasing, can we have more details?</p> <p>Response – There are a number of reasons. Adult and social care pressures from an aging and growing population, employers national insurance contribution increases, public sector wage settlement (likely to be 1%), inflation on contracts. More details can be made available if requested.</p>
<p>Question 8 – Will there be a council tax increase?</p> <p>Response – This will depend on the final settlement from the Government. If there is a shortfall then the Council may have to increase the Council tax to reduce the funding gap.</p>
<p>Question 9 - How can you ensure investment / income generated in Bath benefits the wider area?</p> <p>Response – All additional investment / income goes back into the main revenue budget and is distributed across the whole area. There is an assumption that Bath gets a disproportionate amount of the income spent on it however this is not the case. The monies raised in Bath are distributed across the area.</p>

## 2. West of England Joint Spatial Plan including Question and Answer session

<p>Question 1 – How can we bring forward brownfield sites that are owned by developers, rather than development being forced onto greenfield sites?</p> <p>Response – Not in all cases, however some brownfield development is costly due to the contamination issues, poor access etc. For developers it's much easier to develop greenfield sites. The Local Authority is measured on its delivery of housing numbers. The Council works with developers and agents however the Local authority cannot force developers to bring forward their sites.</p>
<p>Question 2 – There is a known brownfield site in Whitchurch that has been vacant for over 28 years. How can we make sure these sites are developed first?</p> <p>Response – Developers are known to 'land-bank'. The Government are looking at introducing a tax on sites that have planning permission.</p>

Question 3 – Why is there no proposed expansion in Bath?

Response – The Inspector felt that there was already enough development in Bath with the MOD site and Western Riverside and took out the site in Weston.

Question 4 – In Chew Stoke a new bus stop has been installed however we have no regular service. How can we improve local services and infrastructure in the future?

Response – It will be possible to use CIL monies to enhance local services and infrastructure in rural communities. It has been important that the JSP considers housing, employment and transport together to ensure a more holistic approach is taken. The Chew Valley Transport Strategy and Total Transport bid will be looking at local solutions.

Question 5 – What extent will other infrastructure such as GP services be considered?

Response – The Council and the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) have been working more closely together to ensure future infrastructure is better planned.

Question 6 – The Council has a duty to co-operate with other local authorities in the West of England, does this include Wiltshire and Mendip and do they also have requirements to co-operate with B&NES?

Response – Yes. The housing allocation goes beyond the Core Strategy allocation. All local authorities will have to co-operate with each other. The Council is having active discussions with Mendip.

Question 7 – Will an individual's response be just as valid as a Parish Council?

Response – Yes, they hold equal weight.