

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BOAT DWELLERS & RIVER TRAVELLERS TASK AND FINISH GROUP WORK**

### **Introduction**

At the last Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (HMP) on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012 the Panel received an update on Boat and Mobile Home Dwellers from the Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, which included a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and the Canals and River Trust. The Panel were asked to consider if they wished to undertake any policy review work on this matter and if they would support the MOU. It was agreed at this meeting that there were a number of issues that still needed further investigation and that the Panel should undertake some Task and Finish Group work to explore some of these issues further and report back to the Panel in May 2013.

### **Background**

This issues surrounding Boat dwellers & River Travellers impact directly on the wards through which the river Avon and canals flow; however the river is accessed by all sections of society and as they require schooling, medical care and utilities, their needs impact on other B&NES residents.

Recent reports suggest that there has been an increase over recent years in the numbers of people opting to become boat dwellers due to the lack of affordable housing available in certain areas and this has placed pressure on the River and canal side due to the lack of available mooring space within the district. A recent BBC news item focused on the problems of a family moored at Limpley Stoke and the rising costs of canal moorings.

### **Task and Finish Group – role and methodology**

A Task and Finish Group may be established by the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel for the purpose of conducting an in depth review of any Council service, policy or issue that affects the lives of B&NES residents. Matters requiring review by a task and finish group generally arise from issues which have been identified by one of the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels.

Once the evidence has been considered through

- Research of currently available information and data
- Conversations/interviews with relevant officers/organisations

The Task and Finish Group produces a report containing details of the evidence gathered, their conclusions and subsequent recommendations.

The report is then submitted to the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel who in turn may refer the report to the Cabinet or any partner agencies affected, asking them to consider the recommendations arising from the investigation and how things could be improved.

## Objective

The Task and Finish Group will investigate the common needs and requirements of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers along the River Avon (Widcombe to Bradford on Avon TBC) and provide the HMP Panel with enough information to make recommendations to Cabinet for both practical measures such as the development of a Memorandum between the Council and Boat dwellers, and for future policy development.

The work will also set out to support the work carried out by the River Corridor Group and their vision for the future River Avon and also link to the Current Core Strategy<sup>1</sup>, specifically the requirement to deliver more dwellings, which have so far been increased through large housing developments and not yet that of river dwelling people.

It is also important that work on the river is integrated with B&NES other policies, such as tourism, education, health and 'housing'. For example, in Birmingham and Oxford the canal and river system contribute substantially to housing students, and reducing HMO problems.

## Scope

To achieve the above objective the Task and Finish group will investigate the following areas:-

1. Establish the number of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers in the area (area covered TBC)
2. Investigate what the Council are doing to assist/support Boat Dwellers & River travellers
3. Investigate what other agencies are doing to assist/ support Boat Dwellers and River Travellers
4. Establish the key issues faced by Boat Dwellers and River Travellers
5. To make practical solutions for recommendations to any problems identified within the report by examining the following areas further:-
  - a. Investigate ways of improving access to services (i.e. Healthcare, dentistry, employment, education, democratic services)
  - b. Investigate the different mooring solutions available ( link to the development of a mooring strategy)
  - c. How would the MOU benefit the local Boating community?

## Excluded from Task and Finish Group work

TBC

## Outputs

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<sup>1</sup> In the 2011 Core Strategy Draft as presented to the Planning Inspector, Policy CP10 Housing Mix para 6.80 page 124 applies though river homes are not specifically mentioned and it could also be argued that policy CP7 Green Infrastructure applies par 6.58 on p 119. The findings of the Group should be useful in the further development of policy in the Local Development Framework and Placemaking stages.

To produce a report for the relevant Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel (Housing and Major Projects) with recommendations which will be made available to the relevant Council Cabinet Member and/or other organisations to consider and make a response.

**Constraints**

- **Timescales.** Task and Finish Groups plan for 2-3 months, and aim to provide a concise and brief update of findings to the HMP Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel in May 2013
- **Budget.** The work must be managed within the budget available to the Panel, in consultation with the Panel Chair and Vice Chair
- **Process.** The investigation will be carried out in accordance with the Bath & North East Somerset Council Policy Development and Scrutiny processes.
- **Resource.** Project management resource available from the Policy Development & Scrutiny Team is limited therefore support for undertaking research/ collection will need to be nominated from within the steering group members or through Service area Officer support to the Task and Finish Group.

**Task and Finish working group Team (TBC )**

Lead Task and Finish Group Councillor:	Cllr Eleanor Jackson
Task and Finish Group Members:	
Policy Development and Scrutiny Project Officer	

**Expert advisors**

Planning & Communities	Ann Robins
Corporate Policy's Manager	Samantha Jones
River Champion	Cllr Dave Laming
Board of Directors at B&NES River Corridor Group/ Director Built4Life	James Hurley