



**Connecting Communities -
Bathavon Area Forum – Report of the Facilitated Workshop
Thursday 23rd July 2015**

Executive Summary followed by detailed notes

Attendees

- Cllr Martin Veal, Cabinet Member for Community Services Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Cllr Lyn Alvis, Monkton Combe Parish Council
- Cllr David Veale, Bathavon
- Cllr Robert Law, Englishcombe Parish Council
- Amy Matthews, B&NES Childrens Centres
- Heidi Limbert, B&NES Childrens Centres
- Jo Spinney, Sirona Care and Health
- Cllr Rob Mimmack, Batheaston Parish Council
- Cllr Jan Helps, Bathampton Parish Council
- Cllr Moira Brennan, Bathampton Parish Council
- Cllr Stuart Andrews, Bathampton Parish Council
- Cllr Alison Millar, Bathavon South
- Inspector Sarah Treweek, Avon and Somerset Police
- Sgt Geoff Cannon, Avon and Somerset Police
- Cllr Maureen Millband, Bathford Parish Council
- Andrew Pate, B&NES Strategic Director for Resources
- David Trethewey, B&NES Divisional Director for Strategy & Performance
- Sara Dixon, B&NES Stronger Communities Team
- Alison Wells, B&NES Stronger Communities Team
- Dave Dixon, B&NES Stronger Communities Team
- Mark Hayward, B&NES Strategy & Performance
- Independent facilitators, Rowena Harris and Diana Godwin

1. Introductions and welcome

- Welcome from Cllr Martin Veal, Cabinet Member for Community Services Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Setting the scene - background & context
- Video about Connecting Communities – the importance of local engagement.
- It was asked how a Bathavon Forum might overlap with the Valley Parish Alliance which includes parishes from Wiltshire. Agreed it was important not to duplicate efforts so minutes from all meetings of both bodies should be available online to members. B & NES officers will contact Wiltshire CC to see how they want to collaborate.
- Somer Valley Forum was named as being a good example of successful partnership working across boundaries.

2. Introduction to the Facilitated Workshop – Rowena Harris

Purpose – the Forums have been designed to provide a stronger voice for the community and help improve engagement with the public sector partners. The workshop aimed to help the Forums consider different ways of working together on specific ideas, gain a better understanding of what partners can offer and review the influence and effectiveness of the Forums for the future.

a. What's already happening? The Forums could provide ways of exchanging information: people were asked to bring posters or a pre-written postcard/notes to tell other people in the area about things planned or underway to improve things in their community.

b. What issues concern you NOW and what ideas do you have to make a change? People were encouraged to write on post it notes under the following headings:

1. Health & Wellbeing
2. Transport
3. New housing and infrastructure developments
4. Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change
5. Skills and Jobs
6. Stronger and Safer Communities
7. Education
8. Young people
9. Older People

These post it notes were typed up and are included in the next section of this report. Transport is clearly the priority issue for Bathavon as well as a need for better information sharing and community engagement.

c. Action Planning : the attendees were asked to propose what they wanted to discuss further in small groups. Three themes were suggested and a lead was nominated for each to ensure action is taken forward:

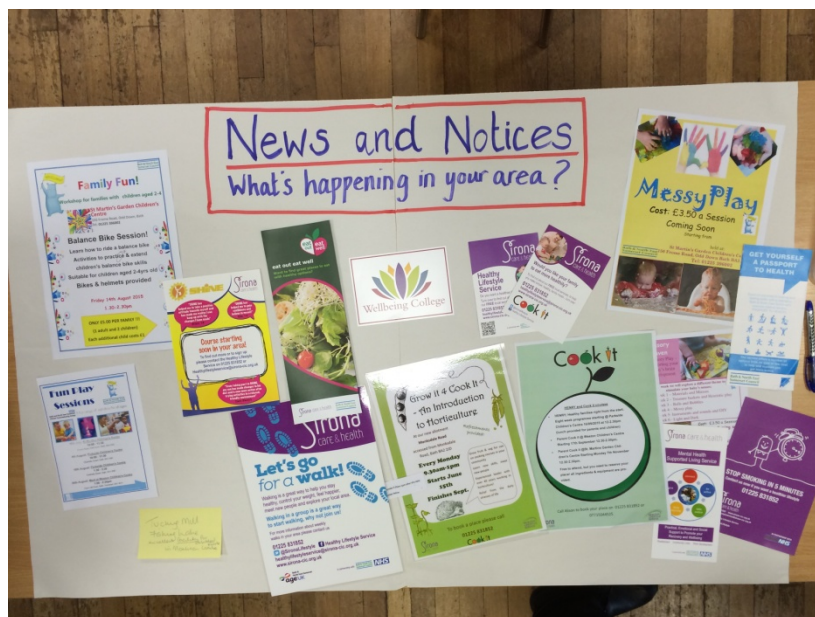
- **Influencing Transport Decisions** - leads: Dave Dixon, Andrew Pate, David Trethewey (B & NES)
- **Getting more input from our communities: how to improve communication between Parish Councils and parishioners** - lead: Robert Law
- **Better communication with B & NES, training and development for new Parish Councillors & Clerks** - lead: David Trethewey & Andy Thomas - Strategy and Development B & NES Council

Detailed notes and actions agreed in each discussion are included in the next section of this report. The 'Lead' will report back on progress at the next Forum meeting.

3. Closing words

- Attendees were urged to ensure a meaningful agenda for the Forum by becoming active members (not waiting for B & NES to lead), also to invite others to attend the next meeting
- B & NES will support the formation of the Forum by organising the next meeting at the end of September and developing a communications plan to ensure key agencies are invited
- Dave Dixon (B & NES) will be in touch about the next meeting, at which a chair & vice chair will be elected

What's already happening in Bathavon?



What issues concern you most at the moment and what ideas do you have to make a change?

Post - it notes as follows

- **Health & Wellbeing**
 - *suggest improved integration in delivery of health promotion activities (currently within Healthy Lifestyles) & other agencies*
 - *encourage more referrals to healthy lifestyle services to reduce ill health and improve well being*
 - *take opportunities to encourage use of cycling and of river for canoeing*
 - *we are lucky to have a village surgery and NHS dentist*
 - *excellent health care system in Bathford via Coalpit Road Surgery*

- *encourage others to meet together*
- *there's a new Wellbeing College run by CURO and Sirona to reduce mental health admissions*



- **Transport**
 - *can we have contact points in B & NES e.g. I want to discuss a highways issue*
 - *need more affordable public transport and a more regular reliable service*
 - *encourage use of public transport*
 - *subsidise taxi fares for elderly & unemployed to keep appointments*
 - *bus fares in B & NES are inconsistent e.g. it costs more for a family to travel from Peasedown to MSN than from Peasedown to Bath*
 - *action on bus fares - too high for families*
 - *affordable public transport would significantly reduce car use in & out of Bath, cheaper than park & ride*
 - *worried that valley will be sacrificed to help Bath traffic problems without proper consideration of evidence*
 - *speed limits along Warminster Road A36. No repeater signs are lighting therefore most lorries & cars speed*
 - *problems on the London Road - lorries, bikes, danger zone area*

- A36 open after 2nd slippage closure in 10 years so do not consider A36/A46 link - alternative A350
- Batheaston: major problem of heavy goods vehicles accessing Colerne airfield warehouses in Wiltshire - Wiltshire CC not sympathetic historically
- Batheaston: traffic having to use London Rd into Bath enroute from North & east towards Southampton area
- **New housing and infrastructure developments**
 - concerns over student housing in Bath. Residents affected maybe feeling left out & going to other areas like Trowbridge
 - no mechanism for low cost housing to be allocated to local people with connection to the Parish. People have to learn about community and support mechanisms
 - more affordable housing, control student housing
 - developments including affordable houses eleven planning permission s----- not return to DCC to reduce no (sorry hard to read this writing!)
 - infill housing rather than 'developer' led wholesale coverage of land - infrastructure must include good road links, housing should be varied in design
 - Foxhill development: 700 houses? Combe Down traffic
- **Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change**
 - Bath City Farm & Sirona run growing & horticulture course & there are volunteer opportunities
 - Forest school available: outdoor/growing education
 - Bath Area Growers - education about growing food
 - we should encourage sustainable energy - but it should be from commercial companies (apologies could not read rest of message)
- **Skills and Jobs**
 - we are a dormitory village: no real jobs, hard to keep shop open, do we just accept this?
 - jobs and apprenticeships for adults - change of career or for those who have been unemployed
 - children's centres can offer volunteer opportunities for individuals looking to enhance skills BUT a coordinated approach with other agencies to support this is needed
 - 2 universities, low paid jobs (could not read rest of writing)
 - use people who have practised skills of all types to pass on to others - skills audit
- **Stronger and Safer Communities**
 - improved information sharing between agencies is needed to support understanding of work being done, greater efficiency & savings
 - sharing of information/issues between partner agencies and public
 - need much better information on works planned by B & NES Highways so that we can influence & communicate to the community
 - our community is ageing but young families are coming in - how do we connect the two - befriending? Adopt a Granny?
 - actively look out for your neighbours - get to know them, even if you are chalk & cheese!

- *Bathford PC last year held a speed watch programme - although did not catch any one speeding it was worthwhile as cars slowed down when they saw a speed gun*
- *2 tunnels open - lots of cyclists in country lanes - crash hats, parents ahead, behind, on the right please*
- **Education**
 - *Children's Centre interested in offering placements to Secondary School children for work experience e.g. admin, child care*
 - *not all children should attend school on the other side of the city - TRAFFIC*
 - *boat population are full time residents especially if they have children in school. Do they count when we decide on resources e.g. schools, doctors etc*
 - *Batheaston: village school unable to admit some local children while others are driven into village from Wiltshire - more traffic!!*
 - *Bathampton: village school can't accommodate all local children*
- **Young people**
 - *village facilities for young people so they can meet. Villages seldom have a cafe/bar for them*
 - *Batheaston PC stepped in to increase support for youth club when B&NES withdrew support in 2011 but major commitment from precept. Over 1000 young people use the facility twice a week*
 - *concern that some young people heading down the wrong road and could do with early intervention*
 - *Bathford have club for young people held in church, also hoping to make use of the school*
- **Older People**
 - *health visitor service has a new preventative role for elderly*
 - *Bathavon North - lots of elderly people could do with support - could provide a 'village agent' to support and signpost to services*
 - *we have venues which could be used for gatherings: tea & cakes, bingo etc*
- **Other**
 - *Bathford shop is hoping to have a cycle rack outside*
 - *Valley Parish Alliance (VPA) works well because we have a shared interest in protecting the valley*
 - *if easier to access river moorings will benefit all*
 - *there is a training programme for new Parish Councillors which I enjoyed 2 years ago*
 - *how about inductions for Parish Councillors (not ALCA/ how to be a PC) ie how B & NES works, these are the people you can contact etc*
 - *can we have newsletters for Parish Councils so we know what is coming up*
 - *is there a central register of organisations & companies who offer volunteers for community activities?*

The issues raised on the post it notes could be reviewed at a future meeting of the Forum.

Action Planning - notes from small group discussions

1. Future Format of meeting and getting more input from our communities: how to improve communication between Parish Councils and parishioners

What benefit will this idea bring to the community?

- *more informed Forum, more sense of representation*
- *hopefully more interest in these matters among residents*

What needs to happen first and by when?

- *new chair of Bathavon Forum should take responsibility for acknowledging importance of bringing in the views of the wider community and encourage the sharing of good practice among members*

Who will lead? (contact details please)

Dave Dixon (B & NES) will ensure this goes onto agenda for Forum meetings.

Robert Law decided to go to his next PC meeting and ask for a discussion on this issue

Who else needs to be involved (or wants to be involved)?

All Forum members

What help we would like? ongoing support from Bath & North East Somerset Council

Further comments:

- *problem of division in villages - always the 'usual suspects' turn out for meetings*
- *Batheaston PC changed from 'public may attend and may speak' towards actively inviting local groups and encouraging more discussion*
- *go to where people already meet - don't expect them to come to you until they know it's worth it*
- *knock on doors - have face to face conversations about issues*
- *get a list of contacts of all group leaders in the Parish*
- *use social media*
- *map it out: work out who needs to have a greater voice on a particular issue and how best to involve them (different strokes for different folks)*
- *give people a chance to submit questions before the meeting as many fear speaking out in public*
- *provide cards to fill in a personal view so it can be taken into account even if they can't attend the meeting*
- *B & NES is looking at developing an online Connecting Communities Forum- could be useful but face to face communication is less open to misunderstandings*
- *in larger Parishes PC'S have asked Councillors to take on representing a specific area (usually not where they live)*
- *at the other Connecting Community Forums there is an open session at the beginning of each meeting when anyone can ask a question in advance. There are templates that all Forums can use*

2. Better communication between B & NES and Parishes and better induction for new councillors

What benefit will this idea bring to the community?

- *improved connection between B & NES & PC's*
- *greater awareness of issues*
- *knowledge and information sharing*
- *best practice*

What needs to happen first and by when?

- *more information to PC's from B & NES show-casing good projects, clarifying lines of communication*
- *set up buddying with other similar PC's*
- *all to get going asap*

Who will lead? *B & NES Strategy & Performance - Andy Thomas, David Trethewey*

Who else needs to be involved?

Parish Councils including clerks, ALCA (Avon Local Councillors Association)

What help we would like? *Contacts, newsletters, closer contact with B & NES* *Enable training opportunities (linked to existing opportunities where possible)*

3. Influencing Transport Decisions

What benefit will this idea bring to the community?

- *less congestion, better environment*
- *wider consultation on issues that affect everyone who lives and works in the area*

What needs to happen first and by when?

- *need a spokesperson from the Valley Parish Alliance to be on the Bathavon Forum*
- *ensure transport on the Bathavon Forum agenda*
- *need one point of contact within B & NES on transport issues*
- *Moira to send VPA minutes to Dave Dixon*

Who will lead? *Dave Dixon, also Andrew Pate & David Trethewey (B & NES) ensure these issues go on agenda for next Forum meeting, clarify contact routes and liaise with VPA*

Who else needs to be involved?

Highways Authority, Wiltshire CC, Jane Scott Chief executive of Wiltshire CC, West of England Partnership

Further comments & ideas:

- *Transport includes different users: cars, boats, cycles as well as public transport*
- *need further discussion about transport with the right people at a strategic level*
- *Agencies need to work more effectively together to address transport issues*
- *there are other specific issues in Bathavon which are not covered by VP*
- *should be a B& NES rep on the VPA*
- *address high bus fares - increase bus use, reduce traffic*

Feedback on the Workshop (10 forms were completed, all comments typed up)

1. On which sections would you have liked to have spent more or less time this evening?

More time on...

- *post it comments*
- *group discussion*
- *telling us something that demonstrates the value of the Forum*

Less time on...

- *a slow start but took a while to clarify purpose*
- *introductory section*
- *turning everything around to the answer is to have a Forum*

What was about right?

- *small group discussion*
- *all of it*

- *very well balanced*
- *each small group given equal time to feedback*
- *feedback session*

3. Please give one example of something you will do as a result of tonight's discussions, no matter how small.

- *discuss some ideas with my Parish Council*
- *canvass people in my Parish*
- *talk to my PC*
- *feedback to staff*
- *discuss with other PC's*
- *consult with local community to ask what their broader issues are to ensure feedback for next Forum meeting*
- *feedback to my team within my organisation*
- *go back to PC & discuss how we can get feedback and views from all sectors of our community*
- *report back to my PC and encourage continued involvement with Bathavon Forum*
- *look at ALCA website to see what support is available*

4. Any thoughts about the frequency, format and venue for future Community Forum meetings?

- *every 2 months*
- *every 2 months*
- *not too often - no more than 3 month*
- *every 3 months*
- *every 3 months - introductory talk followed by discussion*
- *I would have liked to see representatives from other public sector/voluntary organisations - heavily weighted to parish councillors -*
- *quarterly*
- *twice a year - rotate around Bathavon area*
- *questions for consultation could be agreed at the end of each meeting. Using survey monkey or equivalent to ensure input from other agencies*

5. Any other comments?

- *good idea to get agencies together in an informal way*
- *what of other agencies - Youth, Voluntary sector, housing?*
- *important to pool our resources*
- *would be nice to have representatives from all services e.g. education, housing etc*
- *enjoyed feedback from each group - not too repetitive*
- *very well chaired*