

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	13th July 2011	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2279
TITLE:	Future development of Bath City Liaison Forum	
WARD:	All Wards in the City of Bath	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
None		

1 THE ISSUE

This report sets out proposals to further develop partnership working between the Council and organisations representing local residents and other groups and organisations within the City of Bath. It builds on and develops the work of the Bath City Liaison Forum and makes recommendations relating to future ways of working, in the context of the "Big Society".

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees that:

- 2.1 The approach to the future development of the Bath City Liaison Forum set out in this report be adopted
- 2.2 An Interim Steering Group be established with the membership as set out in paragraph 5.5
- 2.3 The Interim Steering Group be requested to prepare detailed Terms of Reference, membership and working arrangements to be agreed by the Leader of Council and presented for approval to the first meeting of the revised Forum

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications although Council resources will be required to be allocated for support to the Forum, its Task and Finish Groups and any online services that the Forum uses to conduct its business.

4 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- *Building communities where people feel safe and secure*
- *Promoting the independence of older people*
- *Improving life chances of disadvantaged teenagers and young people*
- *Improving school buildings*
- *Sustainable growth*
- *Improving the availability of Affordable Housing*
- *Addressing the causes and effects of Climate Change*
- *Improving transport and the public realm*

5 THE REPORT

5.1 The Bath City Liaison Forum was established in 2008 as a way of improving information flow and liaison between groups representing residents in Bath and the Council and other partners. It has provided a useful conduit to raise issues of local concerns and to keep residents' groups informed of Council activities. Reports presented have included on the Local Development Framework and City Centre issues.

5.2 In addition, the Forum established a successful Task and Finish group on street cleansing which directly led to improved outcomes in this area of work.

5.3 At its meeting of January 2011, the Forum considered how it could make improvements to its working arrangements. In particular, the need was identified to develop and deepen collaboration between public services and local residents and to utilise the goodwill of local citizens in improving the City and its neighbourhoods.

5.4 Following this, the Council has undertaken an initial engagement with residents' groups to consider new ways of working which meet these objectives. Emerging from this process are the following proposals for a more flexible style of partnership working which aims to strengthen engagement, promote active citizenship and better reflect the diversity of Bath's communities.

- An Annual or twice-yearly **Forum meeting**, engaging a much wider range of local organisations in the City of Bath than were represented on the previous Bath City Liaison Forum. The aim would be to seek to reflect the diversity of Bath and its communities. The membership could therefore potentially also encompass local businesses and other organisations contributing to the life of local communities as well as organisations such as our Student Unions and of course relevant public service partners. This Forum would set priorities for the coming session following open discussion, and agree the goals of Task and Finish groups, as described below. The Forum would also provide an opportunity for councillors representing Bath wards to identify key issues and exercise their influence on shaping the debate. Further work is being undertaken by the Interim Steering Group on the detailed membership, Terms and Reference and ways of working for this Forum

- **Task and Finish Groups** – comprising representatives of groups with an interest in the subject under discussion, potentially including representatives of: local residents' and locally-based businesses; elected members; and representatives of relevant public service providers. This would build on the success of the street cleansing group highlighted above.
- An **online presence** which would enable quick and easy communication, reduce the need for meetings and encourage practical discussions on key issues. This could potentially be accessed by a wide group of local citizens who wish to take part in this new approach to collaboration and to suggest and develop practical solutions. However, it is also recognised that take-up of online services is uneven across different areas and communities. The aim would therefore be to complement our “face-to-face” work with local residents and businesses, not replace it.
- A “light touch” **steering group** which will support and manage the process and ensure it is delivering its objectives.

5.5 Subject to agreement of Cabinet, it is suggested that the current group developing this approach (comprising the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations, the London Road and Snowhill Partnership and *Changes in Whiteway*) continue to meet as an Interim Steering Group to finalise detailed working arrangements, working closely with the Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods. These detailed Terms of Reference would be subject to formal agreement by the Leader of Council and be presented for adoption to the first meeting of the Forum

5.6 It is considered that this approach to building the capacity of a wider “network” can make a real contribution to the Council's commitments to localism and to the “Big Society”. For example, the first Task and Finish group under the umbrella of this Forum is expected to relate to winter weather precautions, where close co-operation between the Council, active citizens and local businesses is central. The intention is for the recommendations of this group to be reported to the first meeting of the wider Forum which will, subject to finalising Terms of Reference, take place later this year.

5.7 It is currently envisaged that the Council will help support the Forum, online presence, steering group and task groups. The Council will also help to publicise the opportunities for engagement provided by the Forum both through its work in specific communities and more widely.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out on the establishment of the Bath City Liaison Forum. An initial revised assessment of the approach set out in this report indicates that there will be a positive equalities impact. The creation of a wider forum and more task and finish groups will allow for groups and individuals reflecting the protected characteristics better to engage in the process than at present. The introduction and use of an on-line system may have a

differential impact across the protected characteristics but this will be mitigated by ensuring other communications methods are used and that tailored support is given. These working arrangements will be incorporated into the plans and documentation of the Forum.

8 RATIONALE

8.1 The development of the Forum set out in this report arise from discussions with the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations and other residents' groups designed to improve the operation of the Forum.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 Consultation with residents' groups considered whether the Forum needed to continue. It was concluded that there was a role for an improved arrangement.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 *Cabinet members; Other B&NES Services; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer*

10.2 Consultation with residents' groups was carried out through a series of discussions and a draft of this report was circulated to seek views. The feedback received will also be used as the Interim Steering Group develops the detailed arrangements for the Forum.

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 *Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Corporate;*

12 ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	<i>Bath City Liaison Forum – existing Terms of Reference</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	