

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Cabinet	
MEETING	11 th April 2018	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3054
TITLE:	Parish Charter Review	
WARD:	All parished wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Final draft revised Parish Charter 2018</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Consultation Feedback and Responses http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/parish_charter_consultation_feedback_and_responses.pdf</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Process for Developing the Charter http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/process_for_developing_the_charter_1.pdf</p>		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 A revised Parish Charter has been prepared following engagement with our parish councils. It is presented to Cabinet for adoption prior to an invitation for Full Council to endorse at its AGM in May 2018, and to the B&NES branch of ALCA to endorse at its AGM in September 2018.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

- 2.1 Adopt the revised Parish Charter attached as Appendix 1 to the report, with the exception of the revised Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison which are for Council to determine.

- 2.2 Recommend that the Council's AGM in May endorse the Parish Charter and that it reviews and adopts the revised Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison set out in Appendix 1 of the Charter document.
- 2.3 Agree that the implementation of the Charter be reviewed and evaluated in the first year of its operation in order to make any further refinements required as part of the Council's Changing Together programme.
- 2.4 Acknowledge and thank the members of the Working Group for their contributions and the parish councils who responded to the consultation.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The staffing and other resource requirements for undertaking this review are being managed from within existing budgets. As part of the Council's Changing Together programme there are plans to reduce staffing levels. The implications of these reductions for service delivery particularly as they impact on parishes will need to be closely monitored.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Building effective relationships between Bath & North East Somerset Council and our parishes is vital for tackling a range of issues and challenges in our local communities. The Council has a number of powers including the general power of competence which supports its approach to working in partnership with parishes.
- 4.2 Parishes are statutory consultees (eg for planning applications) and are widely consulted by Bath & North East Somerset Council on other matters. They provide a representative voice to give communities more control over and say in how local services are delivered.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Since the Parish Charter was adopted over a decade ago, the context has changed significantly as a result of financial pressures but also due to new opportunities such as advances in digital technology and enhanced partnership arrangements. As a result, the Parish Charter has been revised and a new, draft Charter is now ready and recommended for adoption.
- 5.2 A Working Group of parish representatives has overseen the process of revising the Charter and the associated consultation. They have met regularly since November 2016 and invited Cabinet members and senior officers to their meetings to discuss views and experiences. There is further information about the Working Group and process in Appendix 3.
- 5.3 The adoption of the attached revised Parish Charter represents a significant milestone in the evolving relationship between Bath & North East Somerset Council and local parish councils. The Charter contains a series of core

principles and commitments on both sides. Appendices set out additional useful information such as updated terms of reference for Parish Liaison and Parish Council functions and responsibilities. Alongside the Charter is a 'Toolkit' designed to be a working document offering practical information on structures, protocols and standards. The intention is that the Toolkit can be readily updated and changed and made available to other organisations including in non-parished areas.

- 5.4 A key opportunity – as well as a concern – raised through the Parish Charter review process has been how to support the further devolution of services, which could offer opportunities to those parishes wishing to have local control and provide more services in their communities. The revised Charter therefore contains a series of principles for devolution as this area of joint working is further developed in future.
- 5.5 The process of reviewing the Charter has also acted as a catalyst for discussions about new ways of working. The Charter, for example, identifies opportunities to work together on digital solutions such as 'FixMyStreet'. The Parish Charter Review Working Group will therefore remain in place to monitor and review the Charter and its implementation.
- 5.6 The Parish Charter has been subject to extensive consultation, with 43 parishes out of 51 responding. The detailed feedback was presented to the Working Group for consideration. The feedback and Working Group responses are set out in Appendix 2.
- 5.7 The draft revised Charter was considered by the Communities, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on 12th March 2018. In discussing the revised draft, members observed the importance of training and development to ensure Council staff have a good understanding of the Charter and the opportunities for partnership working with parish councils. Central to this work is ensuring that staff are supported in implementing the Charter. While the Council already includes reference to parishes in its induction training, work is also underway to ensure that the importance and role of parishes is embedded into the Changing Together programme and associated organisational development work.
- 5.8 PDS Panel Members also highlighted the importance of cross-boundary co-operation on issues affecting parishes with neighbouring authorities including Wiltshire and Somerset. This point has been further strengthened in the draft Charter presented to Cabinet.
- 5.9 The proposed timeline for the adoption of the Parish Charter is as follows

10 th May	B&NES Full Council (AGM)
19 th September	Final consideration of Charter at ALCA AGM

6 RATIONALE

- 6.1 The Parish Charter supports the Council's Corporate Strategy and provides a framework for future relationships and co-operation with parishes.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Parish Charter Review Working Group led the consultation on the redrafting of the Charter with all parishes given the opportunity to participate (see Appendix 2 for consultation results). In addition, the Working Group invited relevant Cabinet members and senior officers to their meetings to discuss views and experiences prior to shaping the revision.
- 8.2 We have already started to have discussions with key service areas on implementing the revised draft Charter and will produce a communications plan to deliver this.
- 8.3 In addition, consultation has taken place with the S151 Officer on this report and the Monitoring Officer has been involved in the preparation of the draft Charter.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	<i>Reports to Communities, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel:</i> <i>12th March 2018</i> https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=554&MId=5036 <i>22nd May 2017</i> https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=554&MId=4544
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