

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING:	Council	
MEETING DATE:	10 th May 2018	
TITLE:	Revised Parish Charter 2018	
WARD:	All parished wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1 – Revised Parish Charter 2018 (including draft Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison)		
Appendix 2 – Consultation Feedback and Responses		
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/parish_charter_consultation_feedback_and_responses.pdf		
Appendix 3 – Process for Developing the Charter		
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/process_for_developing_the_charter_2.pdf		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 Over the last eighteen months, the existing Parish Charter has been updated and revised in consultation with our parishes. The revised Charter was adopted by Cabinet in April 2018. Cabinet also agreed for a review in the first year in order to make any further refinements required as part of the Council's Changing Together programme. The Charter is now presented to Council, for its endorsement, and for its adoption of the Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison. The Charter will be presented to the Bath and North East Somerset branch of the Avon Local Councils' Association (ALCA) at its AGM in September 2018.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to;

- 2.1 Endorse the revised Parish Charter attached as Appendix 1 to the report

- 2.2 Adopt the Terms of Reference for the Parish Liaison meeting contained within the Parish Charter at its Appendix 1.

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 as part of recommended review.

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.
- 4.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken which highlighted the positive impact enhanced local services could have for a range of users. A recommendation arising is to update the 2016 survey with parishes to gain better understanding of the services they currently offer and any support or training needs they might have.

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 Charter has now been adopted by Cabinet.
- 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 parishes. 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 will be 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 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 feedback and Working Group responses are set out in Appendix 2.
- 5.7 In March 2018, the draft revised Charter was considered by the Communities, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel. In discussing the revised draft, Panel Members highlighted the importance of cross-boundary co-operation on issues affecting parishes with neighbouring authorities including Wiltshire and Somerset. This point has been strengthened in the revised Charter.
- 5.8 Panel Members also 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 parishes. In April, Cabinet agreed to ensure that all staff and councillors will be supported in implementing the Charter. While the Council already includes reference to parishes in its induction training, it will ensure that the importance and role of parishes is embedded into the Changing Together programme through staff and councillor awareness and specialist training for key service areas.
- 5.9 The Parish Liaison Meeting is a joint consultative body set up to consider issues of common interest between the parishes and Bath & North East Somerset Council. It meets three times a year with meetings usually chaired by the Chair of the Council. As part of this review, the Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison (Appendix 1 of the Charter) have also been updated and are presented to Council for adoption.
- 5.10 Following Council’s endorsement, the revised Charter will be presented to ALCA at their AGM in September.

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 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared and is detailed in the background papers.
- 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	<p><i>12th March 2018 and 22nd May 2017 - Reports to Communities, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel:</i></p> <p>https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=554&MId=5036</p> <p>https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=554&MId=4544</p> <p><i>11th April 2018 – Adoption at Cabinet</i></p> <p>https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MId=4656</p> <p><i>Equalities Impact Assessment</i></p> <p>http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/final_eia_for_parish_charter_1.pdf</p>
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