

## **BATH CITY LIAISON FORUM**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held**

Tuesday, 25th January, 2011, 6.30 pm

#### **1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Sarah Bevan, Chairman of the Council, who welcomed those attending.

#### **2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Committee Administrator drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out on the Agenda.

#### **3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 5TH OCTOBER 2009**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **4 COUNCIL BUDGET 2011/12**

The Divisional Director for Finance (Tim Richens) gave a presentation on the Council's forthcoming budget for 2011/12. He outlined the national situation with regard to the public sector deficit and its implications for the provisional local government settlement. He then went on to detail the local budget impacts and issues and informed the meeting that the Council was planning to save £30m over the next four years. This amount could not be met by efficiencies alone and would mean that there would have to be cuts in lower priority service areas. However, he assured the meeting that the Council Tax rate for 2011/12 would not increase.

Henry Brown (Chairman of FoBRA) thanked Tim Richens for a clear presentation and enquired whether the overall 16% funding reduction for next year had been confirmed. The Divisional Director replied that if some of the government grants did not come through, the percentage could be higher.

Henry Brown further commented that, with regard to making savings, the Association could see possible opportunities for partnership working with residents e.g. in March 2010, following the hard winter, the Association offered to organise residents to clear snow and ice from the pavements. No response had been received from the Council at the time. They were hoping that this offer from residents would have helped cope with the effects of the bad weather which the area experienced in December 2010.

Regarding the cuts to service areas, the Association understood that it was to be a gradual process over the four years. They hoped that the cuts would be identified and discussed with residents at the earliest opportunity.

The Chief Executive (John Everitt) informed Mr Brown that he had noted the offer regarding snow clearing and that an officer would be in contact with FoBRA within the week. Councillor Charles Gerrish ( Cabinet Member for ) added that they weren't ignoring the residents' associations, but that the conclusions of the Highways Winter MaintenanceReview were still being finalised.

Councillor Malcolm Hanney (Cabinet member for) acknowledged the importance of working with the community and informed the meeting that the Council were considering creating a Community Empowerment Fund which would provide funds for local initiatives such as PACT and youth services. He added that many of the efficiency savings had been possible due to good partnership working in many cases and that productive relationships with the business, tourism and residents communities were vital for the future of the city.

Henry Brown replied that the Association was pleased to see that the Council was committed to financing the Public Realm programme but was concerned about the changes to the Bath Transport Package., especially with regard to the proposed changes to the bus services. Councillor Haeberling assured the meeting that there were no plans to cut bus routes.

Robin Kerr (Secretary of FoBRA) asked how residents could be involved in the Business Improvement District (BID). Malcolm Hanney replied that the BID was being promoted by the business community itself and that while the Council was a partner in the initiative due to its large commercial estate, it had no democratic power over the members. It would be up to residents' associations to talk with the BID members.

The Chair thanked Tim Richens for his presentation and the meeting noted the report.

## **5 THE FUTURE OF THE BCLF**

Henry Brown summarised the history of the Forum since its inception and said that, although recent meetings had not been well-attended, the majority of residents' associations wanted it to continue, although perhaps with a more effective format. It was felt that there should be more of a dialogue between the Council and members and that there should be at least 3 meetings a year in order to maintain momentum. Publicity for the meetings could also be improved.

Councillor Haeberling apologised for the Council's delayed response to the concerns raised by FoBRA members. She confirmed that the Council were happy to accept issues from FoBRA for the Forum agenda and to ensure that the appropriate council officers were present to provide information and take questions. She added that improvements would be made to the advertising for the meetings.

Councillor Gazzard commented that he had been very impressed with the attendance and level of participation at the Better Bath Forum and at PACT meetings

and suggested that the City Liaison Forum could learn from these examples of good practice.

David Dunlop (London Road Area Residents Association) added that he felt it was important to schedule future dates for the Forum and to make it work, as everyone wanted the best outcomes in the city for all residents. The Chief Executive welcomed his suggestions and agreed that it was important to engage with as many residents as possible to consult on city-wide and strategic issues, but that the content and style of the meetings needed to be addressed.

Gerald Chown (Macaulay Prospect Residents Association) commented that the Task and Finish group on street cleanliness had been a successful initiative and that it would be good to regenerate the optimism and enthusiasm that it created. This kind of practical partnership was a useful model for future joint working.

Patrick Rotheram (Vineyards Residents Association) agreed that the Task and Finish group was an example of positive action, but expressed concern that FoBRA were not to be part of the Transport Commission and had received no feedback on their comments about transport issues and central area parking. Councillor Haeberling replied that this issue could have been included on the agenda if FoBRA had wished. The Chief Executive added that the chair of the Transport Commission was keen to engage with residents' associations.

Councillor Vic Pritchard (Cabinet Member for ) commented that the Council did listen to residents' concerns and cited the initiative regarding street drinkers and the proposal for a 'wet house'. As a result of residents' opposition, the idea was not pursued and other measures put in place which seemed to be effective. In addition, in response to residents' requests, the Council had funded taxi marshals in Orange Grove and Kingsmead Square and provided mobile toilets.

Henry Brown commented that they had only proposed one item for this meeting's agenda as they wanted to allow a reasonable time for a thorough debate. Councillor Haeberling responded that the Council only wished to inform the Forum members of the budget proposals, but that in future they would welcome more topics from FoBRA and other groups.

Andy Furze (Ward Councillor for Kingsmead) said he felt that encouraging Neighbourhood Watch Committees and those residents' associations not affiliated to FoBRA to join the Forum was a good idea. He always encouraged people to create and join residents' associations.

The Chair invited David Trethewey (Divisional Director for Policy and Partnerships) to sum up the debate and suggest ways forward. He informed the meeting that the Council engages with a wide range of groups using different meeting formats. The Parishes Liaison model had been adopted for the Forum meetings, but he acknowledged that it may not be the most appropriate. He added that there were issues about membership as well as representation. In addition, if meeting dates could be arranged well in advance, then it would be easier to assess and plan the officer time required and gauge whether it was sustainable. He suggested the use of social networking sites and improvements to the web presence in order to ease communications.

Henry Brown commented that he was pleased and impressed by the level of Councillor and officer attendance at this meeting and the willingness shown to improve the Forum arrangements. He suggested that he meet with David Trethewey to consider all the issues and bring proposals back to the members. A provisional meeting date for the Forum was agreed for the middle of March, to be confirmed.

The Chair put this proposal to the meeting and it was unanimously agreed. She thanked all those attending for their contributions and closed the meeting.

## **6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was decided that the Committee Administrator arrange the date for the next meeting in consultation with appropriate parties.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**