

**Democratic Services**

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**Your ref:**

**Our ref:**

**Date:** 18 January 2011

**E-mail:** Democratic\_Services@bathnes.gov.uk

**To: All Members of the Bath City Liaison Forum**

Councillors Sarah Bevan (Chairman of the Council), Representatives of Bath City Residents Associations and local Community Housing Associations

**Copy to:**

Councillors Peter Edwards (Vice Chairman of the Council), Francine Haeberling (Leader of the Council), Paul Crossley, John Bull and Chris Cray (Group Leaders)

Bath City Ward Councillors

Cabinet Members: Councillors Terry Gazzard (Development and Major Projects), Charles Gerrish (Customer Services), Malcolm Hanney (Resources), David Hawkins (Council as Corporate Trustee), Vic Pritchard (Adult Social Services and Housing) and Chris Watt (Children's Services)

Chief Executive and appropriate officers

Chief Executive and other appropriate officers

Press and Public

Dear Member

**Bath City Liaison Forum: Tuesday, 25th January, 2011**

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **Bath City Liaison Forum**, to be held on **Tuesday, 25th January, 2011** at **6.30 pm** in the **Brunswick Room - Guildhall, Bath**.

Tea and coffee will be provided before the meeting.

The Agenda is set out overleaf.

Yours sincerely

Ann Swabey  
for Chief Executive

**If you need to access this agenda or any of the supporting reports in an alternative accessible format please contact Democratic Services or the relevant report author whose details are listed at the end of each report.**

*This Agenda and all accompanying reports are printed on recycled paper*

## NOTES:

- Inspection of Papers:** Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or a list of the background papers relating to any item on this Agenda should contact Ann Swabey who is available by telephoning Bath or by calling at the Riverside Offices Keynsham (during normal office hours).
- Public Speaking at Meetings:** The Council has a scheme to encourage the public to make their views known at meetings. They may make a statement relevant to what the meeting has power to do. They may also present a petition or a deputation on behalf of a group. Advance notice is required not less than two full working days before the meeting (this means that for meetings held on Wednesdays notice must be received in Democratic Services by 4.30pm the previous Friday)

The public may also ask a question to which a written answer will be given. Questions must be submitted in writing to Democratic Services at least two full working days in advance of the meeting (this means that for meetings held on Wednesdays, notice must be received in Democratic Services by 4.30pm the previous Friday). If an answer cannot be prepared in time for the meeting it will be sent out within five days afterwards. Further details of the scheme can be obtained by contacting Ann Swabey as above.

- Details of Decisions taken at this meeting** can be found in the minutes which will be published as soon as possible after the meeting, and also circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. In the meantime details can be obtained by contacting Ann Swabey as above.

Appendices to reports are available for inspection as follows:-

**Public Access points** - Riverside - Keynsham, Guildhall - Bath, Hollies - Midsomer Norton, and Bath Central, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton public libraries.

**For Councillors and Officers** papers may be inspected via Political Group Research Assistants and Group Rooms/Members' Rooms.

- Attendance Register:** Members should sign the Register which will be circulated at the meeting.
- THE APPENDED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS ARE IDENTIFIED BY AGENDA ITEM NUMBER.**
- Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

When the continuous alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building by one of the designated exits and proceed to the named assembly point. The designated exits are sign-posted.

Arrangements are in place for the safe evacuation of disabled people.

**Bath City Liaison Forum - Tuesday, 25th January, 2011**

**at 6.30 pm in the Brunswick Room - Guildhall, Bath**

**A G E N D A**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting will be chaired by the Chairman of the Council, Councillor Sarah Bevan (or, in her absence, Councillor Peter Edwards, the Vice Chairman of the Council)

**2. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman will draw attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as follows:

*If the continuous alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building by one of the designated exits and proceed to the named assembly point, namely, across Orange Grove to the Abbey. The designated exits are signposted. Arrangements are in place for the safe evacuation of disabled people.*

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Members and Ward Councillors are asked to sign the circulated attendance list

**4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 5TH OCTOBER 2009 (Pages 5 - 10)**

To approve the Minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record

**5. COUNCIL BUDGET 2011/12 (Pages 11 - 12)**

The Divisional Director (Finance) will give a presentation on the Council's forthcoming budget proposals.

**6. THE FUTURE OF THE BCLF (Pages 13 - 16)**

The Chair will invite the Chairman of the Federation of Bath Residents and the Divisional Director for Policy and Partnerships to lead a discussion on the future arrangements for the BCLF.

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To agree the date of the next meeting (please bring your Diary)

The Committee Administrator for this meeting is Ann Swabey who can be contacted on

**BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

**BATH CITY LIAISON FORUM**

**MONDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2009**

**PRESENT :-** The Chairman of Council, Councillor Bryan Chalker, in the Chair

Forum Members:

Martin Broadbent (Greenway Residents Association), Michael Brett (Abbey Residents Association), Henry Brown (Federation of Bath Residents Associations), Jan Brown (Norfolk Crescent Green Residents Association), Mark Cartwright (Shakespeare Avenue Residents Association), Gerald Chown (Macaulay Prospect Residents Association), David Dunlop (London Road Area Residents Association), Robin Kerr (Federation of Bath Residents Associations), Stephen Little (Royal Crescent Society), Ian Perkins (Abbey Residents Association), David Rising (London Road Snow Hill Partnership), Richard Wales (Widcombe Association) and Nigel Websper (Pulteney Estate Residents Association)

Also in attendance:

Councillors: Francine Haeberling (Leader of the Council), Charles Gerrish (Cabinet Member for Customer Services), Terry Gazzard (Cabinet Member for Development and Major Projects) and Chris Watt (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

Ward Councillors Ian Gilchrist and Richard Maybury

Apologies for absence were received from Robin Davies, Lisa Dora and Patrick Rotheram; and from Councillors Chris Cray, David Hawkins and Vic Pritchard

**8 CHAIRMAN**

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

**9 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

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

**10 MINUTES – 16<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2009**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Henry Brown gave the meeting an update on Item 6 of the previous meeting (the Traffic and Pollution Task and Finish Group). The object of the Group was to work jointly with the Council on transport options and issues. Six people had volunteered and Patrick Rotherham had offered to lead on behalf of the residents. They had held a preliminary meeting with David Trigwell. The Group would be examining best practice in other cities and planned to complete their work within 6 months.

Councillor Charles Gerrish added that the Group would shortly be consulted on air quality issues.

## **11 BUDGET SETTING PROCESS FOR 2010/11**

The Strategic Director for Resources and Support Services (Andrew Pate) gave a presentation on the background to the proposed budget for 2010. He identified the areas of funding reduction and outlined the actions which were being proposed to cope with the situation.

A resident enquired about the savings target for the change programme and was informed that it was needed to make a substantial contribution to the Council's 5% per annum savings requirement. The different aspects of the programme have separate targets and these are still at a draft stage. A saving of 10% or more is being targeted within support services. Further savings are being targeted from lean reviews and rationalisation of off ice accommodation. Andrew Pate went on to say that the Authority was, in comparative terms, in a reasonable position and the reserves were in good order; however, the pressures facing local government and the public sector were immense.

A resident enquired about the percentage of the budget taken up by employment costs and was informed that it would amount to 30% of gross spend. It was suggested that the Council could look at reducing the layers of hierarchy as a way of reducing costs. The Chief Executive responded that the number of layers varied between services but that in most services there were only 3 or 4 layers from senior management to frontline staff.

A resident raised concerns about the likely rise in the cost of pensions and how the Council would cope with this problem. The Chief Executive informed the meeting that the Council were lobbying national bodies about this issue as any change would require legislation. Andrew Pate added that the Council's financial plans anticipated the pensions costs and agreed that all employers faced difficult pressures arising from deficits in pension funds.

A resident requested an update on the finances of the Spa project and also whether the proposal for a casino had progressed any further. The Chief Executive replied that the Spa was extremely successful and that there was solid evidence that it had boosted the City's economy. He acknowledged that the City should look at providing other attractions and referred to the investment in the Roman Baths, but pointed out the conflict caused by the necessity for reducing the budget as set against the need to invest to generate more income.

With regard to the casino, Councillor Charles Gerrish informed the meeting that a technical specification for the licensing process was being prepared which would be presented to the full Licensing Committee.

Henry Brown commented that the proposed efficiencies would not save enough to balance the external pressures on the Council budget. Residents were concerned about cuts in services and would like to be consulted about the priorities. Councillor Francine Haeberling acknowledged that it would be a difficult year but that it was intended to preserve the highest priority services and to consult on proposed cuts.

The Chairman thanked the Director for his presentation.

## **12 PROGRESS IN RECOMMENDATIONS OF CLEANLINESS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Councillor Charles Gerrish introduced this item and informed the meeting about the various specialist cleaning machines and vehicles which had been purchased in order to improve street cleanliness. It was proposed to move staff from Sawclose to Avon Street so they were closer to their work and the possibility of further moves to Manvers Street or the Sports Centre were being considered. Out of Bath, staff had been allocated to 5 dedicated teams which would cover specific areas. Councillor Gerrish acknowledged the support of local groups, the Task and Finish Group and the Bath Chronicle with the cleanliness campaign. With regard to the seagull problem, he informed the meeting that there was to be a local conference in November where authorities could pool ideas ready for the 2010 breeding season.

Gerald Chown (Chairman of the Task and Finish Group) said he was encouraged by the report and stated that the productivity savings arising from the use of the new equipment would be significant. Councillor Gilchrist expressed concern that the improvement in the inner City centre litter collection was to be paid for by reducing the service to outer areas. The Divisional Director for Environmental Services (Matthew Smith) assured him that this was not the case and that the increase in efficiency had been achieved by investing in better equipment.

Henry Brown welcomed the Council's response and expressed a hope that the investment will bring long-term improvements but asked what was proposed for the next financial year. Councillor Gerrish replied that he would be giving a 6 month progress report on the new machinery which it was hoped would deliver good value in efficiencies in return for the investment. A resident commented that the cleanliness of the Snow Hill area had improved substantially in the past two weeks. He suggested that greater enforcement action, in particular against restaurants, could raise income.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Gerrish and Matthew Smith for their contribution.

## **13 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LDF) – CORE STRATEGY OPTIONS**

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport (David Trigwell) gave a presentation on the impact of the Core Strategy on the City of Bath. He informed the meeting that the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) had been delayed by the Government until 2010 but that local consultation on the Core Strategy could still go ahead based on the Draft RSS. He went on to explain the LDF programme which would culminate in a final version in 2011 and outlined the challenges concerning housing and employment which were specific to Bath. The consultation period would run from 16<sup>th</sup> October to 11<sup>th</sup> November.

The Fobra representative asked whether the Authority was totally committed to the Strategy and whether it had any influence over the University's plans for expansion. Councillor Charles Gerrish replied that the Council was totally committed to following the Core Strategy process as it currently stands but that a review may be necessary

if the Government changes the Strategy. David Trigwell added that, if the City wished to control the size of the University population, then that would need to be expressed in the responses to the consultation. Nigel Websper (Fobra) asked whether the student accommodation was included in the total housing needs and was informed that, at present, they are not counted but that the Council would be raising the question with the Government as to whether they could be designated as part of the affordable housing pool.

Jan Brown asked whether there were possible conflicts between the proposals for the Public Realm and the Core Strategy. In response, David Trigwell stated that the Public Realm was a very important part of the process, especially where improvements to the Public Realm linked to better transport provision.

Henry Brown asked whether the consultation period could be extended into December but was told that the date had been set. He confirmed that Fobra would be encouraging residents' groups to take part in the consultation and would be happy to collate the responses.

Councillor Richard Maybury asked why the Core Strategy was so important. David Trigwell informed him that the Local Plan was coming to the end of its life and that the Core Strategy would lay down a planning framework to replace it. He was aware that developers were drawing up plans which they would want to progress once the economic situation improved and it was important that the Council were prepared with a clear planning strategy in order to respond robustly to proposals.

The Chairman thanked the Director for his presentation.

#### **14 PROGRESS ON BATH TRANSPORTATION PACKAGE**

The Group Manager for Planning Policy and Transport (Peter Dawson) introduced this item and thanked all those who had engaged in the project. He updated the meeting on the planning process – it was hoped that, if the final permissions were granted, then the scheme would go out to tender with a project price being set in 2010. Potential delays could be caused by the compulsory purchase orders or if a Public Inquiry was called.

The Chairman thanked the Group Manager for his presentation.

#### **15 IMPROVEMENTS IN BATH CITY CENTRE**

The Group Manager for Planning Policy and Transport (Peter Dawson) introduced this item. He informed the meeting of the proposed changes which included making the City centre more pedestrian and cycle friendly and changing the vehicular access to some streets. The public consultation carried out earlier in the year had generated a favourable response overall.

Henry Brown expressed concern that the various schemes would be started in a piecemeal fashion and asked that the changes be progressed in a logical order. David Trigwell replied that progress depended on the funding streams – these proposals were part of the Bath Package and it was hoped to co-ordinate the work as much as possible. A resident observed that it was important to consult with the

bus and taxi drivers about the scheme for the High Street as it was already too congested and this was before the proposed narrowing of the road.

Councillor Charles Gerrish added that the Civitas funding had been allocated to building a freight distribution centre outside the City centre from which electric vehicles would take goods into the City. This scheme would be in place before the street improvements. A resident asked who would meet the running and delivery costs of the freight scheme and was informed that it was funded by a European Union grant and was based on a model which was working well in Bristol. The costs were shared between businesses and the freight centre itself.

The Chairman thanked the Group Manager for his presentation.

#### **16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the Committee Administrator would arrange the date for the next meeting within 6 months in consultation with appropriate parties.

The meeting ended at 8:35pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**

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### Briefing Sheet – The Council Budget 2011/2012

#### National Budget Context

The Council's Budget for 2011/12 is being developed against the backdrop of the UK's biggest public sector deficit since the Second World War following the deepest recession since the 1930's. In the 2009-10 financial year, the budget deficit reached £157bn, meaning the Government had to borrow £1 in every £4 it spent.

Some immediate steps were taken by the Coalition Government in the June 2010 budget to reduce the deficit by some £6bn in 2010/11 with approximately 21% falling on local government. For B&NES this meant a cut of £1.8m per annum in revenue funding (equivalent to 2.5% on Council Tax) and a £1.8m reduction in capital funding alongside notice that Coalition Government funding of other critical B&NES capital schemes was to be reviewed. The savings in 2010/11 have been taken by the Coalition Government but the costs of implementing the savings (including redundancies and meeting contractual commitments) have fallen to B&NES and have required additional efficiencies and / or cuts of over £800k beyond the headline figures quoted.

In terms of tackling the significant ongoing budget deficit, the Chancellor set out the Coalition Government plans in the Spending Review on 20<sup>th</sup> October. This deficit reduction programme indicated 28% cuts to local authority spending over the Spending Review period from 2011/2012 to 2014/2015. In addition, funding for infrastructure such as school buildings, roads and transport was reduced by 45% on average.

#### The Local Government Finance Settlement

The provisional local government financial settlement has now been received in draft, and the headline is a 13.5% reduction in the Council's Government formula grant for next year 2011/2012. The Coalition Government has given a greater level of protection to Councils they deem more dependent upon Government Grant notwithstanding that B&NES Council is one of the lowest funded unitary authorities. Furthermore, B&NES grant was 'damped' by an amount of £2.5m pa by the previous government so was receiving less than the Government's own assessment of B&NES needs requirement as protection was given to Councils receiving more than their needs entitlement.

The numbers for 2011/12 and beyond are further complicated by the transfer of several specific grants in to the formula grant. At this time it is not yet entirely clear which grants are included, which are being separately announced, and which have stopped. The Council will be considering this in detail.

Based on our analysis to date the headline reduction in Government Grant (about a third of the Council's non-schools funding) is between 15% and 20% for 2011/12 and the number should become much clearer by the end of January as other announcements are made.

The medium term financial plans which have been prepared by Services have allowed for most of the implications of the financial settlement although up to £2M of funding could be affected by specific grants disappearing especially affecting Children's Services and potentially Adult Services.

Financial plans will need to be revisited in the light of the financial settlement to see what adjustment to the year 2 (2012/13) figures are needed. The annual budget report will refer to this and the need for further prioritisation in the allocation of resources in addition to further efficiencies to accommodate the effect.

The uncertainty about some specific grants and the fact that the Government financial settlement is only for 2 years (not 4 as had been indicated) means there is a high level of uncertainty about these numbers. This is compounded by the effect of the review of Local Government Finance which will affect 2013/14 onwards.

### **Local Budget Impacts and Issues**

The sound financial management of the Council over the years means we are in a better position to face the severe national economic situation than many other councils. Indeed the Council has correctly anticipated the main aspects of the financial settlement and has been planning for up to 30% reductions in funding over the next four years.

The Council Budget now being prepared for 2011/12 recognises the very difficult financial challenge now facing the whole of the public sector. There will be a need to prioritise resources and the Council will do this with regard to the following principles:

- Reflect the Council's already agreed and established [priorities](#).
- Seek to prioritise vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.
- Maximise efficiency.
- Redesign the shape and delivery of services.
- Consider if services are necessary or are being provided at the right level.
- Work even more closely with partners including the NHS, the Police, and the voluntary and private sectors.
- Maintain capacity to manage the changes.

There are also a considerable number of pressures and changes that the Council must recognise and plan for as part of its budget setting process and the most significant of these include:

- Grant funding historically to the value of £2.5M pa below the Government's assessed level of need for B&NES.
- Maintaining the condition of the highways.
- The increasing elderly population placing significant demands on Adult Social Care and Health services.
- Increases in national taxation including employers' national insurance and landfill tax.
- Major changes affecting Adult Social Care delivery including:
  - the establishment of GP Commissioning Consortia (and the withdrawal of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) by April 2013)
  - the transfer of responsibility for Public Health to local authorities
  - the required transfer of the provider elements of PCTs to other organisations by April 2012 with substantive progress required by April 2011
- Reviewing the Council's role as a Local Education Authority due to impacts of the Coalition Government's Academy school initiatives.

Taking account of the Spending Review, the financial settlement and the pressures outlined above suggests that around £30m of service budget savings will be required over the next four years.

The scale of the projected reduction in local government funding is such that it cannot be met by efficiencies alone. There will need to be even greater prioritisation of services and this will lead to cuts in service areas which are considered lower priority.

### **Council Tax**

The financial settlement included an announcement of financial support for councils who freeze their Council Tax for next year at the current level (i.e. a zero increase). The Cabinet currently expect to be in a position to make recommendations for a zero increase in Council Tax for 2011/12 to Council in February 2011 as part of the 2011/2012 budget setting process.

**Cllr Francine Haeberling**  
**Leader**  
**B&NES Council**

**13 October 2010**

**Dear Francine,**

## **FUTURE OF THE BATH CITY LIAISON FORUM**

David Taylor asked us at the end of August to provide views on the future of the Forum, with a view to strengthening its arrangements. Working from the BCLF minutes, I have consulted all the people who attended more than one meeting, including non-FoBRA attendees, and got a good response, and we have also had a discussion about this in the FoBRA committee on 30 September.

There is a fundamental question whether the BCLF should continue at all. It is a fairly obvious candidate for a spending cut. On the other hand there is much interest in the new localism. Views are not unanimous, but the majority feel that the Forum ought to continue if the arrangements can be strengthened. I have received a wide spread of views, some of them deeply critical, but I will try to summarise them constructively under headings relating to the practical arrangements.

### **General**

Most respondents have expressed concern about the poor attendance, despite the presence of leading figures from the Council and from FoBRA. To turn this around, we think the meetings have to be seen to be attractive, interesting, relevant, and likely to make a difference. Otherwise resident representatives just won't turn out in the evenings for them.

Some respondents have commented that the Parish Liaison Committee model (on which you based the BCLF) is not appropriate because the city is not parished, and residents' groups in Bath are not resourced like parish councils. There is no general support for parishing Bath, and in the short term at least I think we need to concentrate on improving the Forum arrangements.

### **Purpose of the Forum**

While the stated purpose, to 'act as a focus for community engagement...provide a link to the LSP...', suggests that there will be a two-way dialogue at the meetings, there is a perception that in practice the Council uses the Forum to tell residents what it has already decided, rather than to ask them what they think and to listen to their concerns.

### **Venue**

Most people think that the Council chamber is quite unsuitable for the Forum. Whilst it's architecturally and historically interesting, it has an unsympathetic layout, poor acoustics and is patently inappropriate for a genuine dialogue. There is also a feeling that this is not 'neutral' territory. The other meeting rooms in the Guildhall are even more depressing, so if you want more people to come we think you need to hold the meetings somewhere more pleasant.

## **PROMOTING RESIDENTS' INTERESTS IN BATH**

## **Frequency**

There is quite a strong desire to have more meetings – three or four a year. This might help the Forum to develop momentum, but only of course if there were enough important subjects to make the meetings worthwhile.

## **Agenda**

The general principle of deciding this in discussion between the Council and residents is accepted, though non-FoBRA attendees would naturally like this discussion to go wider than FoBRA. I think the solution must lie in greatly improving communications (see below).

## **Chairperson**

The Chair of the Council ought to command general respect, but has not always done so at the BCLF. We suggest that the chairmanship should alternate between the Chair of the Council and the Chair of FoBRA. This might help to relieve pressure if the frequency of meetings is increased.

## **Attendance**

Respondents have commented pointedly on the difference between attendance at the BCLF (10-20 residents) and the BetterBath Forum (100-200 attendees). This is attributed to BBF taking place on neutral territory in bright, friendly surroundings, with an independent chairman, one item on the agenda per meeting and good advance publicity. There are several practical lessons here.

The Council seems to have very poor and outdated information about residents' groups in the city. Contact details for FoBRA members are listed on our website, but no one seems be charged with maintaining an up to date list of other groups. This obviously needs attention.

You might also consider whether the net should be widened to bring in more people. Could Neighbourhood Watch groups be invited? Should individuals be allowed to attend, as well as representative groups? Is it appropriate to exclude local pressure groups?

There is a general view that Council leaders must be seen to be taking an interest. This doesn't mean that officers should not continue to make detailed presentations and reports, but that you yourself, the Chief Executive and the relevant Cabinet member(s) should attend and be prepared to join in the discussion.

Attendance by Bath councillors has been patchy. Some respondents feel they are out of touch with residents, and that it would help to reduce this distance if they were encouraged to attend.

David's email mentions the possibility of inviting the Police and Health Authority. We think the attendance should reflect the issues under discussion, which might require these organisations to attend on occasions, eg if alcohol harm reduction was on the agenda. Other bodies, eg Somer, might be brought in for other topics. But generally, we think it would be best to strengthen the involvement of Council leaders, rather than to dilute their presence with other organisations.

## **Nature of the discussion**

There is a strong feeling that the discussion lacks spontaneity and genuine debate. It would be helpful if the Council confirmed that it does in fact want an open-ended two-way discussion at the Forum.

If we succeed in attracting more residents groups, Councillors, and sometimes other official bodies, the discussion will inevitably become more general. This strengthens the case for having a tighter arrangement to look at specific issues, on the lines of the street cleaning Task & Finish Group, where residents and Council officials worked successfully together to draw up a fresh blueprint for the operation. Regular meetings between the FoBRA and Council leadership can also be useful. There is very great annoyance over the Council's failure to deliver on its agreement to set up a second TFG, on transport options.

The Council's willingness to set up specific initiatives like this will be seen as a test of your commitment to making the BCLF work.

## **Publicity**

The Forum has been announced in one or two emails, and I'm not sure whether anything was done for recipients who aren't on the internet. Most respondents think this is inadequate.

It would be helpful to get forward dates agreed, say, a year in advance, with key issues pencilled in at the appropriate season (eg budget preparation). The resident side could also call for discussion on particular issues, and these could also be built into a forward calendar, though there should still be space for either side to table urgent ad hoc items. These arrangements could be publicised well ahead, in the Chronicle, Council Connect, and perhaps at dedicated notice boards at Council offices open to the public.

There certainly needs to be a webpage for the Forum, with information about its objects, successes, expected agendas, and how to attend, though we have to remember that a proportion of potential attendees are not internet-equipped, and would need a parallel newsletter.

## **Successes and failures**

The street cleaning TFG is seen as the main success. The presentation on the Council's budget was also very helpful.

Failures include the poor attendance, lack of genuine debate, the Council's failure to set up a second TFG, and poor publicity.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the shaky start, the majority would prefer to see the BCLF continue, with arrangements amended on the lines suggested above. I expect that you and your colleagues have also been thinking about changes. Would it not be a good idea for us to get together to talk through these points before making any definite decisions?

I should be happy to bring together three or four FoBRA and non-FoBRA people to discuss this with you.

Best wishes,

**Yours sincerely,**

**Henry Brown, Chairman**