

# **Bath and North East Somerset Council**

## **PARISHES LIAISON MEETING**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 19th June, 2013, 6.30 pm**

Councillor Neil Butters (Bath & North East Somerset Council) (Chair), Tim Ball (Bath & North East Somerset Council), David Bellotti (Bath & North East Somerset Council), David Dixon (Bath & North East Somerset Council) and Ben Stevens (Bath & North East Somerset Council) and David Veale

Representatives (Parishes and Town Councils): Batheaston, Bathampton, Cameley, Camerton, Chelwood, Chew Magna, Combe Hay, Compton Dando, Compton Martin, Corston, Dunkerton, East Harptree, Englishcombe, Farmborough, Freshford, Hinton Charterhouse, Keynsham, Marksbury, Newton St Loe, Paulton, Peasedown St John, Priston, Publow with Pensford, Saltford, South Stoke, Stanton Drew, Ubley, Whitchurch and West Harptree

Officers attending: Jo Farrar (Chief Executive), Louise Fradd (Strategic Director of Place), David Trigwell (Divisional Director of Planning and Transport Development), David Trethewey (Divisional Director of Policy and Partnerships), John Wilkinson (Divisional Director of Regeneration), Simon De Beer (Planning Policy and Environment Manager), Lisa Bartlett (Development Manager), Phil Mansfield (Building Control Manager), Sue Murtagh (Green Infrastructure and Environmental Partnerships Coordinator), David Wales (Principal EEB Development Officer) and Julie O'Rourke (Planning Officer)

Also attending: Peter Duppa-Miller (Local Councils Association), Tony Crouch (Local Councils Association), Jon Reynolds (Regional Director of BT) and Evan Wienburk (Wansdyke Telecom UK)

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

The Chairman, Councillor Neil Butters, welcomed everyone to the meeting

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

The Senior Democratic Services Officer read out the procedure

#### **3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received as follows:

B&nes Councillors Paul Crossley, Charles Gerrish, Nathan Hartley, Eleanor Jackson, Dine Romero, Martin Veal and Tim Warren

Parish Representatives Doug Creed (Kelston), Alistair MacKichan (Charlcombe) and Eric Potter (Timsbury)

#### **4 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

There were no items of Urgent Business

#### **5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 20TH FEBRUARY 2013**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer read out amendments to the draft Minutes that were circulated with the Agenda.

These were as follows:

Attendance List Page 1 Add the following in the list of representatives of Parish Councils: Batheaston, Combe Hay, Compton Dando, East Harptree, Englishcombe, Freshford, Keynsham, Priston, Publow with Pensford, Saltford, Swainswick and Whitchurch

Minute 34 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph Page 7 1<sup>st</sup> sentence After "... and that £30M needed to be saved", add "over 3 years ..."

With these amendments, the Chair signed the Minutes as a correct record.

#### **6 THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY**

Sue Murtagh, Green Infrastructure and Environmental Partnerships Coordinator, reported on this new Strategy (March 2013) which was about making sure that the natural environment worked for the community by making the most of the benefits that the natural environment could and should be providing for people, places and nature. Partnerships would be formed and there would be better use of existing resources.

The meeting was updated on 3 current initiatives delivering the Strategy. Firstly, funding had been secured from Natural England to help support a 12 month graduate internship to map existing GI resources, gaps and opportunities on a parish basis. This work would inform the rural element of the Place Making Plan. Secondly, work had started on securing coordinated management of the green setting of Bath. A workshop about this would be held tomorrow. The workshop in partnership with the Cotswolds AONB Conservation Board would explore a possible HLF funding bid which, if successful, could bring in resources up to £3M. Thirdly, the Strategy was already being used to support partner initiatives. The Avon Wildlife Trust with "Buglife" was exploring a "B-lines" project, based on a successful pilot project in the north of England. The aim would be to define and enhance key wildlife corridors across the west of England.

The report was noted.

## **7 THE LOCAL ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (CONNECTING COMMUNITIES)**

The meeting considered a report by David Trethewey, Divisional Director of Policy and Partnerships, which briefed Parishes on the "Connecting Communities" initiative. This was a new programme jointly adopted by public services in Bath and North East Somerset (including the Council, Police, Fire and Rescue, Curo and Health Services) to simplify and improve the way the public services engage with local groups and residents.

Councillor David Dixon (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods) introduced this item and David Trethewey gave a power point presentation. Afterwards, the Chair asked that a copy be supplied to those requesting it.

The report and presentation were discussed and various issues were raised by representatives of Parish and Town Councils. They included the impact of Variable Message Signs on Hinton Charterhouse, Parish Cluster Group meetings being ineffectual in Keynsham but Area Groups were not desired, parts of the community in Bath adjoining South Stoke being excluded from consultation on the Core Strategy, and the effect of Bath not being "parished". The Divisional Director and Councillor David Dixon responded to the points that were raised.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his presentation.

## **8 THE IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL BROADBAND IN NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

The meeting considered a report by David Wales, Principal EEB Development Officer, which provided an update on Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) the contract for which was signed with BT last January. It indicated that, by the end of 2016, in the CDS area, 91% of premises would have a fibre connection for superfast broadband of at least 24Mb per second and 100% of premises would have at least 2Mb per second. By 2020, all premises should be on superfast broadband of at least 24Mb per second. The report referred to fibre optic broadband being the predominant technology with most of the area receiving Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) ie to the green cabinet on the street, and Fibre to the Premises (FTTP). Issues of Surveying, Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF) and especially Rollout Communication were addressed.

The Chair stated that he had allowed Councillor Brian Huggett, Chairman of Englishcombe Parish Council, to make a statement which he accordingly did. Copies had been circulated around the table and a copy would be retained on the Minute Book.

John Wilkinson, Divisional Director of Regeneration, responded to some of the comments. He agreed that the best broadband service should be provided. He had met with Wansdyke Telecom, a Community Interest Company, and was willing to work with them to provide the best service.

He introduced Jon Reynolds, Regional Director of BT, who stated that it was a good decision to join Devon and Somerset. EU funding had been provided for Cornwall which was a large rural area and lessons were being learnt. He said that the size of the project could not be under-estimated and that they needed to be sure that the

work was deliverable in the projected timeframe. Councillor Huggett referred to the apparent neglect of rural areas in the district and old overhead wires. Peter Duppa-Miller (Combe Hay) made a plea for “symmetric” service to aid upload and download as the current poor service affected many people and businesses in the rural area. Mr Reynolds replied that due diligence was important and it was hoped that the 91% target would be exceeded. He stated that 24Mb would be available for download but upload requirement was not part of the project; symmetrical speed was not required by many customers. However, “Fibre on demand” would be available for extra speed and field trials were currently being undertaken to increase speeds.

A representative of Cameley Parish Council considered that the 91% target would mean 1 in 10 households would not benefit. She queried the criteria for assessing which premises would not be upgraded, the added costs of being upgraded, and whether the proximity to the green cabinet was a criteria for receiving fibre broadband. Mr Reynolds responded that it was hoped more than the 91% target would be achieved. The minimum speed service by 2016 would be 2Mb as per the contract/framework. Some customers in the last 9% whose cabinet is upgraded may struggle but would receive a 5-24Mb service with potential for higher speeds in future. There were some limitations and cost parameters to be considered and there were no automatic upgrades. The lowest price was probably £16/month but the service was open to competition. However, there could be technical improvements later and they would want to know of any demand issues. A representative of Freshford Parish Council enquired whether the Hinton Charterhouse/Freshford area would be included before 2016. Mr Reynolds replied that there would be an announcement on the order of areas in the Autumn of this year but people would need to know their Exchange Area when it goes live. In response to queries raised by the Chair, he stated that the delays experienced with state aid approved by the EU were frustrating but it was a transparent process and BT were the only company investing. It was anticipated that Wiltshire and Gloucestershire could integrate their project to cover any border issues. His e-mail address for those who wished to contact him direct was [jon.reynolds@bt.com](mailto:jon.reynolds@bt.com)

John Wilkinson, Divisional Director, emphasised that they were encouraging people and communities to work with them and to lobby Government as their knowledge and experience would be a useful asset.

The Chair thanked them for their attendance and for reporting on this item.

## **9 THE B&NES CORE STRATEGY**

The meeting considered a report by David Trigwell, Divisional Director of Planning and Transport Development, which informed that the Core Strategy was currently at Examination. Nearly 1100 representations had been received and forwarded to the Inspector for consideration. The report summarised the main issues raised with regard to the policy framework for the rural areas. The Council had, on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013, approved proposed Changes to the Submitted Core Strategy for consideration by the appointed Inspector. The report summarised the next stages of the Core Strategy process. Information received from the Inspector on the Examination in Public would be publicised as soon as practicable.

David Trigwell and Simon De Beer (Planning Policy and Environment Manager) briefly commented on the process.

In response to comments from a representative of Compton Dando that the Parishes were not given advance notification of the Special Council Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March which removed land in rural parishes from the Green Belt and released it for development, Councillor Tim Ball (Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning) stated that details of the meeting had been put on the Council's website where parish councils could have seen them if they had looked for them.

The report was noted.

## **10 THE B&NES PLACE-MAKING PLAN**

The meeting considered a report by David Trigwell, Divisional Director of Planning and Transport Development, on the Placemaking Plan, the purpose of which was to complement the strategic policy framework in the Core Strategy. A Launch Document agreed by Cabinet sets out the proposed scope of the Placemaking Plan, the key issues to be addressed and an overview of how B&NES would work in collaboration with local communities. Various activities were proposed by B&NES to facilitate the input from local communities. The report outlined a programme for preparation of the Plan, progress of which was closely linked to that of the Core Strategy.

Simon De Beer, Planning Policy and Environment Manager, briefly reported on the matter and introduced a new Planning Officer, Julie O'Rourke, who had been appointed with the specific task of working with Parish and Town Councils on the project.

Councillor Sally Davis (Farmborough) requested that Ward Councillors be included in any communications on the subject. Councillor Tim Ball (Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning) emphasised that this was an opportunity for Parish and Town Councils to have their say on possible development sites within their areas prior to the Local Plan being finalised at the end of next year.

The meeting noted the report.

## **11 GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOW PEOPLE SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**

The meeting considered the report by David Trigwell, Divisional Director of Planning and Transport Development, which referred to a report to the September 2012 Cabinet meeting setting out the scope of the "stock take" on the preparation of the Plan and to a progress report being provided to the Cabinet meeting last week. The report referred to a projected need for pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, and those in Transit, up to 2027. Progress on sites was identified together with the next steps. A programme for the Plan was set out culminating in the Council considering and adopting the Inspector's recommendations in the Winter of 2014.

The Divisional Director briefly reported on the matter and referred to a planning application being prepared for the Lower Bristol Road site in Bath. In response to queries raised by a representative of Compton Dando regarding unauthorised encampments, he stated that site owners could apply for permission and it would be appropriate to determine the application; however, it may be expedient to take enforcement action. If an appeal was lodged, it would be a long process.

Peter Duppa-Miller (Local Councils Association) referred to the 30 sites which would require assessment by the end of this year which was a huge task. He offered the services of the Parish Councils in this regard. Simon De Beer, Planning Policy and Environment Manager, responded that it was not just site assessments that were required and that they would be working with other local authorities such as Bristol and South Gloucestershire. Sites that were outside the Green Belt would be assessed first. Town and Parish Councils had previously requested that information should only be released when work was complete and not in a piecemeal fashion. The Examination in Public on the Gypsies and Travellers Plan would scrutinise the appropriate documentation.

Various issues were raised by representatives of Dunkerton, Stanton Drew and Publow with Pensford. The Divisional Director responded that confirmation of the sites would be done on a district basis and neighbouring Authorities would be consulted. A Plan was required that would withstand legal challenge and not fail on a technicality. Officers could be requested to go into communities to support parishes to disseminate information to residents. There would not be any embargo on enforcement action which would be taken when and wherever appropriate.

The meeting noted the report.

## **12 HYDRAULIC FRACTURING - 'FRACKING'**

Phil Mansfield, Building Control Manager, stated that "Fracking" was part of his remit. He gave a power point presentation to the meeting. This covered various issues including the potential effect on the Hot Springs, Geology, Legislation etc. The gas extraction would be by means of coal bed methane extraction or shale gas "Fracking". Licences would be required for these forms of extraction and planning applications required for boreholes and production.

Issues of noise and the impact on the road system were raised. The Building Control Manager responded that there would be a significant number of lorry movements if production went ahead and such concerns would be considered as part of the planning process. Regarding a query about Use Classes, David Trigwell, Divisional Director of Planning and Transport Development, considered that production would come under General Industry (Use Class B2). They would work with adjoining local authorities regarding any possible impacts.

A representative of West Harptree considered that there many issues to be taken into account and that "fracking" would affect a large area. It was considered that this was unthinkable in the area of Compton Martin and the Chew Valley Lake with the numerous springs in the area.

The Chair requested that parish representatives make their views known to the Building Control Manager. Peter Duppa-Miller requested that the power point presentation be sent to all parish representatives.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his presentation.

### **13 VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS**

The meeting received a briefing paper prepared by Joy Jefferys, Strategic Transport Projects Manager, on Variable Message Signs (VMS) which was a state of the art electronic traffic messaging system which would provide better and more up to date information to the travelling public.

David Trigwell, Divisional Director of Planning and Transport Development, briefly reported on the subject. In response to comments by a representative of Hinton Charterhouse, he stated that the purpose was to provide an early warning to drivers and would encourage drivers to use major routes and avoid "rat-runs". The impact of the appearance of the signs on the road had been considered. In the case of Hinton Charterhouse, the A36 came under the jurisdiction of the Highway Agency and the Council had supplied them with a Safety Audit as requested. In response to comments by the Chair, he said that a second Safety Audit would be supplied and that weight and height information could be included on VMS. The Chair and the Chief Executive had visited Hinton Charterhouse and met the Vice Chair and the Clerk of the Parish Council about the matter.

The Divisional Director responded to some of the issues raised by representatives of Batheaston, Corston and South Stoke by saying that some de-cluttering of signs had been undertaken but the cost of signs was an issue. There would be on-going discussions regarding information to be displayed.

The briefing paper was noted.

### **14 MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE REVISIONS**

The meeting received a briefing paper on the Mobile Library Service prepared by June Brassington, Operations Manager (Libraries). A 3 year Library Strategy had been agreed by Cabinet in April 2012 which included retaining all the existing library branches, introducing the Community Libraries Programme and withdrawing 1 mobile library in 2013/14. The changes were outlined and a draft timetable formulated for consultation. The new timetable was due to come into effect on 29<sup>th</sup> July.

The Divisional Director, Planning and Transport Development, briefly commented on the subject. Councillor David Dixon (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods) thanked the parishes for their responses to the proposed timetable. There would be a number of minor changes made as a consequence and a "dry run" held. He emphasised that, although only a comparatively small number of residents were affected, they were still important and it was always good to hear comments that were raised with the benefit of local knowledge. The Chair referred to the provision of Library Hubs and cited the example of the Community Library in Combe Hay.

The briefing paper was noted.

## 15 PAPERLESS PARISH COUNCILS

The meeting received a briefing paper prepared by Mark Minkley, Team Leader - Environment, on a transition to electronic communication on the planning application process in order to improve the Council's service to Town and Parish Councils. The advantages of the new process was outlined which would commence on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Support would be made available for Town and Parish Councils. There would be a review of how it has worked after 6 months and additional support provided if required.

Lisa Bartlett, Development Manager, commented on the proposal.

Peter Duppa-Miller (Local Councils Association) stated that most parishes were delighted. However, the cost of providing the equipment (laptop, projector and screen) was in the region of £1200. He provided details of parishes' precepts showing that it would be difficult for some parishes to afford to pay for the equipment. There was Public Works Board funding available but it couldn't be provided in the timescale. The Development Manager stated that there had been positive feedback from parishes to these proposals. However, parishes could inform Development Control via their e-mail address [development\\_control@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:development_control@bathnes.gov.uk) by August of any perceived problems. There would in any event be a review after 6 months. She suggested that it might be possible for parishes to share their equipment.

The briefing paper was noted.

## 16 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2013 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Riverside, Keynsham.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**