

Bath and North East Somerset Council

PARISHES LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 17th June, 2015, 6.30 pm

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Sally Davis, Michael Evans, Charles Gerrish, Ian Gilchrist (Chairman), Marie Longstaff, Vic Pritchard, Dine Romero, Martin Veal and Tim Warren

Representatives of: Bathavon West, Batheaston, Bathampton, Camely, Camerton, Chelwood, Chew Magna, Clutton, Compton Dando, Compton Martin, Corston, Dunkerton, Englishcombe, Farrington Gurney, Freshford, High Littleton, Kenynsham, Monkton Combe, Priston, Publow with Pensford, Saltford, South Stoke, Timsbury, West Harptree, Whitchurch

Also in attendance: Jo Farrar (Chief Executive), Maria Lucas (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Lisa Bartlett (Divisional Director, Development) and Deborah White (ALCA County Secretary)

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Meeting stood and observed a one minute silence in tribute to Peter Duppa-Miller, who died on 1st May, and to Councillor David Bellotti, who died on 10th June.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman advised the Meeting of the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Patrick Anketell-Jones and Cllr Tony Clarke.

4 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

5 MINUTES: 25 FEBRUARY 2015

The minutes of the meeting of 25th February were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 PRESENTATION BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR TIM WARREN

Cllr Warren first of all outlined the new administration's key commitments for the next four years.

- Increased efficiency and reduced spending. He said that the Council faced a huge financial challenge. It was too early to decide detailed measures, but the administration would seek to minimise reductions in services. A financial review to establish a four-year spending plan was being undertaken by Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Resources.
- Transport. The Bath and Keynsham Transport Strategies would be updated and there would be a review of transport in the Chew Valley and Somer Valley areas.
- More homes and jobs. The administration would seek to achieve this objective while protecting the Green Belt. The Council's Core Strategy had been agreed in July 2014, and this was being used to defend against unacceptable proposals at planning appeals
- Young people. Among other things, the administration would seek to provide high-quality care for looked-after children.
- Cleaner, healthier communities. The administration was looking forward to working with the parishes on this objective. Efforts would be made to keep the streets clean, increase recycling and to protect and enhance the natural and built environment.
- Dignity for older people. The administration wished to increase grants available to assist older people with disabilities to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

He introduced his Cabinet colleagues, Cllrs Michael Evans, Charles Gerrish, Marie Longstaff, Vic Pritchard and Martin Veal to the Meeting. He apologised that Cllrs Patrick Anketell-Jones and Tony Clarke had been unable to attend tonight.

He then turned to the agenda issues requested by parish representatives.

Connecting Communities

Cllr Warren said that the agendas for Area Forums would be tailored more closely to the characteristics of individual localities. Local people should attend the Forums and give feedback on the issues they felt were important.

[Information about Connecting Communities and the dates of future Area Forums are given on the attached briefing note.]

Fracking

Lisa Bartlett (Divisional Director- Development) said that 'fracking' was a general term applied to several extractive techniques. There were currently no licences to allow prospective developers to carry out explorations in the Bath and North East Somerset area. There had until recently been one prospective developer, who had held a 13th-round licence to conduct explorations in the southern part of the area. The government rescinded this licence, even though the developer had wanted to renew it. We are awaiting an announcement by the Government in relation to allocation of 14th-round licences.

If a licence was issued that covered the Bath and North East Somerset area or adjoining areas, for example, the Mendips, the licensee would still have to seek planning permission before it could commence any operations.

Cllr Warren reminded the Meeting that the Council had passed a resolution he had proposed in July 2013 stating that the Council had serious concerns about the potential impact of fracking on the Green Belt, underground springs and water supply in the area, and that it should adopt measures to control, and if possible, prevent, fracking in the area.

Broadband

Thys van Tonder (B&NES Broadband Principal) said that it was astonishing that the UK was still only 24th in the world broadband connectivity league. The roll-out programme was being co-ordinated by the Connecting Devon and Somerset partnership. The rate of cabinet installation had increased, and two new staff members had been engaged. The partnership had 100 "broadband evangelists" to promote the uptake of superfast broadband. Some of them would be coming into the B&NES area in the next three months.

The aim of the current roll-out programme had been to get 90% broadband coverage in the UK including Devon and Somerset; tenders had recently been issued to increase that by an additional 5%. It was hoped that contracts would be concluded with BT shortly. Four cabinets had recently been installed in Batheaston and one in central Bath. He referred to the recent agreement between TrueSpeed and Hibernia Networks and said that they had been very positive about playing a role in the roll out of broadband in the area.

In reply to a question from a delegate about when and where future installations would be taking place, he said that he did not have access to BT's plans and only knew when work had been started and when it had finished.

In reply to a question from Cllr Michael Evans he said that while all new cabinets were fibre-enabled, they would only have fibre connections to the cabinet, and not beyond. Cllr Evans asked whether existing cabinets which were close to the exchange would only have copper connections to the exchange. Mr van Tonder replied that this would be the case; newly-installed cabinets would not be live until they had been tested.

Cllr Paul Myers said that some of the area's largest employers were close to an exchange and so had only copper connections. Surely something could be done about this? Mr Van Tonder replied that he would need the postcodes of the relevant premises before he check with BT. There was a separate programme for the roll out of superfast broadband to commercial premises.

Replying to a delegate who expressed disappointment at the slow pace of the broadband rollout in the area, Mr Van Tonder said that one obstacle was EU rules restricting state aid for industry, which prevented the Council putting its own network or connections in place. Legal advice was being taken at present about what the Council could do to help areas not in the programme.

A delegate said that the lack of a mobile phone signal was a problem in some parts of the area. Cllr Warren agreed and said that the number of mobile phone masts needed to be reviewed.

Review of road works

Cllr Warren said that the administration's announcement about a review of road works had unfortunately been misunderstood in some quarters. It was simply a review of why some road works had taken so long to complete. Duncan Hounsell, Chair of Saltford Parish Council drew attention to the announcement by Network Rail that Metro West could stop at a new station at Saltford. It was therefore essential to expedite this scheme so that the opportunity was not missed.

Neighbourhood Plans

A delegate expressed concern about the slow progress in relation to arranging Neighbourhood Referendums. The Chief Executive apologised and advised that there were now three Neighbourhood Plans and that the referendums are proposed to take place on 10 September 2015.

Gypsy and traveller sites

Lisa Bartlett advised that work on the Gypsy and Traveller DPD was delayed pending an assessment of sites outside the Green Belt being undertaken by the other West of England Unitary Authorities.

7 COUNCIL STRUCTURE

The Chief Executive outlined the Council's new committee structure. A Health and Wellbeing Select Committee had been established to underline the Council's increasing statutory role in this area.

8 COUNCIL'S MONITORING OFFICER

Maria Lucas introduced herself to delegates. She said that she would be arranging to attend parish meetings to meet the councillors and speak about standards. She invited parish clerks to contact her if they had any queries about standards issues.

9 PRESENTATION BY MATT ATKINSON, PRINCIPAL OF BATH COLLEGE

The Chair welcomed Matt Atkinson to the meeting.

Matt said that he was now Principal and Chief Executive of Bath College, formed from the merger of City of Bath College with Norton Radstock College. The college had two campuses, one in Bath and one in Westfield. 80% of students were from the locality. 9,000 students enrolled each year and 3,000 were full time. The college employed 650 staff. The previous two colleges had suffered a quite severe reduction in funding, so a merger had been necessary. The college had three priorities:

1. To develop the talent of young people;
2. To develop people in the work place;
3. To encourage learning in the community.

The college had access to the Community Learning Fund. It had £330,000 to spend on community projects and welcomed suggestions about where this could be spent. The college already had a Hub-in-a-Pub in Chew Stoke.

The college could no longer afford to duplicate provision at the two campuses, so there would be a rationalisation of courses between the two. Students would have to travel more often between Bath and Westfield. The college had been successful at the first round of a funding application to the West of England LEP for funding to build a new construction skill centre in Bath.

The college had lots of space, and was looking at how this might be made available to businesses. The college wanted to reconnect the Westfield campus to the local business.

Councillor Evans asked whether funding was difficult. Matt said that his task was to ensure that the college was well run within the resources available. There was no doubt that the merger would help the college to be stronger.

Councillor Gerrish asked about the costs of travel between the two campuses. Matt said that the provision of affordable transport in the area for young people was poor. Within a couple of years 500 people would be travelling between the campuses and the college was investing to make transport easier. They were talking to First Bus. The college could be paying up to £300,000 a year for extra services. Free bus passes would be provided to students in September.

Councillor Gerrish recalled that Norton Radstock College had previously had premises in Keynsham. Matt said these had to be closed because of cost pressures. He didn't rule out the possibility of a local presence in future.

10 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting ended at 7.24 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

Connecting Communities: Update for Parishes Liaison Meeting, Wednesday 17th June

As reported previously to Parishes Liaison, our Connecting Communities Forums are designed to help local elected members, parish councils, public services and residents to work better together to address areas of local concern. Three Forums are currently operating- in the Somer Valley, Chew Valley and the Keynsham area. The next steps for Connecting Communities are:

- To extend the Area Forum approach to the Bathavon area- an initial workshop on this is planned for 23rd July
- To hold a series of workshops (details below) to support the production of shared action plans by the three existing Forums, based on priorities the Forums themselves have identified
- To continue to refine and improve how the Forums operate, building on the outcomes of these workshops and our work so far, with the aim of:
 - ✓ Involving more local groups and residents
 - ✓ More effective use of time at the Forums
 - ✓ Greater involvement of partners

In addition-

- Area Profiles have now been produced with local data
- The Working Group on Options to strengthen community representation and civic governance within Bath meets again on 19th June at 12.30 in The Guildhall. Papers for the meeting have been circulated to parishes.

Details of Area Forum Action Planning Workshops

Chew Valley	5pm, 20 July	The Wellsway, Harptree Hill, Harptree
Bathavon (initial workshop)	5pm, 23 July	St Gregory's School Hall, Odd Down
Keynsham	5pm, 28 July	Community Space
Somer Valley	5pm, 30 July	Conygre Hall, Timsbury

Further information on Connecting Communities is available on this link:

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/localism-and-community-planning>

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