

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	14 March 2012	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2366
TITLE:	Bath City Conference – Update	
WARD:	All Wards in the City of Bath	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Terms of Reference		

## **1 THE ISSUE**

This report sets out the current proposals for developing the Bath City Liaison Forum into a new Bath City Conference (BCC) recommending Terms of Reference and outlining plans for the first Bath City Conference, as one of the ways of engaging with communities across Bath.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet agrees that:

- 2.1. The emerging approach to the future development of the Bath City Conference set out in this report be adopted and kept under review so that opportunities to link this process with other community engagement are fully considered
- 2.2. A Steering Group be established with the membership as set out in paragraph 5.4
- 2.3. The involvement of the Council on the basis of the attached Terms of Reference (attached in Appendix 1) be agreed and kept under review and the membership and working arrangements of the forum be presented for approval at the first meeting of the Bath City Conference.

### 3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications. The aim is to use the capacity of Partnership groups and other organisations in Bath to ensure the sustainability of the conference. Some Council resources may be required to support the processes involved including Task and Finish Groups and any online services that the Conference uses. These will be found from within existing budgets.

### 4 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- *Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone*
- *Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live*
- *Building a stronger economy*

### 5 THE REPORT

- 5.1. The Bath City Liaison Forum was established in 2008 as a way of improving information flow and liaison between residents' groups in Bath and the Council and other partners. It has provided a useful conduit for raising local concerns and in keeping residents' groups informed of Council activities as well as setting up a successful Task and Finish group on street cleansing, which directly led to improved outcomes in this area of work.
- 5.2. At the Cabinet meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011 the Cabinet agreed a new approach to the future development of the Bath City Liaison Forum based on developing and deepening collaboration between public services and local residents. It established an interim steering group to prepare detailed Terms of Reference, membership and working arrangements.
- 5.3. Following this, the Council has engaged with residents' groups to consider new ways of working which meet these objectives. Emerging from this process are the following proposals for a more flexible style of partnership working, which aims to be one of the ways of strengthening engagement in Bath, promoting active citizenship and better reflecting the diversity of Bath's communities.
- The proposal is that a "Bath City Conference" (BCC) will be a way of engaging a wide range of local organisations across the City of Bath. This will reflect the diversity of Bath and its communities, encompassing local businesses, student bodies and other organisations contributing to the life of local communities in Bath. Relevant public service partners will also be included. It would agree the goals of Task and Finish groups to be established, as set out below. The BCC would also provide an opportunity for Elected Members representing Bath wards to help identify key issues. Further work is being undertaken by the Interim Steering Group on the detailed arrangements for the first full meeting of the BCC.
  - Task and Finish Groups – comprising representatives of groups with an interest in the subject under discussion, potentially including representatives of: local residents' and locally-based businesses; elected members; and representatives of relevant public service providers supported by appropriate Council Officers.
  - An online presence, which would enable quick and easy communication, reduce the need for meetings and encourage practical discussions and collaboration on key issues. This could potentially be accessed by a wider group of local citizens who wish to collaborate and develop practical solutions. However, it is also

recognised that take-up of online services is uneven across different areas and communities. The aim would therefore be to complement our “face-to-face” work with local residents and businesses, not replace it.

- A “light touch” steering group which will support and manage the process and ensure it is delivering its objectives.

5.4 An interim steering group has been meeting to develop the current proposals. It is suggested that the steering group taking forward the Bath City Conference should have representation from; the following:

- Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods,
- Local Business,
- Residents’ groups
- Tenants’ groups
- Communities of Interest
- Communities of Place
- Student representatives
- Somer Community Housing Trust

The membership of the Steering Group will be reviewed at the first full meeting of the Conference. This membership and other proposed objectives and working arrangements for the Bath city Conference are outlined in the draft terms of reference set out in the Appendix.

5.4. It is envisaged that Council officers will help to support the organisation of the BCC, including its online presence, steering group and task groups. The Council will also help to publicise the work of this BCC through its work in specific communities and more widely. However, due to this being an emerging landscape the Council will need to keep it under review and potentially look at other ways of engaging the community in local areas, such as through other initiatives some of which arise from the Localism Act, in particular Neighbourhood Planning.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

6.2 There is a risk that the Bath City Conference will not join up with other forms of community engagement. To help avoid this the council's involvement in the conference and the Terms of Reference will be kept under review to see what links can be made to existing and emerging forms of community engagement.

## **7 EQUALITIES**

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out on the establishment of the previous Bath City Liaison Forum. This has since been revised and updated taking in to consideration the broadening out of the BCC, which allows for a more diverse range of groups and individuals to take part in this forum, in particular those that reflect the protected characteristics of different groups.

7.2 The introduction and use of an on-line system could have a differential impact across the different protected characteristics groups, but this will be mitigated by ensuring other communications methods are used and that tailored support is given. These working arrangements will be incorporated into the plans and documentation of the Bath City Conference.

## **8 RATIONALE**

8.1 The development of the Bath City Conference set out in this report arise from discussions with the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations, other residents' groups and Small Business Focus with all discussions aimed at improving the operation and impact of this Forum.

## **9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1 Consultation with residents' groups considered whether the Bath City Liaison Forum could continue in its previous form. It was concluded that there was a need for an improved arrangement.

## **10 CONSULTATION**

10.1 Cabinet members; Other B&NES Services; local residents; community Interest groups; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer

10.2 The Steering Group (currently made up of representatives from Resident, communities of place and business groups) have taken part in many meetings to discuss these Terms of Reference and a draft of this report was circulated to seek views. The Terms of Reference will also be presented at the first full meeting of the Bath City Conference before they are formally adopted.

## **11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION**

11.1 *Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Corporate;*

## **12 ADVICE SOUGHT**

12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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<b>Sponsoring Cabinet Member</b>	<i>Councillor Paul Crossley</i>
<b>Background papers</b>	<i>Previous Bath City Liaison Forum Terms of Reference</i>
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	