

Bath and North East Somerset Council

PARISHES LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 20th February, 2013, 6.30 pm

Bath & North East Somerset Councillors: Rob Appleyard (Chair), Neil Butters (Vice-Chair), Paul Crossley, David Bellotti, Matthew Blankley, Gerry Curran and Francine Haerberling

Representatives of: Bathford, Cameley, Camerton, Corston, Clutton, Dunkerton, Farmborough, High Littleton, Marksbury, Monkton Combe, Newton St Loe, Paulton, Peasedown St John, Stanton Drew, Timsbury, Wellow,

Also in attendance: Eric Potter, Chair of B&NES Local Councils Association

Officers: Jo Farrar (Chief Executive), David Trigwell (Divisional Director, Planning and Transport) Simon de Beer (Planning Policy and Environment Manager), Richard Look (Business Continuity and Emergency Planning Manager), Gregory Stacey (Business Continuity Emergency Planning Officer) , Steven George (Senior Planning Policy Officer), Ann Swabey (Democratic Services Officer)

28 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman, Councillor Rob Appleyard, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

29 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Clerk drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Simon Allen, Cherry Beath, Sally Davis, David Dixon, Eleanor Jackson, Roger Symonds and Martin Veal. Apologies had also been received from Bathford and Charlcombe Parish Councils.

31 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

32 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON OCTOBER 17TH 2012

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record.

33 PRESENTATION BY THE LEADER OF COUNCIL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

This item was introduced by Councillor Paul Crossley, Leader of the Council and Jo Farrar, Chief Executive. Councillor Crossley informed the meeting that the vision and aspiration for the Council's future was set by the councillors. Their aim was to develop a whole Council Plan which would remove the friction between the urban and rural areas. The Economic Strategy was in place and the Core Strategy was due to be considered by Council in March. Development of Transport Strategy will start after the Core Strategy had been completed. A Leisure Strategy linked with a Health and Wellbeing Strategy would follow. The Council also planned to invest in education, hence the proposed expansion of 6 primary schools. This continued the Council's main objective of raising educational standards across the board.

With regards to the budget, the Council had set a zero increase for the 3rd successive year. This has been achieved by, among other things, improving back-office efficiency, reducing the number of offices and amending work methodology. The Council were also about to launch the Connecting Families project which would support families with diverse and complex needs within the authority. The authority had also been selected to pilot the government's new changes to welfare reform.

Councillor Crossley acknowledged that the Council had not delivered on the Radstock Regeneration Project and that they intended to put that right. There was also new office development and other regeneration plans for Keynsham. In conclusion, Councillor Crossley summarised the Council's objectives as:

- Promoting independent and positive life
- Strengthening neighbourhoods
- Stronger Economy.

Jo Farrar continued the presentation by outlining the methods by which these objectives would be delivered. The importance of partnership working was stressed and the need to grow that across the public sector especially with neighbouring authorities. She mentioned the '10 in 100' project which aimed to encourage employees to develop innovative ideas (i.e like The Dragon's Den) and also more joined-up working between departments on the One Stop Shop model. In conclusion, Jo Farrar said that she trusted staff to solve problems and that they were responding to higher expectations.

34 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE B&NES COUNCIL'S 2013/14 BUDGET

Councillor David Bellotti (Cabinet Member for Community Resources) introduced this item. He set out the priorities which had been agreed at the Council Budget meeting of 19th February which are:

- protecting front-line services
- No increase in council tax
- Investment in homes and jobs for local people.

Councillor Bellotti informed the meeting that the Council had received a smaller government grant than expected for this year and that £30m needed to be saved from the overall budget. Two-thirds of that sum will be achieved by reductions in the management structure, improvement in Information Technology, increased income and a tourism levy.

The Council had also decided not to cut bus services, the youth service, libraries or bin collections and had allocated extra funds for public health. The authority would also receive an extra £2m for the pupil premium. One of the reasons for not increasing council tax was that the average income in the area does not match the higher house prices, so there was concern that residents would not be able to afford a rise.

Councillor Bellotti added that, in prioritising homes and jobs, money has been put aside for affordable housing. The Council had been chosen to pilot the new Universal Credit scheme and the Social Fund, (crisis payment scheme for local people in need) was being transferred to Council control. There had been a significant rise in the number of young people in apprenticeships, together with a fall in unemployment and house repossessions. The Council was also embarking on major initiative to start partnerships with 10 voluntary organisations which would increase their capacity and improve facilities.

A representative from Priston Parish Council asked whether the timescale for the Transport Strategy was different from that for the Core Strategy and was informed that the Council did not have an integrated Transport Strategy as yet. David Trigwell (Divisional Director, Planning and Transport) added that there was a need to identify where the growth of homes and jobs needed to be over the next 20 years. Once members agreed on what they wanted for the future, then transport issues could be addressed.

A representative from Keynsham Town Council commented on the proposal for 2-year old children to attend school and asked if that was why the children's centre budgets were being cut. Councillor Bellotti replied that not all schools will want to fund 2 year olds. There would be no cuts in the next 12 months for children's centres, health visitors or the careers service.

35 THE B&NES LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Core Strategy

David Trigwell introduced this item and explained that there was still some way to go with the Core Strategy. The challenge was to make progress after the Inspector's examination. He acknowledged that the department had not been able to engage with parishes as well as they would have liked. Simon de Beer added that the department was due to report to Council on 4th March regarding the housing requirement and looking at the best way to respond to need. Once agreed, there would be a 6 week consultation period during which they would hold surgeries around the district. The hearing would then resume in July and the final report would be published at the end of the year.

A representative from Publow and Pensford asked whether they should assume that there would be no major developments in their area as they had not been contacted. Simon de Beer replied that the proposed changes would be released on 25th February when communities could see whether any changes affected them. All the Parish and Town Councils would be informed fully about the reports to Council.

A representative from Freshford Parish Council asked what would be happening to the Local Plan which was due to expire at the end of March and would existing plans go by the board. Simon de Beer agreed that it was a very confusing situation. The Core Strategy will replace parts of the Local Plan. Most Local Plan policies will continue for the time being until replaced by other documents.

A representative from Clutton Parish Council asked how soon the Council would have a 5 year housing supply policy and was informed that, as soon as Members decide to adopt the Strategy's proposals, the planners could use it to apply to new developments.

Conservation areas

A representative from Stanton Drew asked whether the Parish Councils would be able to designate new conservation areas and could they self-fund. David Trigwell replied that resources need to be concentrated on getting the Core Strategy through and that conservation areas would have to be put on the back burner for now. In future they would hope to include conservation areas and heritage issues when the Placemaking Plan is underway.

Placemaking Plans

Steven George introduced this item and explained that the Placemaking Plan was complementary to the Core Strategy, providing detail to the strategic planning framework. Its key aim was to work closely with the parishes and communities in Bath in a similar model to that used by the Policy and Partnerships Team. Placemaking is a timely opportunity for neighbourhood planning work. The launch document would come out in May which would start discussions about the future of various areas.

A representative from High Littleton Parish Council enquired by what date the Placemaking Plan would be completed. He was concerned that it would all take too long. He was informed that the Preferred Options would be available by the end of 2013. The department would be trying to work closely with parishes to ensure that the plans reflected their aspirations, so that there would be no need to create a Neighbourhood Plan as well.

A representative from Publow with Pensford Parish Council commented that their parish already had an appraisal in place and asked whether it was still valid. He was informed that there was no need to change it. A representative from Freshford said that their village was in the process of creating their neighbourhood plan and asked if there was anything they needed to be aware of that might upset their timetable relating to the Core Strategy or Placemaking process. Steven George replied that there was one Placemaking Plan for the whole district. Neighbourhood Plans are a new tier of planning which communities can choose to create or not. It was important to make sure that what was said in the Placemaking Plan is reflected in Neighbourhood Plans and the Core Strategy.

36 GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOW PEOPLE SITE ALLOCATIONS DOCUMENT - UPDATE

Simon de Beer introduced this report and informed the meeting that the timetable for progressing this had been extended due to the need to focus on the Core Strategy. A report on the stocktake would come to Cabinet in May 2013 and a new timetable would be set after that date.

A representative from Compton Dando Parish Council asked whether the delay would stop enforcement actions on existing sites and was informed that the existing policies and powers could still be applied.

37 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Richard Look (Business Continuity and Emergency Planning Manager) gave a Powerpoint presentation to the meeting about the Council's response to recent flooding and severe weather events.

A representative from Clutton Parish Council commented that they provided information to the authority about blocked drains etc but nothing was done about them and so it was not surprising that they then flooded. He was concerned that there were not adequate communications with the Highways Department. Richard Look replied that Highways were the key responders in these situations. David Trigwell commented that the weather conditions in 2012 were exceptional with run-off from fields adding to the large amounts of water that the road drains had to cope with. A representative from Swainswick Parish Council pointed out that some of the problem was due to farmers not clearing ditches.

A representative from Priston Parish Council asked whether it would be practicable for parishes to send texts with photos of flooding to the department. David Trigwell replied that a system was being trialled to allow parishes to report on-line using the telephone. It was hoped to roll it out to all parishes.

A representative from Compton Dando Parish Council asked whether there was a policy about sandbags and was informed that it was the responsibility of the Highways department, however, the authority did not have the resources to supply every house. A representative from Dunkerton Parish Council said that the Highways had been very good when their village was flooded and also during the snow and he would commend their actions.

38 THE GREEN DEAL

The meeting agreed to note this report. The Chair asked parishes to direct any queries to Marion Britton (Interim Project Manager, Sustainability, Policy and Partnerships)

39 UPDATE ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL BROADBAND PROJECT IN

NORTH EAST SOMERSET

The meeting agreed to note the report. The Chair directed the Parishes to forward any queries to Anna Garner (Principal EEB Development Officer).

40 THE PROVISION OF HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND TO RURAL SETTLEMENTS

Councillor David Bland (Englishcombe Parish Council) gave a presentation on rural broadband.

A representative from Englishcombe Parish Council commented that their village suffered from very slow broadband speeds that makes downloading Council documents very slow and difficult. He asked what B&NEs were doing to improve this situation. Councillor Paul Crossley replied that the authority were in the process of collaborating with Devon, Somerset and other West Country local authorities to deliver better broadband services to rural areas over the next 2 years.

A representative from Dunkerton Parish Council asked whether, if cables were laid, they would get rid of telephone wires and was informed that they would eventually go, but that telegraph poles would still be needed for landlines.

41 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

In closing the meeting, the Chair thanked everyone for their contributions. He said that he had enjoyed his time as Chair and especially his visits to the rural communities. He introduced his successor, Councillor Neil Butters, who would chair the next meeting on 19th June 2013.

Peter Duppa-Miller, Secretary to the B&NES Local Councils Association, thanked Councillor Appleyard on behalf of the parishes.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services