

Briefing Note, Parishes Liaison, 16th October 2013
Connecting Communities

1. This note identifies emerging themes arising from the Connecting Communities programme, which began on 1st September, particularly as they are relevant to Parishes Liaison.
2. Parishes Liaison on 19th June received an update on the Connecting Communities 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 we engage with local groups and residents.
3. The Programme began in September in the pilot areas of Keynsham/Chew Valley and the Somer Valley. The initial aim has been to begin conversations about how local working can be strengthened and streamlined.
4. Some of the themes identified so far from partnership discussions (including a workshop hosted by the Chew Valley Area Partnership) are:
 - ✓ Parish Councils are elected bodies and regularly liaise directly with Bath and North East Somerset and other public bodies on local issues such as highways maintenance and traffic issues. These issues should generally be addressed with relevant officers and, as appropriate, Bath & North East Somerset ward members. One of the roles of the Parish Charter (see following agenda item) is to set out agreed standards for this process.
 - ✓ There is also value in Parish Councils, businesses and other community groups working together across wider areas to reflect local needs and concerns that cannot be addressed through day-to-day discussions. A number of parish councils have also identified that sharing information through groups such as Parishes Liaison and Parish Clusters is also valuable.
 - ✓ Different areas have different needs and any changes must make it easier for these to be addressed at the right level without local concerns getting lost. New ways of working must lead to action. Some issues, such as fracking, may also require a wider area of engagement and the Somer Valley Partnership also identified links across into Mendip as being important. Some towns and parishes may wish to work together on common issues regardless of their geography.
5. Further work is taking place to refine these discussions into tangible proposals that can deliver “on the ground” improvements. However, where “quick wins” are possible these too will be progressed, as in the proposed Parish Rangers. A review will also take place of the Parish Charter (see separate agenda item).

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