

# Bath and North East Somerset Council

## PARISHES LIAISON MEETING

### Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 16th October, 2013, 6.30 pm

Councillors: Neil Butters (Bath & North East Somerset Council) (Chair), David Veale

Representatives (Parish and Town Councils): Bathampton, Cameley, Camerton, Chew Magna, Clutton, Combe Hay, Compton Dando, Corston, Dunkerton, Englishcombe, Farmborough, Freshford, Hinton Charterhouse, Keynsham, Marksbury, Monkton Combe, Newton St Loe, Paulton, Peasedown St John, Priston, Publow with Pensford, Saltford, South Stoke, Stanton Drew, Timsbury, Ubley, Wellow, Whitchurch,

Officers attending: Jo Farrar (Chief Executive), Louise Fradd (Strategic Director of Place), David Trethewey (Divisional Director of Strategy and Performance), Simon de Beer (Planning Policy and Environment Manager), David Wales (Principal EEB Development Officer), Stefan Chiffers (Area Traffic Engineer), David Dixon (Stronger Communities Manager), Ann Cullis (Senior Arts Development Officer), John Wilkinson (Divisional Director of Regeneration), Claire Gresswell (Programme Manager, Connecting Communities).

Also in attendance: Eric Potter (Chairman, B&NES Local Councils Association), Peter Duppa-Miller (Secretary, B&NES Local Councils Association), Tony Crouch (Avon Local Councils Association), Laurent Boon (BT)

#### 17 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair of Council, Councillor Neil Butters, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 18 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Clerk read out the procedure.

#### 19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received as follows:

B&NES Councillors: Paul Crossley, David Bellotti, Dine Romero, Tim Warren, Eleanor Jackson.

Parish Representatives: Charlcombe Parish Council

#### 20 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Peter Duppa-Miller read out a statement from Tim Richens (Divisional Director, Business Support, Finance) concerning the issue of Council Tax Support and local grants. The Director will write to all parishes once he has received information from central government about the level of Localised Council Tax Support.

## **21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 19TH JUNE 2013**

The minutes of the last meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013 were proposed for approval by Councillor Tony Crouch, seconded by Peter Duppa-Miller and signed by the Chair.

## **22 THE PARISH HIGHWAY RANGERS PROJECT**

Stefan Chiffers (Area Traffic Engineer) and Dave Dixon (Stronger Communities Manager) introduced this item and gave a Power Point presentation on the proposed work of the Parish Rangers. The scheme will be piloted in the 11 parishes of the Chew Valley cluster area, starting in December.

A representative of Englishcombe PC asked whether the scheme would affect the current funding for village sweepers and Public Rights of Way and was informed that the Parish Rangers would operate in addition to those services. There would be no extra cost to parishes unless additional work was needed. A representative of Ubley PC asked whether the Parish Rangers would have enough time and resources on be able to clean all the considerable numbers finger posts in the area. The officer replied that they hoped to sponsor apprentices to work alongside the rangers.

It was planned that rangers would liaise with a named contact in the parishes to survey the area and identify what needed to be done. This contact could be the parish clerk or one of the councillors. A representative from Corston PC asked whether the rangers would be working to a specific timeframe or rota or whether parishes could call them in on an ad hoc basis. The officer replied that the rangers would visit each parish in the cluster every 3 weeks and to begin with, would be working to a rota.

The Chief Executive informed the meeting that the parish rangers scheme was one of the '10 in 100' initiatives which was being promoted by the Council, whereby council employees had been invited to make suggestions to improve council services and skills. Out of 100 ideas, 10 were chosen and had to be implemented within 100 days.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation.

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

Simon de Beer (Planning Policy and Environment Manager) introduced this report which gave an update on the progress of the examination of the Core Strategy by the Inspector. One of the main outcomes so far was that B&NES would no longer be required to fulfil unmet housing need from Bristol. The next hearing would take place in December looking into the proposed 12,700 houses which are planned to be built

in this area between now and 2029. The urban extension area hearings would be held in March 2014.

The public consultation on the Green Belt would take place from 11<sup>th</sup> November until 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013 to which parishes were invited to attend and make comments on both the Green Belt boundaries and the development boundaries. There would be public exhibitions in Bath, Keynsham and Whitchurch – parishes would be informed about the details and dates. It was hoped that the Inspector would be satisfied with the plans and be in a position to sign them off after the March hearings.

A representative from South Stoke PC asked whether the Core Strategy would absolutely define the Green Belt boundary and was informed that it would. The clerk to Combe Hay PC asked if it was proposed that with reference to the Green Belt adjacent to Bath, the entire place-making process (including the preparation of the necessary development management policies) would be by-passed and was informed that it would for particular sites, though some are being reviewed.

Councillor Veale (Bathavon West) commented that the government's intervention in the planning process appeared to be intended to allow development within the Green Belt. He asked under what circumstances would this be allowed and the officer replied that the government was not in favour of ad hoc development – sites within the Green Belt would need to be scrutinised and go through the full planning process.

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

Simon de Beer (Planning Policy and Environment Manager) introduced the report and informed the meeting that, after the Placemaking Plan was launched in May, the department had received over 200 representations. There had been considerable concern expressed that the Placemaking Plan had been advanced before the finalisation of the Core Strategy. The next consultation will take place in late spring 2014.

A representative of Hinton Charterhouse PC said that they were in the process of doing their village assessment and wondered how to get their document accepted by B&NES. The officer replied that they hoped to incorporate village plans into a region-wide document. The representative from Hinton Charterhouse asked if it was a good idea to create a design statement and was informed that it was a useful exercise.

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

David Wales (Principal EEB Development Officer) and John Wilkinson (Acting Divisional Director for Regeneration) presented the report and introduced Laurent Boon who is the Programme Lead Officer for British Telecom in Devon and Somerset. The programme is on track to deliver faster broadband to 91% of homes in the area by the end of 2016. Surveying is planned to start in B&NES in spring 2014 with first services live by the end of that year.

A representative from Cameley PC asked when their exchange was due to be upgraded and was informed by Laurent Boon that the website would give dates for

when exchanges would go live. A representative from Englishcombe PC, David Bland (who declared a non-disclosable interest), informed the meeting that there were alternatives to this project and that despite promises of 24Mb download speed, for most of the time it was only 15Mb from the current provider. In his opinion, the requirement had been watered down. Laurent Boon assured him that coverage for the private sector would be 24Mb by the end of 2016.

David Wales added that Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) was not the end game – the authority aimed to achieve more in the future and deliver higher speeds in due course. He said that BT had been a good partner, already having invested £40m in the project. Additional funding was also being sought by CDS from the government £250m investment scheme announced last June, as the successor to the Rural Communities Broadband Fund.

The Chair thanked the officers for their contribution.

## **26 CONNECTING COMMUNITIES**

David Trethewey (Divisional Director, Strategy and Performance) introduced the programme in his role as sponsor and explained that the programme was being jointly adopted by public services in B&NES, including the Council, Police, Fire & Rescue, Curo and the Health services. The Parish Ranger project referred to earlier in the meeting was a good example of the Connecting Communities programme.

He then introduced Claire Gresswell who has been appointed programme manager for the roll-out of the initial pilot schemes in Keynsham, Chew Valley and the Somer Valley. She informed the meeting that the pilots were going well and that there was already an improvement in the communications with the community and also with the local authority.

## **27 ARTS DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS PLAN**

Ann Cullis (Senior Arts Development Officer) introduced the report and commented that investment in the arts did not seem to have reached out into the rural communities and that there was an opportunity gap for those who cannot engage in the current activities on offer. The Arts Development Team is planning to remedy this and reach out into the North East Somerset area; as such they would welcome feedback from parish and Town councils about what they would like to see happening.

A representative from Newton St Loe PC asked about what was actually available to small villages. The officer replied that the Bath International Music Festival did take events out to villages as well as to Keynsham, There had also been cinema screenings in Midsomer Norton as well as support for the Priston Festival. The Chair asked whether, under the ward councillors' initiatives (worth £8K), any funding had been sought for Arts schemes and was informed that there were not many.

Councillor Sally Davis said that she had used some of her ward councillors' initiative fund to hold a cinema screening in Stanton Wick. Ann Cullis added that micro grants of £500 were also available to local groups and organisations. The link giving information is included below:

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/sport-leisure-and-parks/arts-development/arts-funding-bath-north-east-somerset-council>

A representative from Monkton Combe PC suggested that the Arts Development Team contacted the editors of parish newsletters to advertise the grants to a wider audience. Ann Cullis replied that her team would take up this opportunity. It was also suggested that the Arts Development Team send information and listings about arts events and projects to parish newsletters. Ann Cullis explained that her team tried to get organisations to do their own publicity, but that they would bear this in mind.

## **28 PARISH CHARTER**

Peter Duppa-Miller (Secretary to the B&NES Local Councils Association) informed the meeting that there was a need for a revision of the Parish Charter as a result of the following:

- The outcomes of the earlier review by B&NES Council and the Local Councils
- The clear need to define the Spectrum of Engagement much more specifically
- The recent changes to legislation, especially the Localism Act and all the subsequent guidance
- The Connecting Communities programme, initiated by major public services
- The increasing perception (particularly by Local Councils) that the commitments embodied in the Parish Charter are not being honoured e.g. the commitment by B&NES to respond in a timely manner to communications from Local Councils.

Under the umbrella of the Connecting Communities programme, a root-and-branch revision of the Parish Charter will be undertaken. Subject to the meeting agreeing to establish a joint working party, Peter Duppa-Miller would contact all Local Councils and seek nominations for members of the joint working party. He would also send out examples of Parish Charter issues that have arisen in 2013 so that the wording of the Charter may be revised to ensure that such issues do not arise again. He was aware of 23 Local Councils in B&NES that have had such issues. The meeting agreed that such a Joint Working Party should be established forthwith.

The Chair thanked Peter Duppa-Miller for his contribution.

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

Peter Duppa-Miller commented that the programme needed to take account of the dates of cabinet meetings at which it would need to be approved. Louise Fradd

(Strategic Director of Place) replied that the timeframe of the programme was been looked at and may have to be changed. A representative of Stanton Drew PC asked about the status of the Lower Bristol Road site and the provision for families – Louise Fradd said she would report back. A representative from Compton Dando PC commented that 2 recent actions concerning gypsies centred around the fact that B&NES has no sites and that the longer the problem goes on, the greater the concerns of parish councils.

The briefing paper was noted.

### **30 PAPERLESS PARISHES CONSULTATION REGARDING PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Eric Potter (Chair of the Local Councils Association) commented that applicants for planning permission find the paper applications with their detailed drawings more helpful than viewing applications on screen. Louise Fradd replied that the desire was to make all applications electronic eventually, but where paper was absolutely required, the planning department would work with that. She confirmed that, in the interim, smaller Parish Councils would receive paper copies. A representative from Dunkerton PC pointed out that once paper copies were scanned, they were easy to download and project onto a screen. A representative from Compton Dando replied that, given slower broadband speeds, it was very difficult and long-winded to download. Jo Farrar added that Lisa Bartlett would be attending the next Parishes Liaison to respond to parishes' concerns on this issue. A representative from South Stoke said that they were moving towards paperless planning applications, but they had problems with multiple files and unclear numbering. The Chair asked where B&NES stood in the league table of councils who are moving towards paperless parishes. Louise Fradd offered to supply that information.

The briefing report was noted.

### **31 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Riverside, Keynsham.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**