

Parish Liaison Meeting 19th February 2014.

Parish Ranger Service – Update on the pilot.

1. Aims of this briefing

This briefing note aims to update the Parishes on the Parish Ranger Service Pilot. The purpose of this pilot is to establish whether it is possible to deliver existing services more efficiently and effectively by better use of existing resources.

The pilot is being undertaken in the Chew Valley Parish Cluster area.

2. Background

Bath & North East Somerset Council has over the years developed a number of different ways of delivering highways, cleansing and grounds maintenance in the towns and rural areas of the authority.

There are already in place some effective working practices between individual Parishes and the Council backed up by the Parish Charter, Parish Cluster and the Parish Liaison meeting.

The Parish Ranger Pilot is aimed at building on the existing good practice and will look to deliver increased outcomes from better co-ordination with the Parish Councils in the Chew Valley.

The Parish Ranger service, if adopted following the pilot, might eventually become part of the Councils “Connecting Communities” programme. We have an ambition for public services to become “excellent” at local engagement by:

- Listening- responding quickly and positively to new ideas
- Prioritising- being flexible to local circumstances
- Joining Up- public services co-ordinating how they engage locally and not “re-inventing the wheel”
- Working with you- helping communities find solutions to local problems

- Sharing ideas - encouraging joint working and sharing “what works”

The Parish Ranger Service pilot is intended to support the delivery of neighborhoods where people are proud to live, by:

- Developing pride in local communities
 - Delivering ad-hoc & routine tasks
 - Recruiting rangers that bridge the gap between community and council
 - More effective use of resources
 - Providing timely responses to enquiries
 - Delivering increased public satisfaction
 - Ensuring cleaner communities, road signs, hedges, etc.
 - Contributing a visible and recognisable presence in the community
 - Enabling Shared ownership and links between the council and community
- Being the face of the Council – acting as the eyes and ears for the area.

3. Parish Ranger Pilot – The story so far.

Following the last Parish Liaison meeting we contacted all 11 Parish Councils in the Chew Valley cluster area.

A workshop was arranged on the 20th November 2013 at Compton Martin Village Hall to develop a more comprehensive programme of activity with the Parishes. Nine of the eleven Parishes attended (i.e sixteen people in total).

Methods of communications between Parish contacts and the Parish Ranger were developed at the workshop as well as the activities that will need to be undertaken.

We interviewed and seconded a member of Council staff for the pilot which started on Monday the 2nd of December 2013.

In the eleven weeks since the start of the pilot, the Ranger has completed 323 separate tasks in the Chew Valley cluster area. 80 of these tasks have come directly from the Parish contacts themselves.

The Ranger has collected 1.17 tonnes of litter since the start of the pilot. The Ranger now recycles from his litter picks all the bottles, cans and other recyclable materials. Prior to this it was all sent to landfill.

In the last 4 weeks this accounts for 8 recycling boxes full of glass and 8 recycling boxes full of cans. In one lay-by alone the Ranger picked up 60 bottles in one visit!

The Ranger has also undertaken a number of tasks repairing local street furniture. The cost to install a new bench in the Chew Valley is £450 but the Ranger has repaired two at present for the cost of £55.

In addition to this the Ranger has been out and about cutting back vegetation, cleaning road signs and street furniture, emptying gulleys and removing hundreds of bags of wet leaves.

4. Parish Ranger – Next Steps

The current pilot has been extended until the end of July 2014. It was felt that the original pilot was not long enough and did not account for seasonal change that will have an effect on the Ranger's duties.

Extending the pilot will also provide more time to consider the best solutions to a number of issues which have emerged during the pilot.

These include:

Resilience – we need to ensure that adequate backup plans are in place to ensure continuity if the Rangers are away from work.

Governance – given that the tasks undertaken by the Rangers fall under the remit of a number of statutory functions (e.g Highway Authority, Waste Collection Authority, Principal Litter Authority) we need to be clear how staff are supervised and work is checked to ensure that required standards are met.

Affordability – the cost of rolling out a scheme to cover the whole area exceeds the amount of expenditure currently incurred on those tasks undertaken by the Rangers. This is because the Rangers are doing work which is not currently done. We need to find a way of closing the gap.

HR issues – implementing the scheme means reducing jobs in other teams and the affected post holders may not be capable of carrying out the Ranger duties. We need to try and avoid a situation where we drive staff into compulsory redundancy and associated costs of this.

We are also still in the process of developing the communication, recording and monitoring processes within the Council and our partners.

We are still planning to hold workshops with all the Parish and Town Councils and these are programmed for May 2014.