

Bath and North East Somerset Council

PARISHES LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 21st October, 2015, 6.30 pm

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Alan Hale, Tim Warren, Anthony Clarke, Michael Evans, Charles Gerrish and Martin Veal

Representatives of: Bathampton, Batheaston, Bathford, Cameley, Camerton, Clutton, Compton Dando, Compton Martin, Dunkerton, East Harptree, Englishcombe, Farmborough, Freshford, High Littleton, Hinton Charterhouse, Monkton Combe, Peasedown St John, Priston, Saltford, Shoscombe, South Stoke, Stanton Drew, Timsbury, Ubley, West Harptree, Whitchurch Parish Councils and Keynsham Town Council

Also in attendance: Andrew Pate (Strategic Director, Resources), Lisa Bartlett (Divisional Director, Development), Mark Reynolds (Group Manager Development), Peter Dawson (Group Manager, Planning Policy & Transport), Chris Major (Group Manager, Transport & Parking), Carol Maclellan (Waste Services Manager) and Andy Thomas (Group Manager Strategy & Performance)

11 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Alan Hale, Vice-Chair of Bath and North East Somerset Council, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said that he would be chairing the meeting in the absence of Councillor Ian Gilchrist, who had presented his apologies.

12 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out on the agenda.

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Ian Gilchrist, Councillor Vic Pritchard, Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones, Dr Jo Farrar, Corston Parish Council and Tony Heaford (Publow with Pensford PC).

14 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

These were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Tim Warren, reported to the meeting on the following issues.

West of England Devolution Deal

Councillor Warren said that the West of England (WoE) was the most productive city region outside the South East and a net contributor to the national economy. The 4

authorities in the WoE formed a bigger economic area than Merseyside. The WoE was overheating and facing challenges in housing supply and affordability and congestion. House prices were about 18% above the national average. The region needed more housing, jobs and infrastructure. There was a shortage of construction skills.

It had been calculated that a £1bn investment in infrastructure could generate a £2bn annual increase in economic output. An initial devolution and payment-by-results proposal had been submitted to the Government on 4th September. The proposal would require a review of governance arrangements. At present there was a Strategic Leaders Board comprising the Mayor of Bristol and the leaders of Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. There was no appetite among the WoE partners for recreating Avon; they wanted to retain their uniqueness and individuality. There would be a meeting with ministers at Parliament and it was hoped that agreement would be reached in principle by the Spending Review announcement on 25 November.

Responding to a question from a parish delegate about what powers might be devolved to the WoE, Councillor Warren said it was hoped that powers over skills training, infrastructure investment and housing would be devolved. The four authorities were not seeking powers over health, or policing. It would make a big difference to Bath and North East Somerset if it was able to retain business rates.

East Bath Park and Ride

Councillor Warren said that there had been several thousand responses to the consultation. It was the largest number of responses to a consultation that the Council had ever received. The responses were being reviewed and more details would be published when the review had been completed. He could not commit any particular outcome at the moment. In response to a question from a delegate, he agreed that it was possible that the Park and Ride might not go ahead. He noted that 70% of respondents to the consultation in the Bath Chronicle had been in favour, but thought that the Council now had a greater understanding of all the issues around the scheme.

Referendum on an elected Mayor for Bath and North East Somerset

Councillor Warren informed the meeting that the necessary 5% of electors had signed a petition calling for a referendum on an elected mayor. The referendum will be held next year, perhaps in May. It was important to understand that the referendum was about whether or not there should be an elected executive mayor for Bath and North East Somerset, the equivalent of George Ferguson in Bristol; the role of the existing Mayor of the City of Bath would not be affected.

17 PARISH SWEEPER SCHEME

Carol Maclellan updated the meeting on the review of the Parish Sweeper Scheme. She said the scheme was set up in 2003. There had been limited monitoring and it was appropriate to carry out a review now. The review would assess how money was being used and to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Scheme with parishes. About 18 parishes participated in the scheme with different ways of doing things. The first step was to find out what parishes were doing and what they liked or did not like about the scheme. Patricia

Vincent had written to all town and parish councils and had met with a number of them. The information gathered would be reviewed and proposals made in December or early next year. Issues that would be looked at included staff training and the provision of equipment.

In reply to questions, Carol said

- the review was not about removing the scheme, but improving it; there was no money to enable another parish to participate at the moment, but the review would look at how the participation of additional parishes could be funded; some parishes were struggling to recruit staff and in places there was duplication; the review was about how the scheme could work more effectively and efficiently
- information was being gathered from parishes to see exactly what they were doing under the scheme; this was not clear at the moment, because the responsibilities of parishes had changed and grown over time
- the clearance of brambles and tidying of verges was not done under the Parish Sweepers Scheme, but was the responsibility of the Parks Department and should be happening as a matter of course; schedules for this work were being reviewed and uploaded to the website, so that parishes could find out when work was due in their area
- the contracting out of respraying had not been successful, so it had been brought back in house; the staff qualification had been improved and six staff trained for the new qualification; this year's programme had started much later than it should because of the problems with contracting out

Councillor Veal said he would be happy to visit parishes with Carol and would ensure that any issues raised would be fed into the consultation process.

In response to a question, Councillor Warren said that the Parish Rangers scheme was a great idea, but unfortunately funds were not available to extend it at the moment.

18 PLANNING ISSUES

Planning Applications – Referral to Chair of Development Management Committee

Mark Reynolds gave a presentation. A copy of his PowerPoint slides is attached to these minutes as Appendix 1. Mark emphasised that applications where a parish had disagreed with the officer's recommendation would only be referred to the Chair if planning reasons were given. It was therefore important for parishes to ensure that they related their comments to the Council's statutory plans.

In response to questions Mark said:

- as soon as the Chair made a decision, this should be posted on the Council's website and the relevant parish would be informed; parishes should let him know of instances where this had not happened

- there was no statutory requirement to consult when applicants revised their plans after discussions with officers, but officers would consult where significant changes were made the Chair would be aware from the report and file whether a parish's comments were based on the original or revised plans

The Chair urged the planning officers to ensure that Chair's decisions were always reported back to the parish. Mark said he would remind his colleagues that this should be done as a matter of course

Local Development Scheme

Lisa Bartlett updated the meeting.

Placemaking Plan. The Draft Plan would be considered by Cabinet in December in order for a consultation exercise to begin. It was based on national policy and guidance. Some of the Council's existing plans had been in place for some years and needed updating. Any responses to the consultation would be directed to the Planning Inspector.

Neighbourhood Plans. She thanked all those who had input to the development of these Plans. The current situation re Neighbourhood Plans can be summarised as follows. 12 areas now designated as Neighbourhood Planning areas – progress as follows:

- Stowey Sutton Plan has been made by the Council (September)
- Freshford & Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan and Clutton neighbourhood Plan passed their respective referendum in September. The Plans are both due to be made by Cabinet in November
- Englishcombe is anticipated to submit its draft Plan to the Council in November
- Chew Valley area and Midsomer Norton are still anticipated to reach draft Plan stage towards the end of the year (Nov/Dec 2015)
- Stanton Drew are working on their options and are going out for community consultation in November
- Whitchurch, Westfield , Timsbury, Publow with Pensford & Batheaston are at the initial evidence gathering stage of Neighbourhood Plan preparation

Planning Training and Support

Mark Reynolds made a presentation. His PowerPoint slides are included in Appendix 1. He said that he hoped parishes had received emails about training workshops, the first of which take place the following Monday in Keynsham.

Councillor Veal suggested that parishes should invite their ward councillors to attend the workshops.

WoE Joint Spatial Plan

Lisa Bartlett gave a presentation on the Joint Spatial Plan. A copy of her slides is attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

The Chair asked who determined the amount of rented housing. Lisa said that at the moment affordable housing was provided on the basis of the Councils adopted planning policies and the details of the type and tenure was guided by advice from housing colleagues. Affordable housing was generally rented accommodation. The Government planned to extend the right to buy to affordable housing, but the regulations had not yet been made.

West of England: Update on Gypsy and Traveller Work

Lisa Bartlett said the Bath and North East Somerset continued to work with its partners in the West of England. Main issues for B&NES are the large proportion of land in the Green Belt (and to allocate a site in the Green Belt, exceptional circumstances need to be made to justify such an allocation) and the lack of suitable located, available, developable and deliverable non-Green Belt sites. Partners were reviewing their areas but early consultations had indicated that there was no capacity in the other areas for travellers from Bath and North East Somerset. It was not possible for a local authority to allocate sites in its area for travellers from another area, which meant that travellers from other areas could not be allocated sites within B&NES. Recent changes to government legislation gives greater protection for the Green Belt and greater protection for the countryside in general.

Councillor Veal asked if the traditional routes of gypsies and travellers were known, and. He also said that river travellers needed to be taken into consideration. Lisa replied that she had no information on the traditional routes of travellers in B&NES. An assessment of river travellers was being undertaken.

19 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT - FUTURE STRATEGY

Chris Major provided a brief overview of Community Transport in Bath and North East Somerset.

He said that the term 'community transport' was usually applied to forms of transport provided to local communities for the benefit of those disadvantaged by lack of access to ordinary transport facilities, such as people with disabilities, or even residents of remote villages. It was often provided by charities or non-profit organisations and operated by volunteers. Local authorities had the discretion to decide whether to provide financial aid, which organisations to support and how much to give them. Bath and North East Somerset supports several organisations in Bath, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock. The Council supports 3 dial-a-ride schemes, 5 minibus schemes and 3 voluntary car schemes in total. These groups were supported with a sum of £286,000 this year to enable them to provide in total 105,000 passenger journeys. Passengers were up 9% on the previous year and subsidy per passenger is down 14% in the last two years.

The Council had to be aware of possible legal challenges to the provision of grants under EU state aid rules, which were very complex. Factors that had to be taken into account were the amount of financial support and the nature and activities of the

group. The Community Transport scheme was being reviewed by Internal Audit to ensure that relevant rules and regulations were being complied with, that the money was being properly spent and that contracts were robust and properly monitored. The Keynsham Transport Strategy is in process of being adopted and there would be similar strategies for the Somer Valley and Chew Valley areas. The Council had obtained £60,000 from the DfT's Total Transport Fund to undertake a review in the Chew Valley area as a pilot. This would allow a greater understanding of the transport needs in this area and of how different groups could be brought together to work more cost effectively. There was dialogue with local transport liaison groups.

20 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Items suggested were broadband in rural areas and education.

21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be:

24th February 2016.

It was agreed that the dates of future meetings would be:

11th May 2016

12th October 2016

15th February 2017

22 NOTE: LOCAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR KEYNSHAM

The Meeting noted the Council's response on the Local Transport Strategy and 'rat running' through Keynsham.

Council response

The current work on the Local Transport Strategy acknowledges that the lack of road infrastructure around Keynsham presents a significant challenge. Feedback in relation to the Keynsham strategy (eg from discussion at the exhibition on 15th September) is currently being considered and any specific proposals in relation to schemes aimed at reducing "rat-running" would be welcome. This issue may also be referred to the Keynsham Area Forum for consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.13 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services