

Bath and North East Somerset Council

PARISHES LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 24th February, 2016, 6.30 pm

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Ian Gilchrist (Chairman), Anthony Clarke, Martin Veal, Michael Evans and Charles Gerrish

Representatives of Parish and Town Councils in Bath and North East Somerset

Also in attendance: Andy Thomas (Group Manager Strategy & Performance) and Andrew Pate (Strategic Director, Resources)

23 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

24 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer read out the procedure.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Tim Warren, Liz Richardson, Martin Veale.

26 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

The Chair drew attention to the Parish and Town Councillors reception to be held on April 20 in Keynsham. All Parish and Town Councils should already have had notification of this date; official invitations will be sent out shortly.

All Parish and Town Councillors were welcome to attend. It would be helpful if Councils sent their own RSVPs detailing numbers expected to attend.

Suggestions from parishes about content to provide focus for the event would be welcome.

27 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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

28 VIDEO IN HONOUR OF PETER DUPPA-MILLER

The Chair welcomed Peter's widow, Margaret, to the meeting.

After the showing of the video the meeting showed their appreciation of Peter's service to the community with a round of applause.

Sara Dixon informed the meeting that the first winner of the Peter Duppa Miller Lifetime Achievement Award had been Joan Pearce of Combe Down. (Further information can be found at:

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/latestnews/volunteers-praised-chairman%E2%80%99s-awards-their-work-bath-and-north-east-somerset.>)

29 UPDATES FROM BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Andy Thomas introduced the briefing note.

Andy said that Catherine Parker in Planning would be willing to take any queries from parishes about infrastructure investment.

The meeting noted the updates.

29.1 COUNCIL BUDGET

Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Resources and Efficiency made a statement to the meeting. He said;

“Last November I attended a number of parish forums and went through the headline details of some of the budget proposals. However in the Autumn, although initially encouraging, the Chancellor’s statement proved far from the case, and when the settlement was announced in December, it showed a reduction in Government funding of somewhere in the region of £3.6m on what had been expected. It means that the overall shortfall for 2016/17 will be £12m. A lot of that £12m had been addressed prior to November, but an extra £3.6m at the last minute on top of that was somewhat more than we had hoped. A new management and service review will be completed by the Autumn to deliver a further £2.2m of savings, whilst in the short term reserves will be utilised until these savings are delivered, the target for that being 1st October. Additionally funding has been provided totalling £360k for the mayoral referendum.

Councillor Warren and I visited the minister in London regarding the late change in the Government formula that led to the reduction. Transition funding was announced for two years. Due to its one-off nature, this extra funding cannot be used to support the base budget as it would cause further difficulties in subsequent years. As a result £749,000 will be used to provide temporary support for departments this year while they adapt to new ways of delivering services and providing contingencies for risk.

The budget does protect all essential services, children’s centres, maintains increased local youth services and environmental services, such as street cleaning and maintains the high quality of social care. To summarise, there will be a 2% adult social care precept plus a basic Council Tax rise of 1.25%, the first for 5 years, a rise that had been postponed with support from Government funding that is now finished. This is the smallest rise in the region, and we have also been able to make additional funds available for a welfare support fund for those who find the increase in Council Tax this year rather challenging.

£5m of savings have been achieved through increases in efficiency in service provision. There is £3m from new sources of income and £1m from more up-to-date calculations on the cost of growth and £1.4m from underspends and better than planned Heritage incomes, which has been built into the figures. I would like to highlight the following specific projects in parishes:

- There will be support for a further year to adult advice and information centres before the Care Commission work leads to a total reformation.

- £200,000 towards the Bath Enterprise Area and the new Enterprise Zone in the Somer Valley
- An additional £0.5m for highways and infrastructure maintenance
- £3m on LED street lighting, a further investment which will lead to a reduction in the cost of street lighting and further savings on energy use
- Funds for bin replacement
- £3.275 million towards an increase in the provision of affordable housing.
- Substantial funds for investment in both Bath Quays and the new property company that has just been announced. This is designed to generate income either through additional business rates that the Bath Quays will generate or through rental income of the property company.
- Specific investment in schools at St Mary's and Writhlington, Farmborough Primary and Saltford Primary and further funding towards Peasedown Primary and Ubley Primary
- £100,000 for highways structures between Belluton Narrows and Pensford in the coming year. This might cause traffic difficulties for those who use that route, and I am advised that the detour for that route is substantial, but local people can half the length of the official detour.
- Drainage funding for Chew Magna, Upper Swainswick and a further phase in West Harptree
- Carriageway works on the A39 at Corston and Charlcombe Lane and a new road at Publow Lane in Pensford
- Surface dressing at Paulton Road in Hallowtrow and Stockwood Lane in Keynsham
- Improvements to the Bannerdown Road footpath, the Hallatrow roundabout and Harptree Cemetery

That's just an illustration of the projects spread throughout the parishes in North East Somerset. All details are listed in the documents about the budget proposals on the Council's website."

29.2 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REFERENDUM ON A DIRECTLY-ELECTED MAYOR FOR BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

30 The Meeting noted the arrangements for the referendum. **BRIEFING REQUESTED BY PARISHES: INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT IN BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

The Meeting noted the briefing.

31 SPECIFIC ISSUES RAISED BY PARISHES FOR RESOLUTION

Andy Thomas introduced this item. He drew attention to the working group of Parish Clerks, which it was proposed would work on the specific issues raised by ALCA under the Parish Charter.

Nick Stevens of Freshford asked whether the working group would also review the Parish Charter itself. He believed Parish Councillors should also be involved. All parishes had been sent a questionnaire about the Charter in 2009 and Freshford had submitted a very detailed response. Would the responses of parishes in 2009 be considered in the review? Andy Thomas clarified that reference to the clerks working group was due to the nature of the specific issues being raised under the Parish Charter. He agreed that there was an opportunity to review and update the Parish Charter and that Parish Liaison should be involved in this.

Nick Stevens referred to the provision of the Charter that B&NES would allow not less than 21 days for consultation with parishes and said that this timescale would often deny parish councils the opportunity to consider an issue at a formal meeting. A longer consultation period would be better for parishes.

Geoff Davies, Parish Clerk of South Stoke, suggested that now the sending of paper plans to parishes had been discontinued, a zip file containing all the documents relating to a planning application should be available from the B&NES website, as was the case in Wiltshire. Parishes generally did not have internet access in their halls, so if a presentation on an application was to be given at a parish meeting it was necessary to download every document relating to the application separately beforehand. The zip file should also be given a meaningful name, not just a number. He said that he had raised this with a planning officer at a previous meeting. Andy Thomas replied that he understood that a software change would be required before this could be implemented. He had not previously been aware of the issue about file names. Geoff Davies said that he could not see that a software change would be required. Martin Robinson, Chairman of Dunkerton and Tunley PC, was concerned that some drawings accompanying planning applications could not be viewed online because of their poor quality. He suggested that there needed to be basic quality standards for these drawings.

A delegate said that with slow broadband speeds it was difficult to examine plans, and it was impossible to see them properly on tablets. He suggested that either appropriate technology should be provided to parishes or paper plans should continue to be sent until these problems were resolved. Andy Thomas said there was help to assist parishes with IT. Planning had said that they would continue to provide paper plans for major applications. Andrew Pate said that a paperless approach had huge advantages and suggested that the way forward was to identify the gaps that needed to be filled to make technology work for parishes.

A delegate said that he felt the response on road diversions was a bit glib. Road closures could impact severely on parishes. Diversions could add many miles to journeys. Very short notice had been given of the work at the Viaduct. Councillor Tony Clarke said that he had already given a public apology for what had happened in relation to the Viaduct and he would give it again. It was unacceptable that notice had only been issued on 23rd December. This was planned work, and there was no reason not to have given a month's notice. A review of the management of road

works had been launched and an attempt would be made to give proper notice in future. Instead of "Traffic Management" a specific officer would be named on notices. Work was being done on producing timelines for future highways work.

A delegate said that parishes have appreciated more detail than had been given in the briefing note. It was disappointing that no officers from Planning, were present to respond to questions from parish representatives. Andrew Pate suggested that this meeting was possibly not the best forum to discuss detailed issues relating to Highways and Planning, for example. Cllr Martin Veal suggested the Parish Clerks' working group might be an appropriate forum; the Clerks could then report back to their parishes on issues discussed by the group. Chris Clemence of Hinton Charterhouse said that she was not sure that all Clerks were aware of the working group. Councillor Veal said that he would ensure that information was circulated to Clerks on this. Parishes could also submit issues to the working group.

32 FOR INFORMATION: MEETINGS OF CONNECTING COMMUNITIES FORUMS

The dates were noted.

33 DATES OF FUTURE PARISH LIAISON MEETINGS

It was noted that future dates of meetings were:

11 May 2016

12 Oct 2016

15 Feb 2017

The meeting ended at 7.24 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services