

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Communities, Transport and Environment Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	9 May 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E
TITLE:	Parish Charter	
WARD:	All parished wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s2877/Parish%20Charter.pdf		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 This report updates the Panel on the proposed review of the Parish Charter.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Note the arrangements for the review of the Parish Charter set out in the report.

2.2 Provide any initial information and advice to the working group being established to undertake the review.

2.3 Receive an update report when further work on the review has been undertaken.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

3.1 The staffing and other resources required for this work are being managed within existing budgets

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

4.1 Building effective relationships between Bath & North East Somerset Council and our town and parish councils is vital for the full range of issues and challenges in our local communities. The Council has a number of powers including the power of general competence which supports its approach to working in partnership with local councils.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 Since the early days of the authority, Bath & North East Somerset has agreed with parish and town councils a number of key protocol documents which set out ways of working between the “principal” authority and our local councils, currently comprising 45 parish councils, 3 town councils and 3 parish meetings. In summary:

- The Parishes Liaison Meeting in 1999 approved a Joint Partnership Statement which set out guidelines on the relationship between Bath & North East Somerset Council and the Local Council tier of local governance.
- Following the establishment of a Joint Working Party in June 2005, a revised framework document for working relations between Bath & North East Somerset Council and the local councils - generally shortened to the “Parish Charter”- was agreed at the Parishes Liaison Meeting on 15th February 2006. Observations were made by the Corporate Issues and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel, at its meeting on 9th March 2006, and the document was subsequently approved and adopted by Full Council on 30th March 2006.

5.2 The Parish Charter sets out both a broad context for relationships and specific commitments from Bath & North East Somerset Council and the local councils. These are set out under headings as follows:

- 1 Core Statement of Agreement
- 2 Consultation, Liaison and Engagement
- 3 Information and Communication
- 4 Standards
- 5 Local Community Leadership
- 6 Devolution of Services
- 7 Quality Parishes

5.3 An update presentation on the operation at the Parish Charter was presented at the Safer and Stronger Communities Panel on 10th January 2008 and then again in March 2008. In 2010, a further review was undertaken including a questionnaire that was prepared and distributed to Parishes on their views on the working of the Charter, with the aim of improving its operation and performance and gathering perceptions of how Parishes viewed the Charter's effectiveness. The findings of the survey were reported to the Panel.

5.4 The general approach taken was that the overall content of the Charter was robust and since then no overall review of the substance of the Parish Charter has taken place. Given this, it is proposed that a review of all aspects of the Parish Charter now be undertaken, taking into account the wide range of changes that have taken place since it was last reviewed. These changes include:

- The adoption of the Connecting Communities programme which has seen the creation of 4 Area Forums in the parished areas involving town and parish councils

- The introduction of the Localism Act and new community rights
- The further development of Council Connect and other channels, including social media, which provide new and updated means of communications
- New roles and services undertaken by a number of parish and town councils

5.5 In addition, Bath & North East Somerset Council has adopted a new Corporate Strategy which identifies the need to protect the services that matter most to our local residents and to make the most of new opportunities and ways of doing things, with a future agenda based on: a strong economy and growth; prevention; a new relationship with customers and communities; an efficient business. Strengthening and deepening partnership working with parishes can provide significant opportunities for delivering these approaches.

5.6 A working group comprising Parish and Bath & North East Somerset Council representatives is being established to undertake the review. It will agree its own work plan, approach and findings and will involve Parish Liaison (with an update being presented at its meeting of 11 May) as well as direct engagement with parish councils and other evidence gathered. A parish clerks working party has also been established to identify improved ways of working including training, development, support and help for parish and town councils, better understanding of town and parish council needs and ways of working.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 It is considered appropriate that this Panel be involved in the review given that its predecessor panel was involve in previous discussion on this issue.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation has taken place with representatives of Avon Local Councils Association, B&NES Branch and with the S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	<i>Andy Thomas, Strategic Manager Communities 01225 394322</i>
Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	