

Draft Notes of the
Somer Valley Forum
 25th February 2016, 6.00pm
 VH Studio 1; Victoria Hall; Church Street, Radstock, BA3 3QG

Present

Name	Organisation Represented
Cllr Karen Walker	B&NES Ward Councillor, Peasedown St John; Vice Chair of the Forum (Acting Chair for this meeting)
Cllr David Collett	Timsbury Parish Council
Juliet Davies	Children's Centre Co-ordinator, B&NES (observer)
Cllr Liz Hardman	B&NES Ward Councillor, Paulton
Charlotte High	Sirona Care & Health (part)
Cllr Eleanor Jackson	B&NES Ward Councillor, Westfield
Cllr Jane Lewis	Midsomer Norton Town Council (part)
Jo Lewitt	Public Health Development & Commissioning Manager, B&NES (observer)
Caroline Lightfoot	Senior Development Officer, Skills & Regeneration, B&NES (presenting)
Heidi Limbert	Children's Centres Service Manager, B&NES (observer)
Cllr Barry Macrae	B&NES Councillor, Midsomer Norton North
Cllr Ian McLennan	Farrington Gurney Parish Council
Cllr Lesley Mansell	Peasedown St John Parish Council
Sgt Tony O'Brien	Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Cllr Veronica Packham	Chair – Timsbury Parish Council
Andrew Pate	Strategic Director Resources (Strategic Director Sponsor of Forum)
Cllr Bob Piper	Paulton Parish Council
Richard Robertson	Welton Village Group
Cllr Martin Robinson	Chair – Dunkerton and Tunley Parish Council
Shirley Steel	Somerset and Dorset Railway Heritage Trust
Terry Taylor	Norton Radstock Regeneration
Ch Insp. Kevin Thatcher	Avon and Somerset Police
Cllr Kathy Thomas	Chair – Peasedown St John Parish Council
Cllr David Veale	B&NES Ward Councillor – Bathavon West
Cllr Hugh Warren	Paulton Parish Council
Alison Wells	Community Projects Officer, B&NES (support)
Richard Wells	W F Wells and Sons
John Wilkinson	Divisional Director - Community Regeneration, B&NES (presenting)
Ben Woods	Group Manager - Economy & Culture, Skills & Regeneration, B&NES (presenting)

Apologies

Name	Organisation Represented
Lynda Robertson	Midsomer Norton Society – Chair of the Forum
Matt Atkinson	Principal and Chief Executive – City of Bath College
Richard Baldwin	Divisional Director - Safeguarding & Social Care (Divisional Director Forum Sponsor)
Cllr John Bull	B&NES Ward Councillor - Paulton
Cllr Charles Gerrish	Cabinet Member for ? B&NES
Roger Tollervey	Welton Village Group

Informal Open Public Session

		Action
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
1.1	<p>KW welcomed those present. DD read out the following statement:-</p> <p><i>‘The Referendum on the future Governance of the Council will be conducted in accordance with procedures similar to those used at local government elections. In the lead up to a referendum there is a 6 week pre-referendum period (commonly known as “purdah)”. During this time, pre-referendum restrictions apply and Councils are required to take particular care over publicity to ensure that communications are balanced and without bias – that there is no appearance of support for one side or the other in the referendum. Therefore this Forum will not able be take any questions or comments regarding the campaigns for or against.</i></p>	
2.	Updates including Q&As	
	<u>2a – Local Police Matters</u>	
2.1	DD introduced Chief Inspector Kevin Thatcher who said he has been in the area for nine months and is visiting all the Connecting Communities Forums to introduce himself and give an update on local policing. There have been a few issues at Avon & Somerset this year but Andy Marsh has now been appointed as Chief Constable which should give more consistency going forward.	
2.2	The Police budgets are not being cut but they are having to direct existing resources to emerging issues such as terrorism; cyber crime and child protection which equates to a saving of £16m - £20 over the next 3-4 years.	
2.3	The Police are currently looking at a strategic alliance with Wiltshire – this could save £30m by pooling ‘back-room’ resources such as HR. They are doing their utmost to protect front-line services. The new Commander, Ian Smith, is keen to ensure the Police remain visible and accessible. Numbers have decreased due to a freeze on recruitment but the Police are recruiting again now.	
2.4	EJ asked whether the Police Station in Westfield would be closing. KT said there are no immediate plans but if it does, presence will be maintained in the local area – the Police station in Manvers Street closed but staff relocated within the City.	
2.5	EJ said incidents of domestic violence are higher than in previous years – what are the Police doing about this? KT said the Police are encouraging victims to report the crime. It is also being recorded differently.	
2.6	EJ said the front office at Radstock Police station is never open. KT said it won’t be but there is 24/7 cover via the staff desk.	
2.7	BMc said there seems to be a merging or blurring of boundaries as the Police also deal with Mendip. KT said local police will occasionally do this. They are local officers and know the area well.	
2.8	KT said crime is relatively low in the Radstock area. BMC said perception is not good with the 101 call centre too far away. It was good to have calls	

	going through to Radstock.	
2.9	EJ said there were several acts of vandalism in Fortescue Road but it took 3 hours to get a response. If it had been quicker, the culprits may have been caught. KT accepted that the 101 service is not as it should be but said there will be major changes at the communications centre, with one person dealing with calls from start to finish.	
2.10	LH asked for clarification between the role of traffic wardens and the Police. KT said parking on double yellow lines is dealt with by parking attendants but if there are obstructions or dangerous parking, the Police have powers to act. They are unable to issue parking tickets.	
2.11	IMc asked whether Police Officers can move from one area to another – he is thinking of the merger with Wiltshire. KT said the details of this are not available as yet.	
2.12	ME asked whether the PCSO's are safe. KT said yes.	
2.13	KT introduced Sergeant Terry O'Brien to give an update on local crime. TOB said there have been issues with people from Eastern Europe trying to sell paintings door to door. They have been located and deterred.	
2.14	There has been an increase in 'drive offs' at petrol stations in Midsomer Norton and Westfield. The culprits have been identified, arrested and their cars seized.	
2.15	The Police have been working with local schools on how to stay safe on-line. The pupils are from Year 6 to secondary. They are also being advised on the consequences of getting involved with crime.	
2.16	There has been anti-social behaviour (lighting small fires) at Westhill Road, Westfield but those responsible have been identified and are 16 or under. Their parents have been advised. The situation is on-going. The Parish Council is installing infra-red CCTV on the Recreation Ground and the Police are stepping up patrols.	
2.17	There have also been issues with youths congregating in Radstock. The Police have caught up with some of them and they have caused nuisance previously.	
2.18	The Police are working with the Pubwatch scheme for Midsomer Norton and Radstock. New software is available to record incidents which will help identify individuals.	
2.19	EJ said there is a lot of substance abuse in the area. LM said there was also a series of attacks on cars in Peasedown St John at night. The Police were called but did not attend. KT said he is unable to comment on particular incidents but could ask the PCSO's to follow up. LM said she thinks the matter has now been resolved.	
2.20	TOB asked if there were any final questions. LH said that there are parking issues in the Tennis Court Road area of Paulton that Police may wish to look at.	

2b - Council's Budget – Andrew Pate, Strategic Director, Resources

- 2.21 AP said he is standing in for Cllr Charles Gerrish this evening, who sends his apologies. They both attended the Somer Valley Forum meeting in November when plans for the Council's budget were coming together. However, the Government changed the rules in December and money went to different parts of the UK. The settlement was £3.5m lower than expected which was a shock as there had been no consultation. Previously, Council predictions on the settlement have been very accurate.
- 2.22 AP said Council representatives went to Government and spoke with Marcus Jones MP – several County Councils went as well. In late January, the Government awarded B&NES some additional funding - £2m over 2 years. This is in recognition that the changes were made late and is one off money to be spent on one off items.
- 2.23 AP said Scrutiny members have raised concerns relating to the generation of income via a new property company and economic development. They feel there is a risk that income may not come in as quickly as hoped. Therefore the additional funds will be set aside to mitigate this. A decline in Business Rate income is another risk – appeals will impact on the Council going forward, not central Government.
- 2.24 AP said there will be a 1.25% increase in Council Tax and a 2% precept for Adult Social Care, including the rise in the national minimum wage. This will be ring-fenced and a separate part of the Council's budget.
- 2.25 One significant change to the presentation given in November is a £2m saving from staff/management costs. The Council spends £120m on this net. £2m is 3% of the budget for office based staff. This will present a challenge over the next 6 months. It is hoped the changes will be in place by September with minimal impact on front-line services.
- 2.26 BP asked whether the level of risk in the budget could be expressed as a percentage. AP said the Council has reserves for risk – generally around £10.5m. BP asked, with a total budget of £120m, whether having less than 10% is adequate. AP said it has been at this level for a number of years and there will be the £2m from Government to supplement it.
- 2.27 LH asked what the total efficiency savings would be this year? AP said roughly £5m – a 3 year programme was completed this year which led to £30m of savings. Looking four years ahead, more could be made through staff reductions and increased use of digital technology.
- 2.28 LH said B&NES has made huge cuts already without redundancies. Frontline services must not be affected. AP said capacity is getting tight while demand is going up. There have been few compulsory redundancies to date but the Council is trying to do more with fewer staff. We are looking at around 30-40 staff potentially – the level of compulsory redundancies should be low.
- 2.29 LM said Cllr Warren had indicated that £431k is coming from the Local Enterprise Partnership, is this correct? AP said the West of England does invest but he would need to check the details. Devolution is possible too.

2c – Joint Spatial Plan Response and Working Parties

DD gave the following update:-

- 2.30 At the November Forum meetings, presentations were given on the Joint Spatial Plan. The four West of England authorities (Bristol City Council; Bath and North East Somerset Council; North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council) are working together to produce a statutory document looking at the housing and economic growth needs of the next twenty years.
- 2.31 A consultation on the various options opened on 9th November and ran until 29th January 2016. The Chairs of all the Forums agreed a joint response to this based on the shared views given at the November meetings. These were:-
- Ensure sufficient infrastructure improvements, particularly transport, are realised where future growth is planned.
 - Consider innovative ideas and new technologies to help solve transport problems.
 - Protect the villages from further growth to avoid over development.
 - Consider developments within existing local centres that have the infrastructure to support future growth.
 - Ensure that there is enough affordable housing to meet current and future needs.
 - Bring forward more brownfield development.
- 2.32 The B&NES Planning Policy team needs to do some further work on the plan and have agreed to set up a series of working group meetings for a short period between February and May. There will be two working groups – North and South. The groups will be made up of representatives from Town and Parish Councils and Elected Members – for Somer Valley, which is in the South Group, the parishes are: Farrington Gurney; High Littleton; Paulton; Peasedown St John; Midsomer Norton; Timsbury; Radstock; Westfield
- 2.33 The first meeting of the South Group was held this afternoon and included background information about the JSP and the role of the working groups. Planning Policy will be attending all the Forum meetings in April to provide an update on the JSP plans.
- 2.34 BMc expressed concern about constant reviews, with the Core Strategy having just been agreed.

2d - Parish Clerks' Survey - this item was accidentally omitted at the meeting but the update is as follows:-

- 2.35 At the July workshops, all the Forums identified a need for better communication between B&NES and the Parish Councils. Also, more support for Clerks. As a result of this, we have established a working group involving several interested Town and Parish Clerks to look at the issues in more detail.
- 2.36 In the Autumn, a survey went out to all Parish Clerks, with responses received at the end of December. We've had a 70% response rate, which is excellent but would like to hear from all Clerks so have extended the deadline until the end of this month and are in the process of following up

	with the Clerks that have yet to respond.	
2.37	There were some very practical suggestions made by Clerks such as reducing the amount of leaflets sent to them as some do not have any facilities to display these. Also, ensuring there is adequate time to respond to consultations. We have also been asked to ensure that Council Officers and Councillors gain greater understanding about the role of Parish Councils and Clerks.	
2.38	The Clerks also said that briefings on topics such as Health & Safety; Planning and Equalities are welcome and we are looking into developing a training programme in partnership with ALCA.	
2.39	The Council is also in the process of reviewing the Parish Charter and will be using the Clerks' working group to help with this process.	
	<u>2e – Representations on Other Partnership Groups</u>	
2.40	DD confirmed that Richard Robertson is now the Forum's representative at the CCG's 'Your Health, Your Voice' meetings. RR said he has not yet attended a meeting but one is being held shortly.	
3.	Consultation/Information Items– Green Spaces Strategy, Paul Pearce, Parks Project Manager, B&NES	
3.1	KW introduced Paul Pearce who has given similar presentations to the other Forums.	
3.2	PP said that as part of a review of the Green Spaces Strategy, such spaces have been assessed for quality; how they should be managed and how accessible they are (ie how far communities have to travel to use them). The information also helps to inform how the Council works with developers on where green spaces should be provided and to ensure that limited resources and CIL monies are targeted effectively going forward.	
3.3	The review was carried out by consultants who received 600 responses to a household survey. They have also worked with key stakeholders. They have mapped facilities and visited 600 sites - some managed by B&NES and others by Town and Parish Councils.	
3.4	Green routes, such as canal and cycle paths, are key for commuting to work and school – they are well used and many need to be improved.	
3.5	The review has identified the sites most in need of improvement and whether communities have an over or under-supply of green space. A mix of doorstep (local) and destination parks has been suggested along with other recommendations.	
3.6	PP said the Strategy has been adopted but there is a need to develop an action plan and he is keen to work with the Connecting Communities Forums and local people on this.	ALL
3.7	BP said parishes have a lot of information on green spaces and sent it to Julie O'Rourke in Planning – he asked whether PP had seen it? PP confirmed that the consultants had access to this.	
3.8	BP said some sites designated for green space had been refused –	

	shouldn't it be more joined up? AP said it was a good point and suggesting BP and PP speak directly in the break.	
3.9	EJ said there is table of allotments in North East Somerset run by Parish Councils. However, walking to them in 20 minutes is not possible. PP said there are one or two areas where funds are available for allotments (?).	
3.10	ME said he would welcome consultation on green routes, particularly extending the Greenway to Farrington Gurney. He also asked whether it would be possible to link a school with a green space? PP said this is a good idea and he would be happy to discuss it further. He is keen to explore the Farrington Gurney opportunity working with the Council's Transport Team.	
4.	Any Other Issues	
4.1	There was none.	

Ordinary Meeting

5.	Notes of the Previous Meetings (13th October and 30th November).	
5.1	These were agreed as a true record with TT proposing and ME seconding.	
6.	Matters Arising	
6.1	There was none.	
7.	Somer Valley Transport Strategy – Peter Dawson, Group Manager – Transport, B&NES	
7.1	KW said she had received a request to record this item for a member of the Forum who was unable to be present. AP said there are no set rules on this as it is informal meeting.	
7.2	EJ asked what the purpose of the recording is. PM said it is for private use only. KW said she did not feel it was appropriate as minutes are taken. PD said he would be happy to speak with the Forum member directly on the subject. BMC said he had no objection. EJ seconded this. It was taken to a vote with 8 votes for the recording and 2 for no.	
7.3	PD said he had spoken to the Forum before Christmas on work to develop the Transport Strategy. He was hoping to have undertaken the public consultation by now but other pressures had delayed it. However, they are close to getting the dates agreed and it should be in 4-5 weeks' time.	
7.4	PD said he has been working with West of England colleagues to develop a plan for the whole district. He showed the 'existing transport issues in the Somer Valley' slide of the presentation. BP asked whether the captions on this slide were the sum total of comment? PD said no - they are designed to stimulate comment.	
7.5	EJ queried the 'good bus service' saying that she regularly has to wait for late buses. PD said it means the provision is good compared to other areas but accepted that including the frequency would be helpful.	

7.6	ME said the road linking Midsomer Norton, Farrington Gurney and the A37 is not fit for purpose, with too many build-outs. In addition, blockages on the A367 make it difficult to get to Bath. These are the main commuter routes. The A39 is a single lane in two built up areas.	
7.7	PM said there is limited space for parking but the Council then supports development – he would like this comment taken back.	
7.8	LH said there are various unsafe pavements and walking routes too. BP said Paulton Parish Council would be providing detailed comments.	
7.9	PD showed the slide on commuting distances. BP said it can take 40 minutes to drive from Westfield to Paulton – the diagram is very limiting. BMC said profiling is needed to support this. Also, the creation of local jobs to reduce commuting – the system needs to work for what our residents do.	
7.10	EJ expressed concern at the lack of adequate bus shelters with seats – following redevelopment in Radstock, there are fewer than before. The stop at Elm Tree Avenue has no seating. Also, the new road outside the Victoria Hall accumulates water when it rains, close to the bus stops.	
7.11	ME said people need to get to work and to school – they do not seem to be being prioritised. PD said the Chew Valley Forum made similar comments but this will link to the Economic Development Strategy.	
7.12	PM said he would like to see more reference to business – connectivity to the motorway network is an issue for this area. Also, parishes need to work together on this, not just in their own patch. Rat-running is very common now. PD said this gives us the chance to stand back and look at the issues. Access to the motorway will be looked at as part of the Joint Spatial Plan – the completion of the Bristol Ring Road would assist.	
7.13	EJ said buses in this area will be affected by cuts being made by Somerset County Council. Wiltshire is also cutting its service to the RUH.	
7.14	BMC said there are some temporary needs while Midsomer Norton High Street is being developed – some extra parking would assist. The Enterprise Zone may generate some different opportunities, so keep this up to date and relevant.	
7.15	SS said the Dial-a-Ride service is invaluable. PD said this is recognised.	
7.16	LM said it took her an hour and twenty minutes to get from Keynsham to Filton. There are lots of little roadworks in Bristol too. It would help if these works are not carried out at the same time. Also, getting people out of cars is not always feasible. Tunnels between here and Bath might be possible and a link to the motorway might take the pressure off the ring road.	
7.17	TT said we are still talking about roads – what about a rail/metro network. It would be good to see some innovative thinking.	

8.	Somer Valley Enterprise Zone – John Wilkinson, Divisional Director - Community Regeneration, B&NES	
8.1	KW introduced John Wilkinson. JW said his colleagues Ben Woods and	

	<p>Caroline Lightfoot were also present and to feel free to speak with them after the meeting.</p>	
8.2	<p>JW said the Enterprise Zone is part of a process, working with communities, to identify their long term economic future. The role of market towns is an important part of this strategy.</p>	
8.3	<p>In terms of economic statistics, the Somer Valley has grown more than the rest of B&NES. It has done better in terms of employment and key sectors are up 16% - these are health and wellbeing; tourism; leisure and culture.</p>	
8.4	<p>JW said that employment has increased but people are commuting out of the area for work. There have also been some major factory closures and a number of empty employment sites. Traffic congestion and poor broadband are key issues. There are a number of jobs in manufacturing in the area but there is a need for development to create further jobs and improve the retail offer. The Enterprise Zone gives an opportunity to tackle this. It will also link to the Transport Strategy and aim to future proof transportation issues.</p>	
8.5	<p>JW said that, three years ago, the Government wanted to identify areas and run mini-competitions – Bristol got a package of support as part of this. However, there were other opportunities too, so a bid for the Somer Valley was submitted – particularly relating to vacant sites. It was well received and got approval, particularly on the basis of job creation.</p>	
8.6	<p>There are a range of benefits to come – 100% of business rate growth can be kept. This means that funds can be borrowed against this now, so that there can be investment in infrastructure up front. There will also be a reduction in business rates for new businesses. JW said George Osbourne loves Enterprise Zones and there have been other visits to the area by the Department for Communities and Local Government - Greg Clark MP will be visiting shortly. Another benefit is that BT will be duty bound to sort out broadband – the Council has already been in touch with them about this.</p>	
8.7	<p>JW said in terms of site analysis, all the employment sites in the Placemaking Plan were looked at and an estimate made of the likely Business Rates to be received - £35m is the projected figure.</p>	
8.8	<p>In terms of timeframe, some resources have been made available in the Council's budget to assist. In the coming weeks, a package of benefits will be agreed with the Local Enterprise Partnership. The Business Rate income will need to be enshrined in law – this will start from April 2017 and go into a separate 'pot'. There is a lot of work to be done but the team are happy to come back to the Forum and to visit Town and Parish Councils as well.</p>	
8.9	<p>BMc said this is fantastic news for the Somer Valley and has been wanted for a long time. He added that it does need to be seen as being shared across the area, not just in Midsomer Norton and Radstock.</p>	
8.10	<p>IMc said BT has been told to tell O2 to make cable runs available for competition. JW said this monopoly has been being watched for some time.</p>	

8.11	<p>EJ said it would have been useful to know about this before Westfield's Neighbourhood Plan meeting. She would like to see jobs here and asked if this can be meshed with the process. EJ added that she was disappointed that the team had got so far in the process without the involvement of the Radstock and Westfield Development Advisory Group. In Westfield, Alcan were given permission for a mixed development, then had a feasibility study and now want to convert it to housing. AP said this presentation was mentioned at the November Forum meeting. It is early in the process, so there is still time to have important conversations. Without Somer Valley as a recognised area for the Local Enterprise Partnership and Government, this opportunity would not exist.</p>	
8.12	<p>JW said he would like to come and talk to Town and Parish Councils about their Neighbourhood Plans – more resource is being made available to strengthen the existing team.</p>	
8.13	<p>JW said there is series of incentives for developers – having infrastructure up front, for example, takes the burden off them. The fiscal priority is to generate Business Rates. If a developer wants investment made, they will need to repay this via the Business Rates.</p>	
8.14	<p>ME said this is exciting but he is worried about transport. Old Mills has been empty for a long time and 'Welton Bag' moved out for the same reason. Would the Department for Transport look at this? JW said transport is at the heart of this and innovation is needed.</p>	
8.15	<p>BW said he has had conversations with Government Departments and other agencies. The Department of Transport is next. They will be linking with the Council's Transport Team and having conversations with the Local Enterprise Partnership too. This opportunity pushes the Somer Valley up the list in terms of transport investment.</p>	
8.16	<p>LH asked whether the projections are inflated - Old Mills needs a lot of investment. Will we really attract people when the inducements are relatively small? JW said we can't promise but this is a good opportunity to work together. Other Enterprise Zones have been successful with less. There will be challenges but we have the eye of Central Government on us in a way that we haven't before. AP said the figures are cumulative numbers up to 2040 but they are significant and further funds can be levered in.</p>	
8.17	<p>BP said he has already made comments via the Parish Council and would like to be involved please.</p>	
8.18	<p>LM said it is a huge opportunity but she is concerned about involvement – is Peasedown St John going to figure – it is on a hill, not a valley? Transport needs something more innovative. Rail lines to Bristol should be open. Also, there is the housing development in Mendip to consider – we invest but people will come from there and take the jobs. Also, why is it called Bath Business Park, when it is in Peasedown? JW said the timetable has been set by the Government. We will be stepping up engagement and nothing is being hidden behind the scenes. As part of this presentation, we have illustrated some of the challenges. Ben has been working on Bath for the past 5 years, which is why we are only seeing action now but need to seize this opportunity.</p>	
8.19	<p>BMc said you have our support. LM asked that the team involves the</p>	

	Forum, not simply report to it.	
9.	Dates of Next Meetings	
9.1	<p>Wednesday 27th April, 6pm, Midsomer Norton Town Hall - The Island, Midsomer Norton BA3 3HQ</p> <p>Wednesday 6th July, 6pm, Venue TBC</p> <p>Wednesday 14th September, 6pm, Venue TBC (AGM)</p> <p>Monday 21st November, 6pm, Venue TBC (Special Budget Meeting)</p>	

Actions

	Responsible
Comments on the Green Spaces Strategy to go straight to Paul Pearce by 31 st March 2016 (link and information sent 1 st March)	ALL
Take on board the comments of the Forum	Peter Dawson John Wilkinson Ben Woods