

Draft Notes of the  
**Somer Valley Forum**  
Monday 21st November 2016, 5.00pm  
The Assembly Room, Town Hall, Midsomer Norton

**Present**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation Represented</b>
Lynda Robertson	Chair of Somer Valley Forum
Cllr Sarah Bevan	B&NES Ward Councillor, Peasedown St John
Cllr John Bull	B&NES Ward Councillor, Paulton
Cllr David Collett	Timsbury Parish Council
Sara Dixon	Locality Manager, B&NES
Cllr Brian Edwards	Camerton Parish Council
Cllr Michael Evans	B&NES Ward Councillor, Midsomer Norton North
Pat Flagg	Midsomer Norton Community Trust
Cllr Charles Gerrish	B&NES Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency
Cllr Liz Hardman	B&NES Ward Councillor, Paulton
Cllr Deirdre Horstmann	B&NES Ward Councillor, Radstock
Cllr Eleanor Jackson	B&NES Ward Councillor, Westfield
Cllr Lesley Mansell	Peasedown St John Parish Council/Westfield Parish Council (part)
PC Blayne Nicholls	Avon and Somerset Constabulary – Neighbourhood Beat Manager – Somer Valley Beat
Cllr Paul Myers	B&NES Councillor, Midsomer Norton Redfield
Andrew Pate	Strategic Director Resources (Director Sponsor of Forum)
Richard Robertson	Welton Village Group
Terry Taylor	Norton Radstock Regeneration
Roger Tollervey	Welton Village Group
Alison Wells	Community Projects Officer, B&NES
Cllr Barry Macrae (part)	B&NES Ward Councillor, Midsomer Norton North
Cllr Karen Walker	B&NES Ward Councillor, Peasedown St John

**Apologies**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation Represented</b>
All	Farrington Gurney Parish Council
Dom Chambers	Somer Valley FM
Cllr Chris Dando	B&NES Ward Councillor, Radstock
Cllr Doug Deacon	B&NES Ward Councillor, Timsbury
Gareth Lloyd	Avon Fire and Rescue Service
Cllr Robin Moss	B&NES Ward Councillor, Westfield
Terry Nicholls	Kilmersdon Parish Council
Cllr Veronica Packham	Timsbury Parish Council

**Informal Open Public Session**

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome from the Chair of the Forum; introductions and apologies.</b>	
1.1	LR welcomed those present and thanked Cllr Myers for hosting the meeting at Midsomer Norton Town Hall. Apologies as above.	
1.2	It was noted that the meeting was not quorate and therefore the AGM would be	

	postponed. EJ requested that Somer Valley Forum meetings are not held on the third Monday of a month due to clashes.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Bath and North East Somerset Council: ‘Our Budget Challenge’ presentation.</b>	
2.1	LR welcomed Andrew Pate and Cllr Charles Gerrish to give this presentation. Full details are contained in Appendix 1.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>To announce nominations for Chair and Vice Chair position and hand out voting slips</b>	
3.1	AGM postponed to early 2017.	

## Ordinary Meeting

		Action
<b>4.</b>	<b>Notes of the Previous Meeting (14<sup>th</sup> September 2016) and Matters Arising</b>	
4.1	The notes were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Update from the Police</b>	
5.1	LR introduced PC Blayne Nicholls, Neighbourhood Beat Manager for the Somer Valley Beat.	
5.2	BN said the Midsomer Norton Carnival had gone well with one stop and search but no arrests. There were some groups of youths but these were dispersed.	
5.3	The Pubwatch scheme is going well and running in conjunction with the Bath and District Business Crime Reduction Partnership. This has had a positive effect on anti-social behaviour in Midsomer Norton and Radstock.	
5.4	A Community Speedwatch is being set up in Radstock but needs more volunteers.	
5.5	248 farms; stables and residents have signed up to Farmwatch – there is further information on the police <a href="#">website</a> . There has been an increase in poaching now that the evenings are darker.	
5.6	There is usually an increase in burglary and vehicle theft around Christmas. Please review your security, not forgetting oil tanks. There is lots of crime prevention information on the police <a href="#">website</a> .	
5.7	There has been some anti-social behaviour in Peasedown’s skate park and at Hill Court, Paulton. This is being worked on. CCTV is being considered at Paulton’s tennis court.	
5.8	In the past six weeks, there has been one dwelling burglary and one attempted burglary in Westfield. There have been 12 shed break-ins in the Midsomer Norton and Radstock area and 4 thefts from motor vehicles – generally tools. There were 9 incidents of criminal damage with 1 arrest and 3 names given. There has also been an arson attack on a property which is being investigated. Finally there, was a major fire at a scrap yard in Radstock which is considered accidental.	

	<u>Q&amp;A</u>	
5.9	<p>Q: Was the attempted arson a hate crime?</p> <p>A: No</p> <p>Q: Have any hate crimes been recorded in this area?</p> <p>A: Yes but I do not have figures with me.</p>	
5.10	<p>Q: There have been calls about anti-social behaviour in Gullock Tying, Midsomer Norton – people racing cars and scooters – can we communicate with Police via their website?</p> <p>A: Yes – if you put in your postcode, the local beat team will be shown and can be contacted.</p>	
5.11	<p>Q: The Forum members are good eyes and ears in their local communities. Can we have names and numbers for local police teams.</p> <p>A: Yes – this information will be circulated shortly by Strategy &amp; Performance. However, the mobile numbers are only operational when staff are on duty and contact through the website is a good way of reporting issues.</p>	S&D
5.12	<p>Comment: There is a lot of graffiti on the Leisure Centre in Midsomer Norton and vandalism in the park. South Road Car Park is locked at night but the crocodile teeth have gone, so cars can get in. If we still had the PACT meetings, the public would have come to speak to the Police about this.</p>	
5.13	<p>Q: What type of anti-social behaviour is happening in Peasedown's Skate Park and how many incidents have there been?</p> <p>A: It's very general and a group of children – minor damage, shouting and swearing.</p> <p>LR thanked PC Nicholls for attending.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Feedback from the Joint Forum Chairs</b>	
6.1	<p>LR said that she and KW attend regular meetings with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the other Connecting Communities Forums, which is chaired by Cllr Paul Myers in his role as Cabinet member for Policy, Localism and Partnerships. She explained that the meetings are an opportunity to share common issues; discuss future agenda items and highlight any concerns we may have. They are also a good opportunity to hear what the other Forums are working on.</p>	
6.2	<p>LR said that she and Karen have raised issues which are common to other Forum areas such as the lack of Broadband in rural areas, highways issues and how we can collaborate effectively across with the other Forums. Karen has been talking to Chris Head from the West of England Rural Network about the Broadband Summit and hope to have information for the Forum in the future. Highways issues, particularly around poor communication and programming has been raised and fed back to this Team and the Senior officers.</p>	
6.3	<p>LR said she and Karen have also attended the Bathavon Forum and hope to attend other Forum meetings in the future. They would welcome any suggestions you have on how we can collaborate with the other Forums.</p>	ALL
<b>7.</b>	<b>Update from Richard Robertson, 'your health, your voice' representative</b>	
7.1	<p>RR said that he attends these CCG meetings on behalf of the Somer Valley</p>	

	Forum. The public are also welcome but they are mainly attended by local community groups. The meetings are part of the CCG's consultative process. The main topic at recent meetings, has been the new contract with Virgin. At the September meetings, two representatives of Virgin attended and presented on their strategy.	
7.2	RR said if the Forum has anything to feedback to these meetings, to let him know.	ALL
<b>8.</b>	<b>Update Item – West of England Joint Spatial Plan</b>	
8.1	LR welcomed Simon de Beer to give this presentation. Full details are contained in Appendix 2. (This Item was taken before number 4 on the Agenda).	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
9.1	LM requested that Forum meetings do not start at 5pm in future – it is too early for those that work and she would prefer a 7pm start time. LR said the meeting was only brought forward to accommodate the Radstock Town Council meeting.	
9.	BMc said the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone has the potential to expand to other areas via the JSP. He feels this should be treated positively as an opportunity for employment regeneration.	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Dates of Next Meetings</b>	
10.1	Postponed AGM – Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February, 7pm (Venue TBC)  Next Ordinary Meeting - ? March  Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> July Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> September Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> November  <i>There is a gap in meetings in Spring to allow for Parish AGM and APM meetings in April and the Metro Mayor election in May.</i>	

## Actions

	Responsible
Police contact numbers to be circulated	S&P
All to consider items to take to the Joint Chair and Vice Chair meetings and 'Your Health, You Voice' meetings.	ALL

**Presentation and Workshop: Bath and North East Somerset Council: ‘Our Budget Challenge’ – Andrew Pate, Strategic Director of Resources, B&NES and Cllr Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency**

AP said that there would be a short presentation with headline messages, then Cllr Gerrish would speak on behalf of the Cabinet. This would be followed by an opportunity for questions and a workshop.

Presenter: Andrew Pate

<b>Slide</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Slides 1, 2 and 3 (Title Slide: Welcome and Aims: Key Messages)	The slide outlines what we are seeking to achieve. There will be presentations to all the Forums so they can get an understanding and also to hear their views. All ideas are welcome as these are shared problems. The targets set for this financial year are on track to be achieved but there is a big challenge ahead.
Slides 4 and 5 (Update on Position: National LA Funding and Expenditure)	This is a national graph and is becoming a reality. Expenditure is growing compared with the Government funding being received. This is the main reason for the reduction in Council funding. The pressures relating to social care also mean that Local Authority costs are rising. The gap between the income and expenditure is the problem and is substantial.
Slide 6	This explains in every day terms what we need to balance the books. There will be no 30% increase in Council Tax, so we need to find creative solutions.
Slide 7 (Reduction in B&NES Govt Funding)	This shows the reduction in funding for B&NES. Locally, Government funding is being phased out and will disappear. It was significant – of the Council’s £110m budget, £20m came from the Government.  It is the same picture across the UK, so Local Authorities will need to become more self sufficient. The ability to retain Business Rates will gradually assist us but there will be an equalisation exercise (ie as ability to get income from this, Government support will reduce) and, if the economy does not grow, benefits will be limited.
Slide 8 (Scale of Challenge)	This provides some figures and where we are in achieving savings - not quite half way with some way to go to balance the books. Cllr Gerrish will explain the approach, which is regarded by the Government as good. They have signed off our efficiency plan and in the short term, £2m will come back through a pilot on the Business Rate retention scheme.
Slide 9 (Headlines from other LAs)	We are fortunate that we have not had headlines like these locally and hope to maintain this. However, we are surrounded stories that are not encouraging, with other authority’s efforts to set transformative budgets, still struggling to balance the books. Some have had to make emergency decision to cut budgets but B&NES wants to try and avoid this.

Presenter: Cllr Charles Gerrish

Slides 10 and 11 (What are we doing: Bridge the Gap)	To bridge the gap, the Council is taking a four stage approach (slide 11). In terms of income, a range of activities are being taken forward such as the Property Company outlined at last year’s Budget presentation. This is already generating income.
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	We also need to look at delivering services in different ways and may need to stop doing certain things.
Slide 12 (Finance and Efficiency)	<p>The introduction of digital services for those that want to use them will help deliver services in a more cost effective and efficient way. However, we will not be forcing people to use it – other options will remain available.</p> <p>Business Rates, City Deal and Devolution are opportunities of getting income and help bridge the budget gap.</p> <p>A Council Tax support scheme was approved by Council recently.</p>
Slide 13 (Policy, Localism and Partnerships)	<p>CG invited Cllr Myers to speak about this as Portfolio Holder. PM said he is optimistic that Devolution will bring further sources of funding (eg for affordable housing) as it progresses.</p> <p>There are opportunities around the use and transfer of community buildings as has been seen locally with the Victoria Hall and Beacon Hall.</p> <p>Where volunteers are involved in delivering services, this will be further encouraged.</p>
Slide 14 (Adult Social Care and Health)	The ‘your care, your way’ approach arose as a result of consultation with residents. People want to be treated as people, not symptoms and improvements to services have been sought as part of the recent tendering exercise. Transferability of data is key to introducing a better system of care.
Slide 15 (Economic Development)	The Council is close to finalising the enterprise area for the Somer Valley and get the Government’s agreement to expand it. We do not want to cut back on capital investment as this provides scope in terms of Business Rates.
Slide 16 (Homes and Planning)	Consultation on the JSP is taking place at present. The West of England is a powerhouse and delivers to the Exchequer. The Council has reserves drawn down for affordable housing – mainly for young people and care leavers. CIL is helping to deliver infrastructure.
Slide 17 (Transport)	Infrastructure improvements are out to consultation as part of the JSP. The operation of a bus franchise is a potential option. The A36 – A46 link should help take traffic away from Bath and we are speaking with the Government about this. The introduction of LED street lighting has helped reduce costs.
Slide 18 (Community Services)	Income is being achieved through events – the increase in wedding venues has been a success. The Libraries Review is taking place – we do not want to lose facilities but move to a more modern approach. Leisure improvements are being made line with people’s modern aspirations. There will be a revised collection pattern for refuse as the Forum were advised at their last meeting.
Slide 19 (Children’s Services)	Connecting Families has been successful. There has been a focus on prevention. School transport is being reviewed as there has been some over-paying on contracts. Devolving budgets to families may be more cost effective. More schools have opted to become Academies than expected. This is a challenge as they can choose to go elsewhere for their services. We are very grateful to the teachers in B&NES as we have very successful schools.
Slide 20 (Big Picture)	This outlines the key local issues.

Presenter: Andrew Pate

Slide 21 (Key	This Council has so far managed to avoid some of the decisions taken by
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Messages)	other Councils but difficult decisions need to be made, hence our request to you.
Slides 22 and 23 (Working in Groups: What do you think)	Working in groups, we would like you to discuss what you have heard and feedback suggestions. The three points on slide 22 will help guide discussions.

### Questions following the presentation

- Q1 We had a presentation on libraries at the last Forum and told that ideas for ways in which the service might be delivered in future were welcome. However, this has been forestalled with decisions on libraries future already being made.
- A1 The Council is exploring new ways to deliver the service without withdrawing it. This will apply to a range of services with greater local input welcome. A decision won't be made until the budget is set in February.

### Budget Workshop Feedback

#### Group 1

- Concerned about impact on the most deprived.
- There should not be an increase in Council Tax
- Don't waste opportunities to work together
- Skills and training – find out what's needed.
- Encourage neighbourliness and community support
- Increase volunteering/groups/capacity – Parish and Town Councils too
- Encourage young people to see the value in volunteering
- Library/Health Hub – the proposal for Radstock is good
- Recycling/waste changes are positive
- B&NES Lottery to raise funds

#### Group 2

- Camerton feels left off the Council's priority list already and the situation may get worse.
- The deficit in Children's Services
- Transport issues – the cost of using the Odd Down Park and Ride
- Issues reported to the Council may be resolved by contractors the Council uses. Communication/feedback is not always good

#### Group 3

- Libraries – how can communities help. Worry that professionals will be replaced by volunteers. More funding from central Government is key.
- Children's Services and overspend in this – how will this be met. Impact on the vulnerable. Not sure how the community can do much to assist.
- Universal Credit Changes – affect the vulnerable and the same people keep being affected by reductions.
- Affordable homes – we are not delivering. In Paulton it should have been 30% but is 18%. The cost of housing in the area is high, so more affordable housing would help.

### Other Comments

- Take a more radical view and cut 3 services, not take 10% off everything.

- Where are the volunteers going to come from? More than 60% of Somer Valley residents work outside the area. They are not going to volunteer when they come home tired.

## **Closing Remarks**

AP thanked everyone for their feedback and said Cabinet will reflect on this. With regard to volunteering, demands are going up but managing demand is not about replacing staff but how volunteers can help. There is some complexity around Council Tax – the Government is encouraging a 2% precept to support Adult Social Care to cover the additional costs. This Council adopted it last year – make sure distinction in mind. New funding requirement.

Cabinet will be proposing a budget to Scrutiny in January and it will go to Council in February.



**Presentation:** West of England Joint Spatial Plan, Simon de Beer – Group Manager, Planning Policy

<b>Slide</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Slides 1, 2, 3, 4 (Title; Critical Issues and Working Together)	This is a West of England Plan involving four local authorities working together. It is a high level, emerging plan which is out for consultation. It is about quality, not just quantity.
Slides 5 and 6 (Transport Vision)	It is not possible to undertaken large developments without understanding the Transport needs.
Slide 7 (Housing Target)	There is a new housing figure of 105k for the four authorities' area. It is a challenging figure. 15k is scheduled to go on brownfield sites, primarily in Bristol.
Slide 8 (Affordable Housing)	Of the 105k, 32k should be affordable (ie those that cannot afford to buy or rent). We are going to struggle to achieve this and welcome thoughts on how it might be increased
Slide 9 (Spatial Scenario)	This shows the two biggest requests from previous public consultation
Slide 10 (Options Testing)	We have looked at various strategic locations, including the Somer Valley. However, the transport modelling did not support development here.
Slide 11 (Options Testing – Transport)	Should employment be increased in Somer Valley to reduce out-commuting?
Slide 12 (Emerging Spatial Strategy)	This is not yet policy or a draft plan. The yellow stripes indicate urban intensification. The orange dots indicate strategic housing allocation which includes 3,500 dwellings in Whitchurch and 1,500 in Keynsham. The purple indicated areas of employment growth. These are the proposals out for consultation at present.
Slides 13, 14, 15 and 16 (Transport Vision x 2: Proposals for Somer Valley: Deliverability)	There is little proposed for the Somer Valley as there will not be much housing growth so no income to fund something like a by-pass. However, there may be more opportunity in other areas to help address existing problems in Somer Valley.
Slide 17 (New Local Plan)	We continue to have discussions with you regarding the options – can this area take any further, small scale housing developments?
Slides 18, 19, 20 and 21 (Consultation Arrangements x 2: Next Steps: Thank you)	The slides show the consultation arrangements and dates. There will be special events for the Parishes most affected.  Do contact me if you have any ideas.

### **Comment after the Presentation**

This is a step in the right direction – there is nothing to worry us but don't forget us either. Small developments here may help and there are pinch points in terms of transport that need to be addressed.