

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Communities, Transport and Environment Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	12th March 2018	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: E
TITLE:	Parish Charter Review	
WARD:	All parished wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Final draft revised Parish Charter 2018 Appendix 2 – Consultation Feedback and Responses http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/parish_charter_consultation_feedback_and_responses.pdf		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Panel following consultation with parishes. A final draft revised Parish Charter has been prepared and is presented to the CTE Panel for review prior to adoption at Full Council in May 2018.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

- 2.1 Comment on the final draft revised Parish Charter prepared by the Parish Charter Review Working Group.
- 2.2 Identify any areas of feedback the Panel wishes to give prior to the final adoption process.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The staffing and other resource requirements for undertaking this review are being managed from within existing budgets. As part of the Council's Changing Together programme there are plans to reduce staffing levels by 15% by 2020 in addition to management savings. The implications of these reductions for service delivery particularly as they impact on parishes will need to be closely monitored.

- 3.2 The final draft revised Charter contains a series of principles for devolution of services to parishes. Many parishes already manage services in their areas and the Charter provides for further opportunities for devolved services, as well as for new ways for working such as better use of digital tools such as FixMyStreet.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Building effective relationships between Bath & North East Somerset Council and our parishes is vital for a range of issues and challenges in our local communities. The Council has a number of powers including the general power of competence which supports its approach to working in partnership with parishes.
- 4.2 Parishes are statutory consultees on planning applications and are widely consulted by Bath & North East Somerset Council on other matters. They provide a representative voice to give communities more control over and say in how local services are delivered.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Since the Parish Charter was adopted over a decade ago, the context has changed significantly as a result of financial pressures but also due to new opportunities such as advances in digital technology and enhanced partnership arrangements. As a result, the Parish Charter has been revised and a new, draft Charter is now ready to be reported on and adopted. The Panel previously received reports on the Parish Charter review at its meetings on 9th May 2016 and 22nd May 2017.
- 5.2 The process of reviewing the Charter has acted as a catalyst for discussions about new ways of working. The Community Empowerment Fund, which has gone alongside the Charter Review, has built new relationships with parishes we may not previously have worked with, as well as leveraging in matched resources, including volunteer hours. A further key change in our relationship with parishes is for the Charter Review Working Group to remain in place to monitor and review the Charter and its implementation. The aim is that the Working Group will also have a wider role in ensuring that agendas for Parish Liaison and the Connecting Communities Forums do not duplicate, with Parish Liaison concentrating on issues that have a distinct parish focus.
- 5.3 The Parish Charter has been subject to full consultation with the parishes, with 43 parishes out of 51 responding. The detailed feedback was presented to the Working Group for consideration. The feedback and Working Group responses are set out in Appendix 2. The key concerns raised by the parishes through the consultation relate to the importance of B&NES staff and Councillors having greater understanding of the role and nature of parishes as well as being aware of the Charter and ensuring it is implemented. While the Council already includes reference to parishes in its induction training, work is underway to ensure that the importance and role of parishes is embedded into the Changing Together programme. There was also some concern about the implications of devolution of services but a willingness from parishes to do more if support and training are offered. The possibility of shared training and other support to parishes is being explored.

- 5.4 The final draft revised Charter contains a series of principles for devolution as this area of joint working is further developed in future. Many parishes already manage services in their areas therefore devolution could offer further opportunities to those parishes wishing to have local control.
- 5.5 The Charter contains five chapters setting out core principles and commitments on both sides. Appendices set out additional useful information such as terms of reference for Parish Liaison and Parish Council functions and responsibilities. Alongside the Charter is a 'Toolkit' designed to be a working document offering practical information on structures, protocols and standards. The intention is that the Toolkit can be readily updated and changed and will be available to other organisations in non-parished areas of the district and other trusted partners.
- 5.6 New digital communications and solutions can offer opportunity for better information and feedback within the context of a more stream-lined workforce where opportunity for continued face to face. The Working Group recognises that as the Changing Together programme is rolled out and new systems such as 'FixMyStreet' are introduced, structures and protocols may be subject to rapid change and therefore the Charter will continue to be reviewed particularly during the first year of adoption.
- 5.7 The proposed timeline for the adoption of the Parish Charter is as follows;

11 th April	Cabinet
10 th May	B&NES Full Council (AGM)
19 th September	Consideration of Charter at ALCA AGM

6 RATIONALE

- 6.1 It is considered appropriate that this Panel be involved in the review and have the opportunity to feed back.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Parish Charter Review Working Group led the consultation on the redrafting of the Charter with all parishes given the opportunity to participate (see Appendix 2 for consultation results). In addition, the Working Group invited relevant Cabinet members and senior officers to their meetings to discuss views and experiences prior to shaping the revision.
- 8.2 We have already started to have discussion with key service areas on implementing the revised draft Charter and will produce a communications plan to deliver this.
- 8.3 In addition, consultation has taken place with the S151 Officer on this report and the Monitoring Officer has been involved in the preparation of the draft Charter.

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, Strategy and Performance</i>
Background papers	<i>Report on Parish Charter to CTE PDS Panel 9th May 2016</i> <i>Report on Parish Charter to CTE PDS Panel 22nd May 2017</i>
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