

Draft Notes of the
Somer Valley Forum
 29th November 2017, 6.00pm
 Midsomer Norton Town Hall, The Island, Midsomer Norton BA3 2HQ

Present

| Name | Organisation Represented |
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| Lynda Robertson | Chair of Somer Valley Forum |
| Cllr Karen Walker | Vice Chair of Somer Valley Forum |
| Ashley Ayre | Chief Executive, B&NES |
| Richard Baldwin | Divisional Director – Children and Young People’s Specialist Services, B&NES |
| Cllr David Collett | Timsbury Parish Council |
| Cllr Doug Deacon | Ward Councillor, Timsbury |
| Maralyn Deacon | Observer, Timsbury |
| Sara Dixon | Locality Manager, B&NES |
| Cllr Michael Evans | Ward Councillor, Midsomer Norton North |
| Cllr Charles Gerrish | Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency, B&NES |
| PC Mark Graham | Neighbourhood Beat Manager, Somer Valley |
| Cllr Ron Hopkins | Westfield Parish Council |
| Cllr Jeff Humphries | Paulton Parish Council |
| Jo Lewitt | Public Health Development & Commissioning Manager, B&NES |
| Cllr Ray Love | Peasedown St John Parish Council |
| Cllr Paul Myers | B&NES Councillor, Midsomer Norton Redfield |
| Andrew Pate | Strategic Director of Resources, B&NES |
| Cllr Jonathan Rich | Peasedown St John Parish Council |
| Roger Tollervey | Welton Village Group |
| Cllr Alastair Slade | Midsomer Norton Town Council |
| Shirley Steel | Somerset and Dorset Railway Heritage Trust |
| Cllr Kathy Thomas | Chair, Peasedown St John Parish Council |
| Cllr David Walker | Peasedown St John Parish Council |
| Cllr Karen Warrington | Cabinet Member for Transformation and Customer Services, B&NES |
| Cllr Hugh Warren | Paulton Parish Council |
| Alison Wells | Community Engagement Officer, B&NES |
| Diana White | Camerton Resident |
| John Wilkinson | Divisional Director – Community Regeneration, B&NES |
| 1 x Member of Public | |

Apologies

| Name | Organisation Represented |
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| Cllr Liz Hardman | B&NES Ward Councillor Paulton |
| Cllr Eleanor Jackson | B&NES Ward Councillor Westfield |
| Cllr Sarah Bevan | B&NES Ward Councillor Peasedown St John |
| Simon Martin | Infrastructure and Development Manager, B&NES |

| | | Action |
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| 1. | Welcome from the Chair of the Forum; introductions and apologies. | |
| 1.1 | LR welcomed those present, introduced herself as Chair of the Forum and Cllr Karen Walker as Vice Chair of the Forum. A safety notice was given along with a reminder to sign into the meeting. | |

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| 1.2 | LR said that, as usual in November, the Forum's main Agenda item is the Council's budget. As with every other council in the country, Bath & North East Somerset Council faces unprecedented challenges due to increasing demand for services and reduced funding. In a recent press release, the Council stated that it sees the Connecting Communities Forums as a key element to help it meet these challenges. We, as residents and representatives of local organisations, have an important role to play in not only highlighting local issues but also considering how things might be done differently in future and how we might collaborate. By working together, we can help address local concerns and continue to protect and enhance the services that matter most to our communities. | |
| 1.3 | LR said that both she and Karen are keen to encourage lively discussions at the Forum meetings and would like to ensure that everyone has a chance to give their views and comments. We understand that these are challenging times and that we are all very passionate about our communities. However, we must remember to treat each other and our guests with respect. | |
| 1.4 | Apologies were given as above. | |
| 2. | Notes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising | |
| 2.1 | The notes of the meeting of 19 th September were agreed as a true record. | |
| 2.2 | An update was given from the September meeting: There had been a presentation on the Somer Valley Transport Strategy and Forum members' comments had been submitted as a formal response to the consultation. | |
| 2.3 | Following the presentation on Housing, figures on unmet housing need in the Somer Valley had been received from Gary Ward and would be circulated. Paper copies were available at the meeting. | AW |
| 2.4 | There was a query from a Swallow service user on why Diamond Travel passes cannot be used before 9am for those studying or working. The response from the Council's Public Transport Team is that this is a national concessionary scheme which is funded by central Government. It enables older and disabled people to travel free on buses in England between 0930 and 2300 on Mondays to Fridays and all day Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays. In the West of England area, including Bath and North East Somerset, the local councils fund some additional concessions such as an earlier start time of 0900 on Mondays to Fridays. Many councils do not offer any additional concessions to their qualifying residents over and above the national minimum. Some, such as Somerset County Council, have had to withdraw additional concessions owing to the pressure to reduce spending on services in recent years. In the current climate, it is unlikely that the Diamond Travelcard partners would be able to make additional funding available for an extension of the concessionary scheme. This information has been passed to Swallow. | |
| 2.5 | Following the presentation on Broadband at the September meeting, paper copies of an article from the Journal with an update were made available. | |
| 2.6 | Progress has been made on Tourism with parishes adding helpful information on accommodation and local attractions to their websites. An article has also appeared in Midsomer Norton Life and copies of this were on the tables. A fuller update will be provided at a future Forum meeting. | |

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| 3. | Update from the Police | |
| 3.1 | LR welcomed PC Mark Graham, Beat Manager for Somer Valley. He said there is now a new sergeant at Radstock Police station on a part time basis – 2.5 days per week. | |
| 3.2 | Avon and Somerset has not changed structurally yet but a Neighbourhood Review is taking place as the service has not been as effective as it should have been. This has been recognised and there will be a return to more community focussed policing. This should be in place by April 2018. | |
| 3.3 | <p>In terms of crime statistics, comparing this month with the same time last year:</p> <p>Burglary is up from 6 to 10 Criminal Damage is down from 11 to 8 Drug Offences are down from 4 to 2 Other Crime is down from 4 to 0 Robbery is down from 1 to 0 Sexual Offences are up from 1 to 7 Theft is up from 20 to 37 Violence is up from 51 to 68</p> | |
| 3.4 | MG said he would available after the meeting if anyone wished to speak with him directly. | |
| 3.5 | <p>Q: Is Radstock Police Station open to the public now?</p> <p>A: It is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Also on Saturday morning.</p> | |
| 3.6 | <p>Q: We have raised the issue of parking outside the Dolphin in Welton before – has anything been done?</p> <p>A: We have spoken to the Council and the area is deemed public highway. However, the property owner believes it is private as it is on their deeds. The Council has been maintaining this part of the highway and recently upgraded the pavement here. The property owner has been advised that if they park there, they will be ticketed. If the vehicle is causing an obstruction, it can be reported to the Police.</p> | |
| 3.7 | <p>Q: There has been a good deal of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Gullock Tynning – what is the current situation?</p> <p>A: In terms of ASB generally, there has been a significant drop. It was bad in Gullock Tynning but there have been no recent reports. It was mainly nuisance cars and bikes but these seem to have gone over the past month. A few people were issued with Community Protection Notices and seem to have moved on.</p> | |
| 3.8 | <p>Q: We have been told as a Parish Council that the police can't do anything about pavement parking unless they see the vehicle driving onto it. Is this correct? I have seen people struggling with buggies and witnessed a related accident.</p> <p>A: There are two pieces of legislation – driving onto the pavement and causing an obstruction. Much is at officers' discretion but in my view, if you can't get a double buggy or wheelchair past a car then it is an obstruction and the police can be called. We can remove the vehicle.</p> | |

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| 3.9 | Q: Now that the Police Station in Bath City Centre is closed, where do people go if they witness any incidents taking place? A: The police work 24/7 so if someone is vulnerable ring 999 in an emergency or 101 for a non-emergency. | |
| 3.10 | Q: The parked cars on the pavement at the car wash in Radstock reduce visibility – can you have a word? A: Yes | |
| 3.11 | KW thanked MG for attending. She said before we continue with the rest of the meeting, she would like the Forum to wish Cllr Warrington a happy birthday. | |
| 4. | Changing Together – the Council’s Budget Challenge and Pressures | |
| 4.1 | See Appendix 1 | |
| 5. | Topic for Future Meetings | |
| 5.1 | <p>LR said topics suggested by Forum Members are:</p> <p>Emergency Planning Young People Broadband Somer Valley Enterprise Zone</p> <p>We have also had requests from the Carers Centre and DHI to participate in the Community Showcase.</p> <p>If anyone has any suggestions for future topics, or wishes to take part in the Community Showcase, do let us know.</p> <p>JH requested an update on the Local Plan.</p> | |
| 6. | Any Other Business | |
| 6.1 | There was none. | |

Actions

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| Circulate the housing need figures with the update. | AW |

Presentation: Changing Together – the Council’s Budget Challenge and Pressures

Presenters: Cllr Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency and Ashley Ayre, Chief Executive of Bath & North East Somerset Council

The presentation can be found [here](#):

KW introduced Ashley Ayre to give the first part of the presentation.

| Slide | Comment |
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| Title Slide | |
| 1 – What we’ll discuss | Contains an overview of the presentation |
| 2 – The changing role of the Council | <p>AA said the role of the Council is changing – he will set the context and then hand over to Cllr Charles Gerrish. The Council has increasing pressure but remains committed to putting residents first. The words on the slide relate to all people – health outcomes, wellbeing, waste and highways – broadly to make Bath and North East Somerset a good place to live.</p> <p>In order to reach its full potential, there is a need for the Council to play a role in Economic Development and Regeneration to provide jobs. The area has a low wage economy and we are seeking to improve the quality and quantity of jobs.</p> |
| 3 – Why do we need to change | <p>We are judged to be a good local authority with the bulk of services done well and cost effectively. However, we are facing unprecedented pressures. We told you last year that we needed to save £49m. This has now risen to £58m and Cllr Gerrish will go through the reasons for this later in the presentation.</p> <p>We have got to prioritise – we have no choice. The Council will be different and it will be smaller. This was going to happen anyway, regardless of the additional pressures we face.</p> |
| 4 – External factors | <p>In 2010, we received £60m from the Government to support our services. In 2020, the amount we expect to receive will be just over £500,000.</p> <p>There is an expectation that the Government grant will be replaced by our ability to retain Business Rates. National Government is moving to a new system for funding Local Government from 2020. We are not likely to have the details of this until the Autumn of 2019.</p> <p>An increasing reliance on Business Rates to provide income is very dependent on the amount of economic activity in our area and its growth. If the economy is depressed at some point in the future, this means volatility in terms of the income we might receive.</p> <p>Other pressures relate to the cost of Adult and Children Social Care. We are no different to any other Council in this respect – we are all facing the same challenges.</p> <p>We will be looking at how we use digital technology to reduce costs –</p> |

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| | <p>digital by choice to recognise that there will be groups for which this is difficult, so there is no intention to impose it.</p> <p>We have a declining role as a 'Universal Provider'. Until recently, the Council delivered around 800 services. Schools is an example of how this has reduced as Academies do not have to buy or use our services. We are looking to reduce what we offer where we are too small to compete whereas once, we were a monopoly provider of some services. Community Interest Companies, voluntary groups etc can often deliver services more cheaply and better.</p> <p>The recent changes to waste services has resulted in a significant increase in recycling. It costs £1,000 to dispose of one truck of refuse but we receive £100 income for one truck of recycling. The change is both financially and environmentally sound.</p> <p>AA handed over to Cllr Charles Gerrish.</p> |
| 5 – Without action this funding gap will increase by 2020 | <p>CG thanked those present for attending.</p> <p>He said the graph on this slide is often referred to as the 'Chart of Doom'. The top line shows the rising costs and the bottom the income. Overall, it demonstrates the rising gap between the two.</p> |
| 6 – What have we done already to help. | Second title slide. |
| 7 – We've made significant savings | CG said £27m had already been saved. |
| 8 – How we saved £27m | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing office space • Streamlining services • Financing – extending repayment periods • Business Rate retention – B&NES took part in a pilot scheme and achieved £2.5m additional revenue as a result of being part of this and the West of England. <p>In short, a lot has been achieved without significantly impacting on front-line services.</p> |
| 9 – Social care efficiencies (£3m) included: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joining up • Scrutinising costs – trying to keep down the cost of care packages • New ways of assessing whether people can remain in their own homes – we've had a lot of success in this. • More information on how people can obtain support • Recruiting more foster carers – if anyone is interested in this, please get them to go down the Council route where they will get more support. The quality of foster care in B&NES is first class. • Investing in special needs education (SEN) – Three Ways and Fosseyway are oversubscribed. People are moving into B&NES specifically to attend these schools. The Council then has to continue to care for the young people when they are young adults. We are having to send some young people out of our district for continued education and there is a cost to this – particularly in |

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| | <p>terms of specialist transport - one individual can cost the Council as much as £25k per year. There is a lack of SEN provision in B&NES for young people aged 18 – 25 years.</p> |
| <p>10 – Committed savings (£15m) by 2020 include:</p> | <p>Some figures on this slide were presented to you last year.</p> <p>Income from the commercial estate is £1m net income after building costs and servicing.</p> <p>We need to deliver the Modern Libraries programme – if we do not, something else will have to go.</p> |
| <p>11 – Despite these efficiencies, we work with partners to provide:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social care – our fostering has an Outstanding Ofsted rating • We have some of the best schools in our area • We have Green Flag parks with communities involved in their care • We have award winning tourist attractions and revenue from these is used to support services across Bath and North East Somerset which equates to £60 per Council Tax payer. • We have achieved Silver standard in our support for the homeless • Work on infrastructure improvements continues |
| <p>12 – and we've kept Council Tax among the lowest in the South West</p> | <p>Only two authorities locally have lower Council Tax charges than Bath & North East Somerset. One is Swindon and they are now having to find twice the savings in comparison. Bristol has the highest Council Tax but still has to find twice the savings. Bath & North East Somerset is value for money.</p> |
| <p>13 – We've also raised significant income from</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Homes Bonus – this comes from the Government and we are delivering to their targets • £18m income from Heritage • £2m from our property development company – it is early days but will provide both income and new homes – both sources of new revenue. |
| <p>14 – and invested to make long-term savings that we can reinvest in services</p> | <p>The Library and One Stop will be combined in Midsomer Norton – this has worked well in Keynsham and we have received good feedback on it with an increase in library use as a result.</p> <p>The Bath Quays Development – we now have a short list of 5 organisations for this scheme which will deliver new jobs and businesses. The Council will receive income from the Business Rates and increased housing. It is one of 2 Enterprise Zones in B&NES, the other being in the Somer Valley.</p> <p>Car Parking Review – parking is an important source of revenue for Highways.</p> <p>Bath and Keynsham Leisure Centres have been improved – keeping people active and healthy is a preventative service.</p> <p>Recycling – there has been an impressive increase in this in the last few weeks. We need it to reduce the cost of landfill to the Council.</p> |
| <p>15 – BUT a further</p> | <p>Third title slide</p> |

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| £16m needs to be found by 2020 | |
| 16 – Why is the cost of care rising | <p>It does not just relate to the elderly as the slide shows. People are living longer and many have complex needs. The costs of delivering all round care are increasing.</p> <p>Children and young adults with complex needs cost the Council £250k a year.</p> <p>14% more children are in care but we lost three care homes in the last year. It cost £1m to find new homes for 240 young people. This wasn't a one off – there are on-going costs.</p> <p>The National Living Wage has affected the costs of 24/7 care. There was a flat rate of £35 a night before – this has risen to £67.</p> <p>More families on low incomes need support – this is a national issue but still needs our support.</p> |
| 17 – But here's the thing | <p>75p in every £1 is now spent on adult/social care – next year it will be 80p in every £1.</p> <p>This leaves just 20% of the budget to fund everything else.</p> |
| 18 – What does this mean for us? | <p>Can we do things differently? We want to hear from residents. What can we do to generate additional revenue – the property company is one example but are there more sources?</p> <p>We need to maximise access to Government funds through the West of England.</p> <p>Tim Warren (Leader of Bath & North East Somerset Council) and myself will be going to the Government with some of our ideas for raising additional income. These include a possible Tourist Tax but we need get the power from them to do this.</p> <p>In Somer Valley we do not see the impact of students to the same extent as Bath but we have lost 3,000 homes in Bath to students. They do not pay Council Tax and we feel there should be recompense for this.</p> |
| 19 – So how do we propose to save a further £16m | Fourth title slide |
| 20 – We're developing proposals around | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring the workforce • Freeing up the ground floor of Lewis House so we can let it to the private sector – as the workforce contracts, we will have more floorspace. • Seeking further efficiencies – we had a positive meeting with the Third Sector Group (3SG) who want to engage and work with us. |
| 21 – How do we propose to restructure | <p>By 2020, we will lose 300 jobs minimum – the workforce may be further reduced.</p> <p>We will work in partnership with other authorities to obtain economies of scale.</p> |

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| 22 – We think there are four areas... | <p>Do you agree that these are the four key areas where communities can help?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying well – leisure centres, addiction support etc • Doing more on-line – most of you will have a mobile phone and can use this to access Council services. However, we will retain the ability for those who do not want to use it. Fix My Street is an example and reduces the time inspectors spend looking for reported issues. • Helping out – volunteering is an example and we encourage students to do this. It can also mean supporting people to stay at home, even checking on an elderly neighbour is an example. <p>We all need to work together. We are working with partners and parishes and are working to improve the Parish Charter.</p> |
| 23 – The way forward – Our Pledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will run workshops over the coming months • Set up a facebook page • Publish a joint pledge outlining what we and the community can do to help |
| 24 – If we all work together | <p>To find out more, view the Changing Together video and submit ideas visit:</p> <p>http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/changingtogether</p> |

Questions following the presentation

Q1: You said that there has been a 14% increase in children in care – why is this?

A1: The percentage looks high but the actual number is low. The increase is due to family break up and other factors.

Q2: Wouldn't it be cheaper to take the children into care?

A2: The Director of Children's Services is here so can answer this. RB said that if a child has welfare needs it costs around £3,000 per year. It is £10,000 per year for a protection plan per child per year. A child in looked after care (ie a home) costs £50,000 or more per year.

Q3: What money goes into solving the problems of a child so that they do not go into care?

A3: We try to support families for as long as we can. If we cannot protect the child, a court has to agree to move them.

Q4: How do we stop this situation happening in the first place?

A4: Continuing to invest in early help services. We have had to make some reductions in this but have tried to protect it. Numbers have increased but it is lower than the national or regional average.

Q5: With regard to the closure of care homes, are these ones where residents contribute to the costs or not?

- A5: Both – High Littleton is an example – all the patients had to be relocated and it cost £1m to re-home them as an additional cost.
- Q6: If people pay for their care, it is not a cost to you. If they need to move, why does it cost you extra?**
- A6: Market forces - care homes know that they can ask the Council to pay more, so we have to do so.
- Q7: Does the Council run any care homes now?**
- A7: No – we are looking at it though. The care homes that closed did not work with us early enough to work out a deal with them.
- Q8: Are you willing to talk to someone who has an idea about this?**
- A8: Yes.
- Comment 1: Nobody has ever been asked whether they would like their Council Tax to go up. Nowhere in the Conservative Manifesto does it say we are going to stop paying people. The Government has capped Local Authorities who are turning to parishes instead.**
- Comment 2: My wife is the Director of the largest disabled charity. Local Authorities say they will pay £4k a week maximum – take it or leave it. Private clients are charged £11k per week. It is economically unsound and so the care facilities close and then the problem and cost goes back to the Council.**
- Response 2: We have met with providers and worked out a fair price. A regular conversation takes place with a representative group. It is difficult and a lot of other authorities are in the same position.
- Q9: Do you use consultants to help you make these efficiencies and, if so, do you know how much they cost?**
- A9: Yes – we have a contract with Ernst Young and they work with us on a range of support services. They undertook the project assessment on Bath Quays and bring experience of working with other authorities. Bath and North East Somerset has been cushioned somewhat by income from tourism and property rentals
- Comment 3: I used to work in central Government and was alarmed by the spend on consultants to tell you what you already know.**
- Response 3: You never know how helpful consultants will be until after they have been engaged. However, they have been very helpful in getting North Quays to the market – we had 16 Expressions of Interest as a result and have shortlisted this to 5. Consultants can be very useful for a one off ask, rather than the on-going expense of an in-house team.
- Comment 4: The Bath Christmas Market must bring a lot of income to the Council.**
- Response 4: We had forecast more but were unable to get planning consent for more stalls. We also need to have a balance between income and impact.