



**Note of the meeting of the Bath City Forum
held on Wednesday, 17th January, 2018
in Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath**

Meeting Attendance

In Attendance
Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones
Councillor Rob Appleyard
Ashley Ayre
Councillor Colin Blackburn
Jeremy Boss
Amanda Cameron
Councillor Anthony Clarke
David Dixon
Roger Driver
Luke John Emmett
Councillor Andrew Furse
Councillor Bob Goodman
Mark Hayward
Sir Peter Heywood
Michael Hill
Bryn Jones
Robin Kerr
Gareth Lloyd
Tracey Long
Councillor Michelle O'Doherty
Rosie Phillips
Mike Plows
Stephen Quinton
Councillor Joe Rayment
Leslie Redwood
Residents
Adam Reynolds
Councillor Dine Romero
Ian Savigar
Councillor Shaun Andrew Stephenson-McGall
Andy Thomas
Councillor Karen Warrington
Virginia Williamson

Apologies Received from
Caroline Kay
Steve Kendall
Penny McKissock
Councillor Lin Patterson
Councillor Peter Turner

1. Welcome and Apologies

Councillor Colin Blackburn welcomed all attendees and apologies were recorded.

2. Minutes from the meeting of 27 November 2017

Robin Kerr disputed the minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes stated: “Robin Kerr felt that the note included from the Fire Service regarding the number of inspections carried out on party house was not sufficient.”

What was also said was: “The October report needs to be substantially improved with respect to ‘Party Houses’, providing detail of the number of inspections which have taken place and what remedial action has been considered necessary in order to bring the danger in these potential death-traps within the kind of risk considered acceptable in hotels and guest houses.”

An update was agreed.

All other aspects were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and were agreed by Jeremy Boss and seconded by Councillor Joe Rayment.

3. Fire Service Update

Bath Fire Station Update

Station Manager, Gareth Lloyd explained that the firefighters are running their winter safety campaign.

- Home visits to the elderly and vulnerable are being carried out.
- Three nights have been spent on the towpaths with community resilience volunteers to educate young people that it's not the best placed to walk if you've been drinking. Work continues with both of the universities in Bath.
- Work has been taking place with food banks to meet vulnerable people living in the community so that visits can be arranged to check their fire safety, and advice can be given on property issues. It is hoped that this work will extend to soup kitchens.
- Requests have been made to boat owners to attend safety meetings at the George Public House in Bathampton. This work will include outreach workers for Julian House and advice on fire detection devices.

Question 1 – Cllr Dine Romero – Does the work with the university students extend to Bath College and school sixth forms?

Response – There are not presently the links that the Fire Service would like to see in place. Work on river safety is aimed at 17-21 year olds and attendance at fresher's events does take place. Social media is being used as one method of getting the messages out.

Question 2 – Cllr Andy Furse – How are interventions taking place with vulnerable people affected by rogue landlords?

Response – Work is ongoing with the Student Community Partnership and the River Safety Group. An online blog is regularly updated.

Andy added that Bath College would welcome visits from Avon Fire & Rescue.

Question 3 – Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall – What is the position of the Fire service in relation to the squeeze from funding cuts?

Response – The budget proposals go to The Fire Authority in February. The service commitment from the front end responders remains 24 hour / 7 day a week operation.

Question 4 - Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall asked how the fire service deals with the issue of washing machine / tumble dryers which are potential “death traps”.

Response – The Fire Service keeps an eye on product recalls and issues alerts for the public.

Question 5 – Robin Kerr – Could a response be given on fire safety around party houses. The Council are holding a scrutiny day in February on this topic. Brighton and Hove Council are ahead of us in dealing with these issues, East Sussex Fire Service has reported that they have powers to shut down premises.

Stephen Quinton, Group Manager – Risk Reduction responded:

- The fire service does have a responsibility to carry out fire inspections at party houses, including Air BnB lets - “Party houses are regulated”. It was stated that there no inspection issues that are “too difficult”.
- Sleeping accommodation is a priority for fire inspections.
- Named unlicensed party houses have been added to its list for checks. There were no specific complaints about any of those properties and there is no evidence to suggest that party houses are any more dangerous than licensed premises.
- 28 properties have been inspected, 5 turned out not to be party houses. None have received any enforcement action. Only one was assessed above level 3 of fire hazard (= advisory), requiring addition of some door closers and smoke alarms.
- A single exception was assessed as level 5 (= the worst) and would have been closed down that night, had not the owner managed to install a wireless detection system before the deadline.
- There are 320 Air BnB’s advertised in B&NES area which provide a challenge as the only way to contact them is to book a room or email them.
- There is nothing to stop owners from illegally blocking or removing fire safety measures (e.g. door closers) once the inspectors have gone.
- There are also 8,000 businesses in B&NES, and a number of care homes, which are a bigger priority for the fire services.
- A premise above a shop was facing prosecution, on return to the property the landlord had installed a fire protection system that covered the issues that had been picked up in the initial inspection.
- Once an inspection is carried out the premise is added to a plan but the reality is that a long time passes before a return visit is carried out.
- The fire service has only two fire safety officers to cover B&NES, this is why a risk-based fire safety assessment system is run.

- It was disappointing to see a reference to Grenfell in relation to party house fire safety in Bath. We will be doing everything in our power to keep you updated.”

Cllr Rob Appleyard felt that the feedback that had been provided was of a high quality and extremely useful. The language that is used future discussion needs to be responsible and measured.

Robin Kerr added his thanks to the information provided.

4. Police Update - Handout

The Police were unable to attend this meeting, a handout was provided covering the latest crime statistics.

5. Modern Community Libraries

Ian Savigar introducing an update on modern libraries and explained that the council is currently in the “engagement and design” phase of the plans for Bath Central Library.

Tracey Long presented on Branch libraries

- There are a maximum of 16 per cent of active library users, who have registered, in any area in B&NES. However, the council realises more people than that actually use libraries.
- There is a high usage of Bath Central Library but little usage of the mobile library.
- A large proportion of residents in Weston and Newbridge use their local library.
- Some 265,000 people took out books from Bath Central Library in the 2016 financial with 192,000 using the online select and collect option.
- The mobile library bus is visited more at some stops than others, it is hoped that we will be able to transfer some of the libraries over to the community and we want to see enhanced services.
- The five branch libraries could be managed by a community body, there has been some interest and the council has a “package of support” to help people take over running the libraries.

There are three models for running a community library:

OPTION C

Independent Stock Community Run Library would see:

- Running and staffing costs all funded by local group
- Book/issues and membership rules (including fees and charges) determined at local level
- IT equipment/support and maintenance, Wi-Fi, printing and any other systems funded by local group
- Income from local sales and services retained by local group
- B&NES decommissioned book stock plus any local sourced stock
- Professional support from B&NES available through networking and training events
- Eligible for one off Community Library Start Up Grant

OPTION B

B&NES stock only Community Run Library would see:

- Running and staffing costs all funded by local group

- Book/issues and membership rules (including fees and charges) determined at local level for rotated stock
- IT equipment/support and maintenance, Wi-Fi, printing and any other systems funded by local group
- Income from local sales and services retained by local group
- B&NES identified rotated book stock plus any local sourced stock
- Professional support from B&NES available through networking and training events
- Eligible for one off Community Library Start Up Grant

OPTION A

B&NES and Consortium Stock Community Run Library would see:

Running and staffing costs all funded by local group

Catalogue book stock and professional support provided by B&NES

Part of Libraries West Consortium stock and reservations network

IT equipment/support and maintenance, Wi-Fi, printing and any other systems funded by local group

All loan related fees, fines and charges income retained by B&NES

Income from local sales and services retained by local group

Click and collect point for core Library stock on Libraries West Consortium system but any related fees, fines and charges income retained by B&NES for consortium system orders

Eligible for one off Community Library Start Up Grant

Library support and funding

- The council will help community groups devise a business case that is sustainable and that was grant funding available.
- The council will set up an example of Option A so that people could come along and have a look at this model.
- Conversations in Weston and Moorland Road have started, groups in other areas of Bath come forward with any ideas they may have.

Roger Driver asked if there was a way to estimate the number of people who use libraries in ways other than taking out books, e.g., using wifi and computers for social welfare applications. Response – The footfall and books borrowed can be measured but it is difficult to categorise other uses in the smaller branch libraries. The aim is to fit into other spaces and have places with mixed resources that fit the community needs.

Roger requested that what information is available on the use of other services be made shared with the forum/communities.

Cllr Shaun Andrew Stephenson-McGall asked whether it was achievable for a community to run a library for 20-30 hours a week on a volunteer basis.

Response - It's so surprising how many people want to do this and it works very well nationally. We already have examples of high numbers of volunteers in Saltford, Bishop Sutton and at a national level. Bath has a large student population that could help.

Cllr Joe Rayment sought assurance that the principle of a library would be maintained and that you would be able to sit there for as long as you liked without buying anything. The word "library sales" in the presentation did not feel right. Joe felt that there was the question of why would anyone run a library if they weren't going to make money out of it?

Cllr Karen Warrington, Cabinet Member for Policy and Transformation explained that some groups might want to generate a revenue stream, but one size does not fit all. The request is that communities will now contact Council Officers to build on established ideas or show where there is support for new options.

6. New Electoral Arrangements - Local Government Boundary Commission Draft Proposals

Jeremy Boss gave a Local Government Boundary Commission Draft Proposals short presentation about Local Government Boundary Commission Draft Proposals which would see changes to ward boundaries in Bath. Jeremy felt that the draft proposals do not meet the stated objectives and principles. Whoever has put together these proposals has done a good job in terms of cutting the number of councillors to the wanted 59 (from 66), but a “lousy job” in terms of reflecting local communities and there has to be a better understanding of local knowledge.

The University of Bath is distorting the position for the South of Bath. The proposed ward for Claverton Down has no real basis.

Jeremy recommended that the Bath City Forum ask the Commission to revisit its proposals for Bath by:

- Staying within the City boundary
- Placing a greater emphasis on community identity and cohesion (noting submissions from local groups and residents)
- Reconsidering the position for the University / Claverton Down
- Seeking for wards to be predominantly with 2 Cllrs

Bryn Jones from Lambridge ward said the proposals meant there would be seven single-member wards in the north of Bath. (Full details of these representations are included in the minute papers)

“You’d have to put all your money on one horse.”

He said Fairfield Park would disappear into Walcot.

“This is an example of a lack of respect for community integrity in the Lambridge area.”

Cllr Rob Appleyard said: “We need to build from the bottom upwards. It is about communities.”

Jeremy Boss thought the forum should go back to the Boundary Commission and ask them to take better account of communities.

Cllr Rayment said he thought the main point should be about the overall boundary of the city as the split between parished and unparished areas would cause problems.

Cllr Anthony Clarke felt that it was virtually impossible now for politicians to have an effect on the outcome as they had already had their opportunity.

Cllr Dine Romero disagreed on this point as local parties can still contribute.

Virginia Williamson explained that Bear Flat would be split through the heart of the community by the new ward boundaries proposed. Virginia had looked at the notes on the website on how communities should respond and where resident associations are set up representation is

easier. The areas without a group will need some level of help from their Ward Councillors in making their representation.

Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall had no issue if the whole of the authority had single-member wards because it's very easy for members that contribute very little to hide behind a good member covering the same ward.

Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall was not bothered by changes to the City boundary.

The university issue is link to national registration on 1 December, a date which means university students are not captured.

The changing ward boundaries do not, ultimately, matter. It just meant wards would have to work on cross-boundary matters, as they do now.

Cllr Joe Rayment said the forum represents the unparished area of B&NES, so keeping the city boundary is good for the future of the forum.

Cllr Andrew Furse said 59 was not necessarily the right number of councillors and remained neutral on whether one and two-member wards, this does however need to be driven by communities

Cllr Bob Goodman felt that the proposals have got this badly wrong, the Bath boundary needs to be kept intact and communities need to go back with their concerns

Cllr Bob Goodman explained that Harry Patch, who is the most famous person in Combe Down, would no longer be in Combe Down if this were to go ahead.

The forum voted that they were in favour of a letter being written to the Electoral Boundary Commission. (17 - Yes / Nil - No)

The forum voted on three points that they wished to have included in the letter being written to the Electoral Boundary Commission

- (i) Staying within the City boundary (Yes - 15 / No - 0)
- (ii) Placing a greater emphasis on community identity and cohesion (noting submissions from local groups and residents) (Yes - 17 / No - 0)
- (iii) Seeking for wards to be predominantly with 2 Cllrs (Yes - 12 / No - 3)

7. Working Group Recommendations for CIL and CEF

Cllr Appleyard went through a list of funding recommendations from the Bath City Forum Working Group.

Community Empowerment Funding

- £6,000 for a shelter at Brickfields Park in Westmoreland
- £5,200 for training and start-up costs for a group of Bath Clean Air Champions to tackle vehicle anti-idling
- £15,000 for Bath Comedy Festival 2018

An application for the Bath City Brand was not recommended.

Bath Neighbourhood CIL Funding

- £7,500 for Bath Festival of Nature 2018
- £3,500 towards Bathscape Walking Festival 2018
- £25,000 towards the protection and restoration of Free Fields near Foxhill.

An application for speed signage in Bathwick/Claverton has been deferred as further information needs to be considered before a final decision can be given.

Councillor Joe Rayment felt that this scheme is important as the road is dangerous; he added that that this should scheme should not be dismissed if the University of Bath are not willing to be involved.

Councillor Colin Blackburn explained this application has now been differed and will come back once the working group have looked at this with the additional information provided.

Virginia Williamson had concerns that there may be differences in the wording on the website and in the criteria guidance document for the Community Empowerment Fund. Virginia also felt that the application form needs clearer guidance around the need for a forum signatory and a clearer way to show the breakdown of costs included in the application.

Council Officers will review the website; criteria document and application form. Amendments will be made if required.

8. Forum Development and Forward Plans

Luke John Emmett, requested to speak to the forum about community engagement (the full speech is included in the minutes papers).

Luke said 90 per cent of the B&NES residents are white and British and that most of the forum members are “white, male and middle class”.

He asked whether the remaining 10 per cent of B&NES residents were properly represented, and called for a series of mock council meetings so people who might find them intimidating could get used to them.

Cllr Dine Romero asked who the Forum meeting tonight felt compared to other Council meetings.

Luke felt that politics had been kept out of the meeting tonight which was a good thing. The room setting is very formal and could be intimidating for those people who are not used to such a set up. Luke suggested that if the venue were to be made available for open days which would allow barriers to be broken down.

Cllr Dine Romero wondered whether there might be a cost barrier to mock council meetings.

Rosie Phillips suggested that forum members had links in the community and there were other ways of reaching out to the community to show them how they can get involved more.

Cllr Colin Blackburn explained

- The forum wants community member to come along and take part.
- The point of the forum was to make Bath a better place to live and work.
- Personally he felt he needs to do more to tell his constituents about the work of the forum.
- Funding recommendations that we deliver aim to improve the City.
- We need to get better at the way we communicate.

Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall said it was more difficult to get community engagement in a big community like Bath without having parish councils.

Shaun felt that the forum should not beat ourselves up too much over the problems we're facing, it will be difficult to solve the community engagement issues with a small budget."

Shaun added that Bath has in the past tried other formats, different venues and other membership models which have all had issues of their own. There are other places such as Bristol and South Gloucestershire, who also struggle with similar issues of engagement,

Cllr Joe Rayment said there was a lot of talk about people resigning from the forum because it was too political. Joe felt that if that's the case, then issues shouldn't be sent to the forums that are contentious because people are political beings and bring their political beliefs to the table. If the forum supports perishing in Bath then we need to have a proper discussion.

Joe added that the diversity is an issue, very few councillors are under forty, very few are full time workers and not many have to rent their home.

Jeremy Boss felt that the acid test is what we do. The forum discussions tend to be dominated by councillors because they were better informed, but councillors need to keep in mind that discussions must suit lay members as well to keep them engaged.

Cllr Colin Blackburn said he would like to see more topics brought to the forum that residents are interested in. The scale of how moving to a parished Bath model needs to be explored and explained.

Jeremy Boss felt there has been very little appetite in his community for a parished Bath.

Cllr Blackburn closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.