

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Communities, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING	11th March 2019	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Consultation, Community Engagement and Communications	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix : Report to Cabinet, 5 th March 2019		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report briefs the Panel on a report to Cabinet on work undertaken with members of our Connecting Communities Forums on 'Consultation, Community Engagement and Communications'. Cabinet was due to consider the report at its meeting of 5th March, including a recommendation to invite the Panel to advise on the future development of this piece of work.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to

- 2.1 Note the update on the development and work of the Area Forums set out in the Cabinet report
- 2.2 Consider the outcomes so far from the working group established to consider consultation, community engagement and communications, summarised below in Paragraph 5.1
- 2.3 Advise on how best to develop further this work and incorporate it into the Council's policy and practices.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 There is a well-established business case for delivering effective and efficient consultation. Identifying appropriate resources for high-quality communications and engagement on projects should be built into their planning phase from the outset.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The council has a wide range of statutory duties relating to engaging and consulting with local residents, and considering responses appropriately through its decision making process.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Cabinet on March 5th was due to consider a report on 'Consultation, Community Engagement and Communications' The report is attached but in summary it:

- 1) Sets out the background and context to the council's approach to local engagement, including the "Connecting Communities" programme, which aims to help local people, organisations and parish councils address the issues that matter to them in their communities
- 2) Describes the current work of the Connecting Communities Forums, involving parishes, local elected members and other residents and local groups. Three Connecting Communities Forums were established initially covering the Somer Valley, Chew Valley and Keynsham areas, building on long-established partnership arrangements in these areas. This was extended to the whole of the parished area with the creation of the Bathavon Forum (now the "Cam Valley" and "Bathavon North Forums"). The council also established the Bath City Forum in 2015, which draws together elected Bath & North East Somerset Councillors and co-opted members. All these Forums have continued to evolve and develop- for example, the Bath City Forum now advises the Cabinet on disbursing the local portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 3) Sets out the work that a group, drawn from the Forums, Avon Local Councils Association (ALCA) and the Third Sector Group (3SG), have undertaken to improve and refine the engagement processes. The group have drawn from the experience of and learning from a wide range of consultation processes, including on Your Care Your Way, the East of Bath Park and Ride, Libraries and Air Quality.

- 5.2 An appendix to the Cabinet's reports sets out the detailed discussions of the working group. However, in summary, the proposal is that four key areas be explored further, as set out below

- develop a 'Charter' on consultation similar to the Parish Charter adopted by the Council to support our working relationship with town and parish Councils.
- agree a vocabulary of 'consultation language' which, whilst not affecting the Council's statutory obligations, would be better understood by residents
- explore opportunities to work more closely with the 3SG to engage harder to reach groups. •

- investigate the idea of setting up an 'Consultation Panel' to give officers feedback prior to the Council embarking on consultation.

5.3 There is a strong commitment on behalf of the Forum members and the council to work together to develop this work further. The outcomes and next steps have been reported back to the Forums and further work is planned. The outcomes of the Panel's discussions will be fed into this.

6 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 None

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 These proposals have been drawn up through joint working with representatives from the local forums, the Third Sector group and parish councils.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	Report to Cabinet- Consultation, Community Engagement and Communications, March 2019 https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s54795/E3133%20Consultation%20Community%20Engagement%20and%20Communications.pdf
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