

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Council	
MEETING DATE:	21st May 2019	
TITLE:	Parish Charter Review	
WARD:	All parished wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Parish Charter progress report 2019 – a review of Charter Commitments and how these have been progressed over the past year.		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Parish Charter was endorsed by Council in May 2018 following a period of consultation with all parishes across the district. The Charter provides a framework for how Bath & North East Somerset Council and the area's town and parish councils work together to serve the people of Bath and North East Somerset. This process is supported by the Parish Liaison meeting which is held three times a year.
- 1.2 It was agreed that the Charter would be reviewed within 12 months of its adoption and this report provides an update on the progress made so far on its implementation.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the progress report on the Parish Charter commitments attached in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Agree that a working group of Council and parish representatives be established to:
- Review and update the Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison to reflect the new ways of working under the Parish Charter.

- Report back to Full Council as appropriate with proposals and recommendations.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The staffing and other resource requirements for implementing and reviewing the Parish Charter are managed from within existing budgets.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Parishes are statutory consultees and hold a number of legal powers to deliver a range of services. They provide a representative voice to give communities more control over and say in how local services are delivered. Across Bath and North East Somerset there are 51 parishes (including 3 parish meetings).
- 4.2 Building effective relationships between Bath & North East Somerset Council and our parishes is vital for tackling a range of issues and challenges in our local communities. Bath & North East Somerset Council has a number of powers including the general power of competence which supports its approach to working in partnership with parishes.
- 4.3 The Equalities Impact Assessment for the Charter has been updated since its adoption last year.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Since the adoption of the Parish Charter in May 2018, overall feedback has indicated that significant progress has been made to improve collaboration and ensure a better shared understanding of local issues. Whilst it is recognised that further work is required to improve communications, it is generally recognised that significant improvements have been made to meet the core commitments of the Charter.
- 5.2 In order to assess progress in implementing the Charter, Appendix 1 sets out work undertaken to deliver the core and specific commitments made in the document. In summary:
- **Together to serve the people of Bath and North East Somerset** – The Council has continued to involve parishes in setting long term corporate priorities including at Parish Liaison meetings and through Connecting Communities Forums. A number of parishes have identified key objectives such as improving rural transport. In addition a new Council policy was introduced in 2019 relating to Community Asset Transfers which specifically recognises the roles and functions of parishes, with amendments to the policy made in response to parish feedback.
 - **Making it Happen** - There is a better understanding of the role of parishes particularly in delivering local services either directly or in partnership with the Council. We are working more closely together to identify the needs of parishes for example training.
 - **Strengthening relationship** – The feedback from both the Council and parishes indicates relationships are becoming more collaborative. In particular, significant efforts have been made over the last year to improve

communications. The Community Empowerment Fund has contributed to successful parish projects and as a result further funding has been secured in 2019/2020.

- **Providing practical support** - The Parish Toolkit has been designed as a working document for parishes to understand how the Council works. The Council's community engagement team serves as a first point of contact for parishes seeking information advice and support. Work continues to ensure that staff and councillors are aware of the role of parishes and how best to work with them.
- **Making the best of our skills and resources** - The Council has been able to draw on parishes' local knowledge and expertise as it redesigns services such as FixMyStreet and refreshes its website.

5.3 Parish Liaison meetings have supported the implementation of the Charter. Meetings are held three times a year. Parish Liaison does not have any decision making powers but can advise and make representations to Bath & North East Somerset Council. Agendas for Parish Liaison are set by a working group comprising of representatives of B&NES, ALCA and parishes.

5.5 The latest Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison were agreed at Council in May 2018 as part of the refresh of the Charter. A discussion took place at the Parish Liaison meeting in March 2019 to identify any further changes to its Terms of Reference that may be required to reflect the new ways of working under the Parish Charter. It is not recommended that any changes be made to the Terms of Reference, set out elsewhere on this agenda, but that a working group will review, update and report back to Council as appropriate.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The Council has committed to reviewing the Parish Charter and this report provides a progress update on its implementation over the past 12 months.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The revised Parish Charter was widely consulted upon.

8.2 A parish survey will be undertaken during 2019 which will include feedback from parishes on many issues including how effective the implementation of the Charter has been.

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.

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Background papers	<p><i>Council report 10th May 2018 - Parish Charter adoption</i> https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s50917/Parish%20Charter%20Council%20Report.pdf</p> <p><i>Parish Charter document 2018 -</i> https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/final_parish_charter_-_may_2018_1.pdf</p> <p><i>Updated Equalities Impact Assessment May 2019 -</i> https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/working-partnership/working-parish-councils</p>
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