

## Parish Charter: Progress Report against Commitments - May 2019

### Chapter 3 - Together to serve the people of Bath and North East Somerset: Our Core Commitments

Together we will work together to promote local economic, social and environmental well-being. We will value the roles, responsibilities, and opinions of our respective councils and be aware at all times that we have a common purpose to serve the public of Bath and North East Somerset and that we serve the same residents. This is the foundation of our Charter.

From B&NES Council	From parish and town councils	Progress made
We will involve parish councils in the setting of our long-term corporate strategies and other priorities.	We will identify local objectives and priorities and work with B&NES Council to identify the best way of delivering them.	<p>Parishes have been consulted on key issues that will affect them and their residents, including the Council Budget, Joint Local Transport Plan and proposals for a Clean Air Zone.</p> <p>Many of the parishes have identified local objectives some of which were submitted as part of the consultation of the Parish Charter. A survey of parishes will take place during 2019 which will request further information on their long-term objectives.</p>
We will champion local democracy and encourage local residents to participate fully in the local democratic process.		<p>Information about local democracy is published on the Council's website. Local residents are able to participate in Council meetings and can register to speak on issues that matter to them. The Council and Cabinet meetings are also webcast. <a href="https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1">https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1</a>.</p>
We will use Parish Liaison and the Connecting Communities Forums to put in place shared projects and identify key local priorities.		<p>Forum Chairs and a representative of Avon Local Councils' Association (ALCA) meet together regularly to identify future agenda items and shared issues. This has been beneficial in identifying key local priorities and avoiding duplication. For example, discussions on rural transport were co-ordinated leading to agreement to establish a Rural Transport working group.</p>
We recognise a shared interest in support for local community facilities and will work together within legal and policy framework eg Assets of Community Value, to achieve this where possible.		<p>The Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy was approved in 2019 and was the subject of consultation which included parishes. Following feedback, the approved policy makes clear the specific role of parishes in the process. A number of discussions about local assets currently owned by the Council are taking place with parishes and communities.</p> <p>A bid fund was made available to form and develop new community libraries with a</p>

	number of models available to suit the needs of local communities. The Council has provided advice and professional support. Bishop Sutton Community Library was the first new facility under this programme. As well as providing local library services, it is a valuable community resource particularly for parents, carers and families.
We will collaborate on digital projects to improve how we work together, communicate and deliver services.	<p>Parishes have been involved in providing input into the roll out of FixMyStreet and have commented on the refresh of the Council's website. They have particularly welcomed the introduction of FixMyStreet as it enables them to quickly report issues, identify whether other residents have already reported them and obtain updates.</p> <p>Parishes continue to offer valuable feedback for improvements to FixMyStreet and will continue to be involved in the website refresh as it progresses.</p> <p>Statistics for FixMyStreet (as of writing) show 245 reports in the previous week, 653 fixed in the previous month and 31,468 updates on reports <a href="https://fix.bathnes.gov.uk/">https://fix.bathnes.gov.uk/</a>.</p>
We will work together to protect the most vulnerable in our community.	Parishes regularly attend the Connecting Communities Forums and through these have raised awareness of issues facing vulnerable people and the local services available to support them, such as Age UK B&NES, DHI, and Mentoring Plus. This initiative has been welcomed by parishes, many of which were unaware of the range of support and activities on offer. They now feel better placed to support vulnerable people in their communities and have been promoting these services to their residents via their website and local newsletters.

## Chapter 4 a) - Making it Happen: respecting and valuing each other

Together we will respect the democratic mandates of all our individual councils within their legal and service remits, recognising that B&NES Council and parish councils exist as separate bodies and have separate tax raising powers.

From B&NES Council	From parish and town councils	Progress made
We will work together to develop our people, including coaching, shadowing and understanding the competencies we need to thrive.		Updated information have been prepared for Council staff and elected members giving information on the role of parishes and advice on how best to work with them. There have also been features on the role of parishes in a number of briefings as well as staff and councillor inductions.

		<p>Parish Liaison meetings have been used to provide advice from the Council Monitoring Officer on purdah rules and elections costs, elections and boundary changes. The Council provides regular training for parishes on key issues such as Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) and the use of GIS Mapping tools.</p> <p>A survey of parishes will be undertaken during 2019 which will ask parishes about their training needs.</p>
We will work within our respective organisational policies and procedures to deal with complaints.		In addition to the individual procedures for all organisations, Parishes have the opportunity to raise issues in respect of the Charter through the Parish Liaison Group. This group was established in 2016 and comprises of representatives of parishes, ALCA and B&NES.
B&NES Council through its Monitoring Officer will support the promotion of high standards of behaviour, including the investigation of complaints against parish councillors, involving the Standards Committee and Parish Councils where appropriate.	Parish Councils will assist the Monitoring Officer in promoting the high standards of behaviour and assist in the assessment of any complaints.	The Standards Committee discuss and agree governance, code of conduct and procedural issues at their meetings and have a work plan for the forthcoming year. 3 Parish representatives attend the Committee and provide information relating to their roles and responsibilities. The Committee receives regular reports on the progress of complaints against councillors, including parish councillors. An annual report on the work of the Standards Committee is considered by Council.
In line with the policies of transparency and accountability, B&NES Council will publish all Parish Councils' registers of members' interests without websites, on its website, and links to all other Parish Councils' registers.	Parish councils will publish their Register of Interests on their websites.	The Council continues to provide information about parishes on its website and supports parishes without websites, offering links to parish councillors' registers of interest. Parish Councils with their own websites have been encouraged to publish their registers of interests on these, together with their Codes of Conduct.
B&NES Council and ALCA will work together to improve governance standards in parish councils as appropriate.		The Parish Liaison Working Group will continue to monitor this and respond as appropriate.
We will ensure that feedback on service delivery changes is effectively communicated.		Some progress has been made to ensure early notification where service delivery changes would have a direct impact.

## Chapter 4 b) - Making it Happen: Strengthening relationships

Together we will work together to address the significant challenges facing our area. As resources tighten we will collaborate in supporting communities to do more for their local areas and make the best use of new ways of working, with greater emphasis on the use of digital technology as staffing resources reduce.

From B&NES Council	From parish and town councils	Progress made
B&NES Council will consult specific parishes on matters when a planned decision would have a specific and direct or significant impact on the local council or its area or inhabitants.	Parish councils will consult B&NES Council on matters when a planned decision would have a direct or significant impact on B&NES Council or on the wider Bath and North East Somerset area or inhabitants.	<p>Parishes are statutory consultees on matters such as planning and highways and these processes are set out in legislation.</p> <p>In January 2019 the Council further developed its approach to consultation, community engagement and communication through a workshop of representatives from all six of the Connecting Communities Forums, including parish and ALCA. The findings were reported to Cabinet and PDS Panel and a number of recommendations have been adopted.</p> <p>Cabinet – 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019  <a href="https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s54795/E3133%20Consultation%20Community%20Engagement%20and%20Communications.pdf">https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s54795/E3133%20Consultation%20Community%20Engagement%20and%20Communications.pdf</a></p> <p>CTE PDS – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019  <a href="https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s54868/CTE%20CCCE%20March%2011%20cover%20report%202.pdf">https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s54868/CTE%20CCCE%20March%2011%20cover%20report%202.pdf</a></p>
B&NES Council will allow adequate time for a response to be made, appropriate to the issue under discussion and explain why it matters to respond. A longer period of time and more detailed engagement will take place where there is a potential high impact/financial implication for a specific parish or group of parishes.	Parish councils will respond to consultations in a timely manner and as appropriate will call special meetings. In doing this they will seek to reflect the view of local people. Parish councils will also respond as appropriate to general consultations (eg where these have been placed online).	It was recognised that the Council's withdrawal of funding for the Parish Sweeper scheme would have impacts for those parishes currently receiving a grant under the scheme. As a result, a working group was established including parish representatives, including non-members of the scheme. As a result, a package was drawn up offering a phased reduction of funding which enabled parishes to better plan for the withdrawal using their own local resources and based on priorities in their communities.

We will provide the framework for Parish Liaison (using the Terms of Reference set) and Connecting Communities.	We will participate in and contribute to Parish Liaison and Connecting Communities Forums.	<p>The latest Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison were agreed at Council in May 2018 as part of the refresh of the Charter. Further amendments are required to reflect new ways of working as set out in the Charter. It is proposed that the Parish Liaison Group will review and update the Terms of Reference and report back at a future date to Full Council.</p> <p>Forum Chairs and Avon Local Councils' Association (ALCA) meet together regularly to identify future agenda items and shared issues. This has been beneficial in identifying key local priorities and avoiding duplication.</p>
We will deliver regular e-bulletins to parish councils covering learning and development; funding opportunities; events and other up to date information.	We will use our local newsletters and websites as appropriate to disseminate information and consultations to local communities.	<p>A regular Interagency e-bulletin is sent to all Parishes with articles on training, funding and events that are taking place across the area.</p> <p>Parishes have used their websites and newsletters to promote local consultations, events and services that are of interest to their residents.</p>
We will use the Council magazine to promote partnership work and local community activity.	We will advise the Council of any good practice or successes we wish to highlight through its meetings or publications.	The Council has continued to review its communication tools and provides regular updates to parishes via e-newsletter, website, social media and e-mail notifications of press releases.
We will work in partnership to manage communications and expectations on key schemes that impact on local communities - particularly Highways (e.g. road closures) and Planning issues, building effective working relationships.	We will work closely with Council service areas to manage the impact of these schemes and build working relationships to manage any local concerns.	<p>All parishes now receive weekly 'StreetWorks' e-mails and planning lists advising them of current roadworks and applications. The Council is currently progressing its a range of projects to streamline services using digital tools.</p> <p>For larger scale projects, for example regeneration schemes, the Council works closely with parishes as appropriate to ensure effective communications and, where possible, we seek to provide joint press statements and other materials.</p>
Every year we will work together to identify a number of shared "Parish Charter" projects which we will jointly sponsor.		As a result of the successful Community Empowerment Fund, the Council agreed at its Budget meeting to reinstate the budget for 2019/20.
We will empower and develop parishes to become as appropriate trusted partners to	We will seek to report issues such as potholes through an agreed process.	The Council rolled out a new initiative FixMyStreet during 2018 which enabled streamlining of reports from parishes to the Council. Parishes are able to take advantage of the facilities including to receive feedback from FixMyStreet. We will

enable better and more streamlined reporting e.g. of highways matters.		continue to identify potential improvements to the service by working with parishes.
We will continue to strengthen relationships with partners including neighbouring parishes and authorities both within our district and across boundaries.		The Connecting Communities Forums membership includes some parishes within neighbouring authority areas such as Mendip and North Somerset. The Valley Parishes Alliance is a B&NES and Wiltshire cross boundary group that discusses highway issues.

## Chapter 4 c) - Making it Happen: providing practical support

Together we will work together to try and answer residents' queries at the first point of contact, signposting as necessary, regardless of whether the query is to a parish or to B&NES Council.

From B&NES Council	From parish and town councils	Progress made
B&NES Council will provide a point of contact to parish councils who need support. When changing key personnel we will update parishes with the new contact details and summary structure charts/line management information.	We will inform B&NES Council of changes to clerks, councillors and other contact details. The clerk will be recognised as the primary point of contact for communications from B&NES and will signpost within their organisation as appropriate.	<p>As a result of the Parish Charter, a 'Parish Toolkit' has been created to aid Parishes to quickly find the information they need to understand the responsibilities of the Council, its services and how best to engage.</p> <p><a href="https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/working-partnership/working-parish-councils">https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/working-partnership/working-parish-councils</a></p> <p>The Community Engagement Team acts as a first point of contact for parishes with a query and can direct enquiries to relevant staff within the Council and ensure feedback is given.</p> <p>Parishes provide up to date information to the Council about contact details s.</p>
We will fulfil our statutory duties in relation to planning consultation and set service standards for how we work with parishes.	We will utilise the processes set out in the service standards, escalating where appropriate.	<p>The Council's provides comprehensive information on planning advice and guidance on its website</p> <p><a href="https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-advice-and-guidance">https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-advice-and-guidance</a></p>
We will promote Council Connect services through our website and provide various ways for	We will use Council Connect services as primary reporting tools.	The 'Parish Toolkit' includes details of how to report issues and information about services.

reporting issues. We will be clear on what timescales can be expected.		<a href="https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/working-partnership/working-parish-councils">https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/working-partnership/working-parish-councils</a>
<p>We will work to develop a Training/Continuous Professional Development offer- e.g. on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) / Section 106, Planning/highways updates, IT/digital</p> <p>Where appropriate the Council will offer other training to parishes.</p>	<p>We will undertake our own due diligence on all projects, recognising that local authorities and parish councils are different legal entities. We will encourage all parish clerks to become qualified and parish councils to work towards the Local Council Award Scheme.</p>	<p>The Council provides regular training for parishes on key issues such as Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) and the use of GIS Mapping tools.</p> <p>A survey of parishes will be undertaken during 2019 which will ask parishes about their training needs. The Council will continue to support their requests to access training.</p>
We will share resources and skills by offering expertise, shared experiences, resources and training as appropriate.		This update report highlights a number of examples of how the Council and parishes collaborate. In particular, the Council has been able to draw on parishes' local knowledge and expertise as it redesigns services such as through FixMyStreet and the website refresh.
We will keep our websites up to date as far as is practicable and use all appropriate forms of media to gain and disseminate information.		The Council provides regular updates to parishes via the e-newsletter, website, social media and e-mail notifications for press releases. Parishes use their websites and newsletters to promote local consultations, events, services that are of interest to their residents.
We will use our powers under the Local Government Act to help parishes achieve their local priorities.	We will secure local support for schemes we put forward as well as undertaking due diligence.	Funding through the Community Empowerment fund is available for parishes during 2019/20. CiL funding has also enabled parishes to prioritise and support local schemes which may not otherwise have been possible.
We will work with parish councils on local community and volunteering projects.	We will build effective partnerships in our local communities.	<p>The Council's annual Community Challenges provide a resource for local communities to undertake projects within their area. Parishes often submit projects which have included painting fingerposts, play area improvements, community gardens and painting community halls. The challenges also provide an opportunity for Council staff to learn more about the area they serve.</p> <p>Last year, 18 community challenges took place, with 6 local employers and a total</p>

		<p>number of 173 participants with over 950 employee hours contributed.</p> <p><a href="https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/volunteering/council-volunteers/employee-community">https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/volunteering/council-volunteers/employee-community</a></p>
So far as practicable, we will share meeting rooms and use events as appropriate to publicise consultations, projects and services.		<p>Keynsham Town Council and Bath &amp; North East Somerset Council have shared resources to support consultation on the High Street improvements, on the Joint Local Transport Plan and to respond to local issues such as anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>The Connecting Communities Forums contain a 'Community Showcase' element which has been used by parishes to highlight best practice such as the funding and play areas.</p>
<p>We will keep up to date information available and contribute our local knowledge in relation to but not exclusively to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency planning</li> <li>• Local data through the research web pages</li> <li>• Parish Online</li> </ul>		<p>This work is on-going and parishes will be updated and asked for information as appropriate.</p>
<p>We will work together to share information and approaches as appropriate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement/bulk buying of equipment</li> <li>• Availability/sharing of ICT</li> <li>• Specialist training</li> </ul>		<p>Bishop Sutton Parish Council worked with the Council on the procurement and installation of their play equipment. Peasedown St John Parish Council were able to replace their street lighting with LED lighting, again by working in partnership with Bath &amp; North East Somerset Council.</p>
<p>We will work together to improve community resilience, for example on Community Places of Safety in respect of minor emergencies.</p>		<p>This work is on-going and parishes will be updated and asked for information as appropriate.</p>



## Chapter 4 c) - Making it Happen: Making the best of our skills and resources

Together we will use the joint principles for the devolution of services to parishes.

From B&NES Council	From parish and town councils	Progress made
We recognise that there are a number of concurrent functions with parish councils. We will pay particular attention to seeking to remove duplication and streamline these ways of working wherever possible.	We will keep B&NES Council updated on the detail of our service operations where there is the potential for joint working or where this would enhance efficiency and reduce duplication.	Forum Chairs and Avon Local Councils' Association (ALCA) meet together regularly to identify future agenda items and shared issues. This has been beneficial in identifying key local priorities and avoiding duplication.
We will give support to parish councils offering training, advice and sharing resources as appropriate to help them use local capacity to improve services. We will provide appropriate equipment and support for litter picks and similar voluntary initiatives.	We will utilise local volunteer and other capacity to improve our areas - e.g. through litter picking, snow wardens, farmers helping with hedge cutting, etc.	The Council and parishes have worked together to improve the environment, for example, at least five Parishes took part in the annual Great British Spring Clean during March and April with the Council providing litter picking equipment and refuse collection for groups wishing to take part.
We will make all communications to parish councils through the clerk for them to signpost as appropriate.	We will respond to communications within reasonable timescales.	Information has been prepared for Council staff which includes advice on working with parishes and a request to liaise with parishes through their clerks.
We will support our elected members in representing their local community and they will be encouraged to work with parish councils.	We will work closely with B&NES elected members as community leaders and problem-solvers.	The Council has an induction programme for all councillors. This includes their role within the community as well as the role of parishes. Councillors and parishes are also brought together at the Connecting Communities Forums for parished areas.
We recognise that parish councils operate through working parties as well as sub-committees.	We will invite B&NES Council representatives to be involved in working groups and to Full	Information has been prepared for Council staff which includes advice on working with parishes and a request to liaise with parishes through their clerks

	Council meetings as appropriate.	
We will publicise the various roles and accountabilities within B&NES Council as set out in the Council's Constitution and other documents. We will also implement public speaking schemes for Council bodies as appropriate, including a general scheme and one specifically for Development Management.	We will seek to direct queries to the most appropriate role. We may seek advice at any time from the Community Engagement Team as to the best route to follow to get things done.	The Council's website is kept up to date with this information.
We will work together to create a Toolkit of information available and where to access it. B&NES Council will provide information on parish councils and their roles as part of its induction for new staff.		<p>The 'Parish Toolkit' includes details of how to report issues and information about services. The Toolkit is a working document and can be updated regularly as required.</p> <p><a href="https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/working-partnership/working-parish-councils">https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/working-partnership/working-parish-councils</a></p>