

PARISH LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 6th March, 2019, 6.30 pm

Councillors: Councillor Karen Walker (Chairman), Councillor Tim Warren (Cabinet Member), Councillor Charles Gerrish (Cabinet Member), Councillor Bob Goodman (Cabinet Member), Councillor Paul Myers (Cabinet Member), Councillor Vic Pritchard (Cabinet Member), Councillor Karen Warrington (Cabinet Member) and Councillor Neil Butters (Observer, non-voting)

Parish Representatives: Rosemary Naish (Chair, B&NES ALCA) and Clive Fricker (Vice-Chair, B&NES ALCA) and representatives of Batheaston PC, Camerton PC, Chew Magna PC, Combe Hay PC, Compton Dando PC, Compton Martin PC, Corston PC, Dunkerton and Tunley PC, East Harptree PC, Englishcombe PC, Farmborough PC, Freshford PC, High Littleton PC, Keynsham TC, Monkton Combe PC, Norton Malreward PC, Paulton PC, Peasedown St John PC, Priston PC, Publow with Pensford PC, Saltford PC, Shoscombe PC, South Stoke PC, Ubley PC, Westfield PC and West Harptree PC

Also in attendance: Micaela Basford (Corporate Sustainability Officer), Mandy Bishop (Director – Environment Services), Dave Dixon (Community Engagement Manager), Sara Dixon (Locality Manager), James Green (Service Designer – IT), Mark Hayward (Community Engagement Officer), Chris Head (WERN - West of England Rural Network), Aurora Loi (Electoral Services Manager), Maria Lucas (Director of Legal and Democratic Services), Martin Shields (Corporate Director – Representing Ashley Ayre, Chief Executive) and Alison Wells (Community Engagement Officer)

25 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Mandy Bishop, Director of Environment Services, introduced herself to those present.

26 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer advised the meeting of the procedure.

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllrs Paul May, Lisa O'Brien and Mark Shelford

Bathampton Parish Council
Bathford Parish Council
Timsbury Parish Council
Whitchurch Parish Council.

28 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

29 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2018 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

30 UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL - CLLR TIM WARREN

Councillor Tim Warren gave an update giving a brief overview of the previous four year term:

The reduction in Local Government funding has led to severe cuts over the last four years which has been very difficult. The proportion of total funding spent on children and adult services has increased to 80%.

- There has been a reduction in staffing levels over the last two years.
- The Council has made a number of changes to working practices e.g. waste services. The main priority is to ensure that vulnerable people are looked after.
- New ways to generate income have also been considered such as commercial property, the setting up of a housing company – Aequus Construction Ltd, Council buildings have been developed and empty properties brought back into use. This enabled funding to be directed to the provision of front line services.
- There has been investment in heritage services such as the Roman Baths.
- The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) has been formed and this has enabled funding of £30m to be leveraged into the area. £10m has also been provided through WECA for local high streets.
- It was also important to ensure that the correct skills are provided in the correct places and for people to be trained in the right jobs.
- There is still work to be carried out with regard to bus services in the area.
- The Bath Quays development will create new office space in the centre of Bath and will generate increased business rates and provide more jobs.
- Children's Social Care achieved a Good Ofsted rating.
- Schools in the area are among the best in the South West.
- The move to fortnightly waste collections has led to a large increase in recycling rates and fly tipping has actually reduced. The recycling rates are in the top six in the country.
- The Cabinet has just approved the clean air zone for Bath. This meets central government's air quality targets without the need to charge private cars. Older polluting commercial vehicles such as buses, taxis and lorries will be charged to drive in the stipulated zone.
- Cllr Warren ended his update by thanking the Parish Councils and local communities for the support and assistance they have provided to enable the recent changes to be a success.

31 UPDATE FROM CABINET MEMBERS

(a) Cllr Charles Gerrish – Finance and Efficiency

Cllr Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency reported on the following issues:

- More funding has been made available for social care; however, the challenge still remains.
- The Government funding settlement was as expected with no additional funding.
- The number of looked after children has increased by 12%. An extra £1.5m has been allocated for children's services.
- More social workers have been recruited.
- WECA has provided £8.5m for highway maintenance work.
- Leisure centres have been upgraded.
- Bath Quays regeneration is taking place.
- £12.3m of savings are required to be made next year which will be challenging but the Council is confident that long-term sustainability can be maintained.
- The restructure of charges for the Roman Baths will also increase the income received.
- The ultimate aim is for B&NES Council to become financially self-sufficient.
- The Council has backed new powers to enable the growth in Airbnb accommodation to be tackled. Other Councils are also lobbying to ensure there is a level playing field for this type of holiday accommodation.
- There will be one-off costs for the local elections this year.
- Council tax bills (basic rate) will increase by 2.95% this year with an additional 1% social care precept.
- In response to a query from East Harptree Parish Council it was confirmed that the additional affordable housing funding will be made available to providers such as Curo.

(b) Cllr Bob Goodman – Development and Neighbourhoods

Cllr Bob Goodman, Cabinet Member for Development and Neighbourhoods gave a presentation regarding single use plastic:

- The goal is for the community to be plastic free by 2030.
- Cllr Goodman thanked the officers for all the work they have undertaken to improve recycling rates and to reduce the use of plastics. One initiative that is currently being worked on is to increase recycling rates by residents living in flats.
- There is still progress to be made to encourage supermarkets to use less plastic and to reduce the use of black plastics.
- Discussions are taking place with local organisations, businesses, schools and places of worship to encourage them to get involved with this project.
- He also praised the work being carried out by local volunteer community groups such as the Keynsham Wombles and Families for a Bright Future.
- Further information is available using the following links:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/environment/sustainability/bathnes-plastic-pledge>

www.bathnes.gov.uk/plasticfree

(c) Cllr Karen Warrington – Transformation and Customer Services

Cllr Karen Warrington, Cabinet Member for Transformation and Customer Services reported on the following issues:

- Cllr Warrington thanked the local communities for their support in transforming branch libraries into community libraries. A small sum of money has been made available for the set-up of the libraries to ensure their sustainability and viability. The Saltford Library has been very successful and has retained a Post Officer Counter for the village as well as increasing lending levels.
- The Love Weston Library now uses the Click and Collect service giving access to three million books.
- Moorland Road, Paulton and Radstock Libraries are also in the process of converting to community libraries.
- Two new libraries have also been opened. One of these, Bishop Sutton, also has a café which is very well used.
- Timsbury have a village agent and the library acts as a community hub.
- Talks are currently taking place with other areas and it is hoped that these new libraries will open in the future.
- The community library project has been driven and helped by the public and community groups.
- A new mobile library has been ordered which will be more reliable than the current one and will have improved fuel efficiency. It will be available at the end of April and will also be more of a community resource including free Wi-Fi. It will also have an awning and be available for small events in the local communities.
- A service review has led to the library stock being moved from Bath to a more sustainable location. This has enabled the Council to utilise existing resources – confidential waste, post and archives.
- Cllr Warrington thanked officers for all their work to improve the library service and to make it more sustainable.

(d) Cllr Paul Myers - Economic and Community Regeneration

Cllr Paul Myers, Cabinet Member for Economic and Community Regeneration, reported on the following issues:

- Parish Councils have expressed a wish to discuss WECA at a future meeting. He confirmed that Tim Bowles, Mayor of WECA will be invited to attend the next meeting.
- The B&NES Council budget was set in February and Parish Councils have raised the issue that they need more notice of budget decisions that are likely to affect them. There is usually a budget briefing before Christmas and more information will be provided to Parishes at this time in future years.

- Bath City Forum has raised concerns regarding consultations carried out by B&NES Council. As a result of this a workshop took place which included discussions around how to improve the good aspects of consultation and how to reduce the bad. Three actions were identified as a result:
 - To develop a charter on consultations.
 - To agree a vocabulary of “consultation language”.
 - To explore this further with the 3rd sector groups and hard to reach groups.
 - To identify a pool of volunteers/residents to test consultations in future. This was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting last week and councillors are keen to take this forward.

A report will be presented to the Communities, Transport and Environment Panel on 11 March 2019.

- The Parish Charter Certificate will be made available on line for those parishes that wish to download, sign and display it as a visual representation of the partnership.

The Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison are being updated to reflect our new ways of working together. This includes a proposal for the chairing of the meetings to alternate between an elected parish representative and an elected representative of B&NES. Agenda setting for Parish Liaison already takes place jointly in a meeting between representatives of ALCA and the Council and this arrangement will be formalised in the revised Terms of Reference. These will be put to Parish Liaison at their next meeting before ratification by B&NES and endorsement by ALCA. The Parish Liaison Meeting agreed this approach. A copy of the powerpoint presentation slides are attached as *Appendix 1* to these minutes.

- The death of a senior figure – B&NES Council is required to have a protocol in place for the death of a senior national or local figure. This would cover matters such as books of condolence, flying of flags etc. Parish Councils will be informed by the Council once a formal announcement has been made. On the death of a prominent local figure then the Chief Executive will decide which parts of the protocol it is appropriate to implement.

The Clerk to Keynsham Town Council thanked the Cabinet Member for the clarification on this matter but felt that more information could be provided at this stage. Other clerks in different areas were already making plans such as ordering black armbands and arrangements for flag lowering and raising. Clerks need time in which to prepare for such an event should it arise. Cllr Myers agreed to look into this matter further and to find out what is needed in advance and what can be provided. The Keynsham Town Clerk agreed to liaise further with Sara Dixon on this matter.

(e) Cllr Vic Pritchard – Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing

Cllr Vic Pritchard, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing, gave an update on the following issues:

- At the beginning of the financial year this service had delivered a balanced budget.
- The Council works very closely with the CCG to deliver the service and both Primary and Social Care are now among the national leaders.

32 FIX MY STREET AND COUNCIL WEBSITE UPDATE

James Green, Service Designer – IT Services, gave a presentation regarding the “Fix My Street” application and the Council Website update.

Fix My Street

- The “Fix My Street” system is B&NES Council’s own customised version integrated with back-office systems and processes.
- A large number of issues can be reported such as abandoned vehicles, littering and bins, flooding and drains and graffiti.
- The system is easy to use and can be accessed on smartphones. It also enables people to follow the progress of an issue that has been reported.
- People can still report issues by calling Council Connect and staff will log the issue onto the system.
- Over 11,000 reports have been made since the system went live in April 2018. There are currently about 220 reports per week.
- The link to the system is <https://fix.bathnes.gov.uk/>

Council Website

- The rest of the B&NES Council website is currently being updated and improved.
- The aim is to make the system easier to use, more accurate and more up to date.
- There will be a different approach to content which is being designed with the user in mind. The site will be more streamlined and is based on research following testing with users.
- It will also be more interactive and is based on the principle used on the gov.uk website.

Questions and Comments

Concern was expressed at the length of time taken to respond to issues raised on the system. For example, a recent report of road damage took 4-5 months to be resolved. Cllr Paul Myers stated that this was a parish charter matter. He noted that issues were prioritised to deal with health and safety and emergency matters in the first instance. It was agreed that this matter would be considered at the next meeting when the relevant officer could attend to address concerns.

It was noted that the feedback part of the system was not always accurate as matters were often logged as being completed when the work had not actually been carried out. Mandy Bishop, Director of Environment Services, stated that she would deal with this issue. She explained that sometimes when a work request had been sent to a contractor the issue was being logged as complete and that the wording needed to be reviewed to more accurately reflect the progress being made.

It was confirmed that the team at B&NES would pass on any matters raised regarding street lights which were a Parish Council responsibility to the relevant Parish Council.

On the whole the Parish Council representatives felt that the new system was a great improvement compared to what they had before.

Cllr Karen Warrington explained that the B&NES website would be updated in a modular manner i.e. certain sections at a time. She confirmed that any member of the public can use the Fix My Street site. Parish Council representatives were asked to encourage the use of the system by members of their local communities as it would enable the Council to better track and monitor this work.

A copy of the presentation slides is attached as *Appendix 2* to these minutes.

33 ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARY CHANGES

Aurora Loi, Electoral Services Manager, and Maria Lucas, Director – Legal and Democratic Services, gave a presentation regarding the forthcoming local elections. The presentation covered the following matters:

- Key events and dates for Parish/Town Clerks, candidates and electors
- Official notices.
- Nomination papers – the nomination period will begin on 19 March and will end at 4pm on 3 April 2019. Nomination forms must be hand delivered and there will be a dedicated room for this purpose in the Guildhall, Bath.
- Forms to be completed – nomination form (1A), home address form (1B), consent to nomination form (1C) and contact details form
- Verification and count – the verification will take place on Thursday 2 May 2019 from 10.15pm and the count will take place on Friday 3 May 2019 from 10am – both would be held at the Sports Training Village, University of Bath.
- After the count.
- Spending return.

It was noted that Parish Councils can request a copy of the register from the Electoral Services Team if required. The copy of the register to be used for nominations is the revised version, which was published on 1 March 2019. The register has been renumbered and the majority of polling district codes has changed.

Candidates can choose not to have their home address on the ballot paper. The name and address of the attesting person is required.

All new Councillors must register their interests as required by the Code of Conduct. The declaration of interest forms must be collected by the Parish or Town Clerk and

there is no longer a requirement to send these to the Monitoring Officer at B&NES Council. Parishes should hold the details regarding registers of interest and place these on their Council website.

The Electoral Services Manager agreed to send a word version copy of Form 1(c) to the Parish Clerks.

The Combe Hay Parish Clerk asked whether it was appropriate for Clerks to deliver the nomination forms. The Electoral Services Manager confirmed that Parish Clerks had assisted with this in the past but it is for the individual Parish Clerks and candidates to decide how best to deliver the forms. It is advisable not to leave this until the last minute in case there are any problems which need to be resolved.

It was confirmed that anyone could sign the consent to nomination as a witness. However, the proposer and seconder must be a registered elector within the parish. There is nothing to prevent a candidate's spouse from being a proposer or seconder, providing they are listed on the electoral register for the parish where the candidate is standing. No proof of ID is required.

A copy of the presentation slides are attached as *Appendix 3* to these minutes.

34 RURAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Cllr Paul Myers gave a presentation giving an update on the Rural Transport Partnership. The presentation covered the following matters:

- Bus services are the “subject of the moment” in rural areas. There is growing resident frustration and this matter has been discussed at various local meetings.
- Residents felt that First Bus had a legal duty to provide a regular service. However, they are not required to do this under the 1985 Local Transport Act. The majority of people feel that an hourly or regular bus service is required.
- There was a cycle of bus services being cut which led to people using the buses less and relying on their cars. There remains a core group of people who do not have access to a car and rely on public transport (e.g. elderly people, disabled people, young people and students).
- It is important to look at where people want to go and when and to then identify what is actually required. Priorities could then be put together and alternative options such as car sharing could be considered. WECA are currently producing a bus strategy.
- The proposal was to set up a B&NES Rural Transport Group which will include the bus companies. The group would hold round table discussions and would be required to come up with proposals and not simply be a “talking shop”.
- It would be important to clearly identify the demand for rural bus services and it was also very important for local people to use the service provided.

Cllr Tim Warren explained that B&NES, South Gloucestershire and Bristol Councils had all received a grant of £800,000 from the WECA Regional Transport Forum to support transport systems in their areas.

The Parish Liaison Meeting agreed to create a B&NES Rural Transport Group consisting of:

- Parish Councils
- B&NES
- Community Transport
- Bus Service Operators

The next steps would be:

- To establish the demand with a survey
- With the help of providers including the community to establish how this demand can be met.
- To match demand and supply – generation of a requirement document not based simply on subsidies
- To take a coherent bid to WECA.

A copy of the presentation slides is attached as *Appendix 4* to these minutes.

35 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that future meetings will take place on the following dates:

Wednesday 24 July 2019

Wednesday 30 October 2019

Meetings will commence at 6.30pm and will be held in the Community Space, Keynsham.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services