

## PARISH LIAISON MEETING

### Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 24th July, 2019, 6.30 pm

**Councillors:** Councillor Andy Furse (Chair), Councillor Dine Romero (Cabinet Member), Councillor Rob Appleyard (Cabinet Member), Councillor Tim Ball (Cabinet Member), Councillor Neil Butters (Cabinet Member), Councillor Paul Crossley (Cabinet Member), Councillor Kevin Guy (Cabinet Member), Councillor Richard Samuel (Cabinet Member), Councillor Sarah Warren (Cabinet Member), Councillor David Wood (Cabinet Member), Councillor Joanna Wright (Cabinet Member), Councillor Sally Davis, Councillor Michael Evans, Councillor Matt McCabe, Councillor Alistair Singleton, Councillor Andy Wait, Councillor Karen Warrington and Councillor Ryan Wills

**Parish Representatives:** Councillor Dawn Drury (Chair of B&NES ALCA) and representatives of Batheaston PC, Camerton PC, Chew Valley PC, Clutton PC, Combe Hay PC, Compton Dando PC, Compton Martin PC, Dunkerton and Tunley PC, East Harptree PC, Englishcombe PC, Farmborough PC, Farrington Gurney PC, Freshford PC, High Littleton PC, Hinton Charterhouse PC, Keynsham TC, Midsomer Norton TC, Monkton Combe PC, North Stoke PC, Peasedown St John PC, Shoscombe PC, St Catherine PC, Stanton Drew PC, Ubley PC, Westfield PC and Whitchurch PC

**Also in attendance:** Lisa Bartlett (Director – Development), Mandy Bishop (Director – Environment Services), Dave Dixon (Community Engagement Manager), Sara Dixon (Locality Manager), Mark Hayward (Community Engagement Officer), Richard Stott (Team Manager for Planning and Enforcement), Alison Wells (Community Engagement Officer) and Jane Wildblood (Corporate and Community Sustainability Manager)

## 1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that Cllr Eleanor Jackson, Chair of B&NES Council, was unable to attend and that he would be chairing the meeting in his capacity as Vice Chair.

## 2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer advised the meeting of the emergency evacuation procedure.

## 3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Ashley Ayre – B&NES Council Chief Executive  
Trudi Gilbank – Clerk to Farmborough Parish Council  
Cllr James Honess – Westfield Parish Council  
Cllr Eleanor Jackson – Chair of B&NES Council  
Cllr Lisa O'Brian – B&NES Council  
Cheryl Scott - Clerk to Keynsham Town Council

Susan Smith - Clerk to Compton Dando Parish Council  
Cllr Dave Wood – B&NES Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services  
West Harptree Parish Council

#### **4 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

There was no urgent business.

#### **5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### **6 UPDATE FROM THE COUNCIL LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS OF BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

The new Cabinet members introduced themselves and spoke about their portfolios.

##### **(a) Cllr Dine Romero – Council Leader**

Cllr Romero stated that she very much valued the relationship between B&NES Council and the Parish Councils and wanted to listen to their concerns and to engage with them in a constructive way. She had already met with the parish representatives from ALCA to set this agenda and the discussions had been very positive.

Cllr Romero said that the Council is also committed to improving community engagement for all citizens across the district, including exploring ways in which they might use citizens' panels or similar. The Area Forums will be convening in the near future and a review of the Bath City Forum is currently underway.

##### **(b) Cllr Richard Samuel – Cabinet Member for Resources and Deputy Leader**

Cllr Samuel explained that he had overall responsibility for finance, property, IT, customer services, revenues and benefits and various other corporate services. The current financial climate appeared to be bleak resulting in funding challenges for local authorities.

Current issues relating to this portfolio included:

- Fair Funding Review - the Government is currently carrying out a review but no proposals had been put forward as yet.
- Business Rate Retention Scheme – this had led to a loss of £3.5m for B&NES.
- Social Care Funding – this was still a challenge as 80% of Council Tax income is spent on adult and children's social care.
- Better Care Fund – there is currently no certainty around this funding after March 2020. Talks are ongoing and it is hoped that any outstanding issues will be resolved.

(c) Cllr Neil Butters and Joanna Wright – Cabinet Members for Transport Services

Cllr Butters explained that he held this role on a job share basis along with Cllr Joanna Wright. He informed the meeting that he had recently attended a special meeting of the Chew Valley Forum which had been held to discuss issues relating to roadworks and diversions in the area. This had been a positive meeting and a number of solutions had been identified including establishing some agreed diversion routes with parishes.

Cllr Wright stated that she had approached all B&NES Councillors to identify transport related issues in their areas. She is very committed to increasing walking and cycling in the area and to improving access to schools. If any parish representatives have any transport issues in their areas then she would be happy to visit them to discuss these.

(d) Cllr Kevin Guy – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Cllr Guy explained that he has written to the Government to demand better funding for schools. The Council has already used some of its reserves for SEND (special educational needs and disability) provision. He is keen to find out any particular issues in the local area and to speak with parish representatives to hear their concerns.

(e) Cllr Tim Ball – Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Economic Development

Cllr Ball explained that he is responsible for planning, housing and development including the Joint Strategic Plan and the Local Plan. He is keen to provide more affordable housing in the area and, in particular, to ensure that carbon neutral housing is developed. He also has responsibility for economic development throughout the area.

(f) Cllr Paul Crossley – Cabinet Member for Community Services

Cllr Crossley outlined his areas of responsibility which cover mainly non-statutory services. He acknowledged that a reduction in the Council's grass cutting schemes has caused issues in parished areas. However, consideration has to be given to both cost saving and environmental/wildlife concerns. He is currently working with the Council's Parks and Open Spaces team on plans for the forthcoming year and acknowledged that there are some areas where grass needs to be cut.

He also has responsibility for Bereavement Services - a competitive industry but a crucial service.

Parks is another important area of responsibility and he is keen to hear ideas for new ways to generate income for this service.

Heritage is another part of this portfolio which includes assets throughout the whole of Bath and North East Somerset. Cllr Crossley asked parishes to let

him know if there are any heritage assets in their areas that are not being maintained.

(g) Cllr Rob Appleyard – Cabinet Member for Adult Services

Cllr Appleyard explained that he is responsible for adult services, safeguarding and public health – services which are largely statutory. The safeguarding element includes community safety. He is also responsible for the collaboration between the Council, B&NES CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) and the RUH (Royal United Hospital). The CCG is being reorganised with three being merged (B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire). He is a RUH governor which involves monitoring the hospital's performance. Key themes for his portfolio are autism and dementia.

(h) Cllr Sarah Warren – Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services

Cllr Warren explained that she held this role on a job share basis along with Cllr David Wood. She is leading on the clean air zone proposals to ensure that legal levels are reached by 2021. Non-compliant HGVs, buses, taxis and vans will be charged to enter the zone. Any businesses or charities that will be impacted need to get in touch. There will be some financial assistance from Central Government and the Council will publish its full business case shortly.

B&NES is one of the Local Authorities that has declared a climate emergency and will work towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The Council has also objected to the Bristol Airport expansion on environmental grounds. The West of England Combined Authority has also now declared a climate emergency.

The Cabinet Members then responded to questions as follows:

- Cllr Ron Hopkins from Westfield Parish Council raised concerns regarding the lack of grass cutting in some areas, particularly in housing estates built in the 1970s and 1980s which have large communal grassed areas. The grass in some locations is 2-3 feet high and residents have been told they are not permitted to cut it themselves as they are not insured. In some areas the Council have said they were not responsible for cutting grass despite having maintained it for 27 years. He requested a meeting to discuss the Council's grass cutting objectives.
- Batheaston Parish Council requested that B&NES Council make it clear which grass will be cut and which areas will not so that residents are aware.
- Cllr Crossley explained that the Council is no longer cutting the grass on land it does not own, including land owned by Curo. In some areas residents have asked if they can purchase the areas of land no longer being maintained by the Council which is being explored.
- Councillor Warren pointed out that climate change is also an issue which had to be taken into account when considering whether or not to cut grass in certain locations.

- Cllr Romero noted that it is important to manage expectations and stated that the concerns raised at the meeting would be looked into.

## 7 CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Jane Wildblood, Corporate and Community Sustainability Manager, gave a presentation regarding climate change. The following issues were covered in the presentation:

- The IPCC Report 2018 – this identified a need for a 45% cut in CO2 emissions by 2030 to get back on track and to avoid a potential temperature increase of 3 degrees or more which would be catastrophic.
- At its meeting on 14 March 2019 B&NES Council declared a Climate Emergency. The Council will identify work that can be carried out across all Council functions to reduce emissions and to enable a carbon neutral B&NES by 2030. The Council also opposed the expansion of Bristol Airport.
- An action plan will now be prepared for consideration at the October Council meeting.
- The domestic sector is the largest producer of emissions at 38%. The challenges include older housing stock; oil fuelled heating and retro fitting listed properties.
- There are actions that could be taken to improve the situation such as considering what we eat, what we buy and how much we fly. Also how land is managed and how much tree cover we have in the UK.
- B&NES will build on the action plan year on year and a new Cabinet member role has been created with responsibility for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services. New ideas are coming forward and plans are being considered to create a citizens' engagement programme to take this forward.
- Two parishes have already declared a Climate Emergency and if others wish to also consider doing this then Jane Wildblood has details of the wording that could be used and can assist with this process. Parishes have an important role to play and some may wish to consider the use of wind power for example.

Ubley Parish Council raised the issue of the Bristol Airport expansion. There is already a Parish Council's Airport Association (PCAA). There are significant issues in North Somerset with the airport expansion. It was pointed out that only 12% of people flying from Bristol Airport use public transport whereas at Gatwick it is 60%. Better public transport links are required.

Cllr Karen Warrington explained that the Chew Valley area is opposed to the airport expansion both for climate change and transport reasons. Expansion would cause a knock on effect to daily life in rural villages.

Keynsham Town Council explained that the application for expansion included a proposal to include more airport care parking in the Green Belt. The parishes were asked to support the PCAA in opposing it.

Cllr Wait noted that people could pay a surcharge to offset the emissions caused by travel. However, Jane Wildblood urged caution with regard to carbon offsetting as it does not reduce carbon going in the atmosphere - a systematic change is needed.

She said that the report to Council will set out what can be done at a local level to help and also what individuals can do.

A copy of the presentation slides is attached as *Appendix 1* to these minutes.

## **8 RURAL TRANSPORT UPDATE**

Cllr Neil Butters introduced the item and noted that the Rural Transport Group had been set up to identify the needs of local people regarding transport in their areas. He informed the meeting that options for improved public transport to Bristol Airport are being considered. It was also important to encourage people to use their cars less frequently; however, he noted that the economics of rural transport is difficult. It is important to carry out research to consider ways in which rural buses could be better used.

Cllr Rosemary Naish from Clutton Parish Council was a member of the Rural Transport Group and noted that this had been set up due to concerns in rural areas. The Group is currently carrying out a survey and it is hoped that some useful information could be gained from the results. The current operating model is unsustainable.

Cllr David Orme also gave an update on the work of the group. There were seven objectives covering the short, medium and long term.

Cllr Dawn Drury noted that it is important to get more areas involved and informed the parishes that membership of the group was open to all. Westfield Parish Council stated that all parishes in the B&NES area should be invited by letter to attend the group.

Cllr Butters confirmed that he would continue to lobby for the continuation of rail electrification onwards from Chippenham. He informed the meeting that hydrogen trains could be an option for the future and also explained that there were plans to increase the amount of rail services to and from Keynsham. Cllr Romero confirmed that the Council is still pursuing the idea of opening a station at Saltford.

It is important for the West of England Combined Authority to consider an integrated transport system for the entire area.

Cllr Romero informed Parishes that the WECA bus strategy would be available for consultation and this will be made available to all Parish Councils.

A copy of the presentation slides and documents referred to in the presentation are attached as *Appendices 2- 5* to these minutes.

## **9 IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES REGARDING UNREGULATED HOLIDAY LETS (AIR BNBS)**

Richard Stott, Team Manager, Planning and Enforcement gave a presentation regarding the impact of unregulated holiday lets (Airbnbs) on communities.

The following issues were covered in the presentation:

- Last year a B&NES Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the impact of Airbnbs – the review had covered primarily the Bath city area.
- It was important to have some control over these properties but there was no requirement for a change of use as the use class remained the same. The Council has lobbied Central Government on this issue.
- The Airbnb scheme had started as a way for people to rent spare rooms in their homes but this had now developed into full house rentals.
- The Council relies on intelligence from local residents to identify any properties that are causing particular problems.
- If properties were licensed then the Council would have access to a database to identify holiday lets.
- To take action the Council needs evidence from residents making complaints of persistent disturbance to prove there is impact on the community.
- In London there is a 90 day rule meaning that people can only rent out their properties for 90 days within a 12 month period. However, this would mean a property could still be rented out for 45 weekends over a year which would not solve the problems being encountered in the Bath area.
- There has been a test case this year in relation to a nuisance property in Bath where there had been a great deal of disturbance for local residents. The enforcement action taken had been upheld on appeal. If the Council has the necessary evidence then action will be taken. The Council is keen to identify whether there are any problems in other areas outside of the Bath urban area.

Cllr Dawn Drury stated that there is evidence of similar problems in rural areas. She is aware of one 10 bedroomed property being used for hen parties in a small village with no facilities.

Cllr Matt McCabe stated that are three such houses in Claverton and also a party house for 12 in Hinton Charterhouse.

Cllr Rob Appleyard queried how these houses could be identified and noted that it would be helpful if there could be legislation around insurance requirements which would enable a database to be created. There may be a covenant on social housing properties which prevents these becoming Airbnb properties following right to buy.

Richard commented that a register of providers could also be a way forward but this needed to be considered in the light of GDPR legislation as a valid reason is needed to hold this information.

It was noted that in rural areas the use of such properties could double the population and cause traffic and parking problems. Evidence gathering is vital and the Council has a log-sheet which could be used by residents if required.

A copy of the log-sheet is attached as *Appendix 6* to these minutes.

An update on the Fix my Street system was circulated with the agenda papers. If anyone is interested in taking part in user research or would like to know more about the project then please contact James Green, Service Designer by emailing [james\\_green@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:james_green@bathnes.gov.uk)

The feedback part of the system is still not recording issues accurately as matters are often logged as being completed when the work has not actually been carried out. Mandy Bishop, Director of Environment Services, explained that this issue is being addressed and needs to link to service standards. Highways Inspectors are being retrained on the system and a User Group is also being created.

## **11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday 30 October 2019 at 6.30pm in the Community Space, Keynsham.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**