

PARISH LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 30th October, 2019, 6.30 pm

Councillors: Councillor Eleanor Jackson (Chair), Councillor Dine Romero (Cabinet Member), Councillor Rob Appleyard (Cabinet Member), Councillor Neil Butters (Cabinet Member), Councillor Paul Crossley (Cabinet Member), Councillor Sally Davis, Councillor Michael Evans, Councillor Duncan Hounsell, Councillor Hal MacFie, Councillor Lisa O'Brien and Councillor Richard Samuel (Cabinet Member)

Parish Representatives: Cllr Dawn Drury (Chair of ALCA) and representatives of Chew Magna PC, Combe Hay PC, Compton Dando PC, Compton Martin PC, Corston PC, Dunkerton and Tunley PC, East Harptree PC, Farmborough PC, Keynsham TC, Midsomer Norton TC, Monkton Combe PC, North Stoke PC, Peasedown St John PC, Priston PC, Publow and Pensford PC, Saltford PC, South Stoke PC, Temple Cloud with Cameley PC, Timsbury PC, Ubley PC, West Harptree PC and Westfield PC

Also in attendance: Will Godfrey (Chief Executive), Lisa Bartlett (Director – Development), Emma Watts (Senior Planning Officer), Mandy Bishop (Director – Environment Services), Carol Maclellan (Group Manager – Neighbourhood Environmental Services), Jane Williams (Corporate Communications Manager), Tim White (IT Project Manager), Dave Dixon (Community Engagement Manager), Sara Dixon (Locality Manager), Marie Todd (Democratic Services Officer), Alison Wells (Community Engagement Officer) and Stephen Sumner (Bath Chronicle)

12 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

13 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

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

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Tim Ball – B&NES Council
Cllr Kevin Guy – B&NES Council
Cllr Sarah Warren – B&NES Council
Cllr Karen Warrington – B&NES Council
Cllr Dave Wood – B&NES Council
Cllr Joanna Wright – B&NES Council

Cllr John Adler – Freshford Parish Council
Jean Fossaceco – Clerk to Shoscombe Parish Council
Trudi Gilbank – Clerk to Farmborough Parish Council

15 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

16 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Mandy Bishop, Director of Environment, gave an update on the FixMyStreet system. Following recent feedback by users, including Town and Parish Councils, there are a range of updates to the system which will soon be going live. This will improve the feedback made available to users including details of action that is being taken on issues raised. Mandy will also be attending a meeting of Parish Clerks to provide an update on progress and the system changes undertaken.

17 INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL - WILL GODFREY

Will Godfrey, the new Chief Executive of Bath and North East Somerset Council introduced himself stating that he has now been in post for four weeks and is looking forward to engaging with Town and Parish Councils in the area. Will has lived in the B&NES area since 2009 and has spent the vast majority of his career in local government. He began his career working in mainly rural communities and more recently has worked at Bristol City Council and Newport City Council.

Will's main philosophy is to ensure that the organisation listens to its residents and understands their needs. It is important for the Council to be as human as possible, to avoid the use of jargon and to focus on simplicity. He hopes to visit many of the local Parishes and to see more of the area over the coming months.

18 UPDATE FROM THE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS OF BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

(a) Cllr Dine Romero – Council Leader

Cllr Romero stated that the Council values its relationship with the parishes and that this meeting is one of the ways in which it engages with them. She thanked all those people who have contributed to the "Consultation Charter" which will set out the Council's commitment to engagement.

The Clean Air Zone consultation has now closed and the business case will be sent to central government on 13 December 2019. The Climate Emergency is a high priority on the Council's agenda. The Council is looking to organise a series of events to identify how people can make changes to improve the situation.

The Cabinet will be considering a report regarding a council house building programme at its next meeting. The report is now available on the Council website and can be found here:

<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1324>

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

Cllr Samuel reported on the following issues relating to his portfolio:

- Next year's budget is currently being prepared. Since the last Parish Liaison Meeting in July the medium term financial strategy has been approved and this gives a good picture of the current situation.
- Decisions now need to be made regarding the budget, council tax levels and fees and charges. There are still a number of financial pressures.
- One of the main financial pressures is children's services, in particular, funding for vulnerable children and those with special needs.
- There has also been a drop in projected income from commercial property largely due to the pressures on the retail sector in Bath City Centre. This has been offset to some extent by the work of the Heritage Team and income from the Roman Baths and Pump Room.
- There has been a drop in car parking income.
- The cost of council loans from the Public Works Loan Board has now doubled due to the interest rate being increased to 2.8%. This may have an impact on capital schemes and the Council will lobby government on this issue.
- The Government has delayed a decision on local government funding until the next financial year.
- The Chancellor was due to make a budget statement but with the pending general election it is unclear whether the new government would be formed in time to do this. Councils need to know the funding position before Christmas.
- The national pay negotiations are currently underway.

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

Cllr Appleyard reported that the proportion of the Council budget required to provide adult care was previously 67% but has now increased to 82%. There is also an increased demand for adult care services.

A consultation regarding the charging framework for care and support is currently being carried out. The consultation is open until the 3 December 2019 and events will take place in the local area. A "question and answer" document will also be available on the Council website. Cllr Appleyard thanked the Parishes for their help with publicising and arranging these events.

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

Cllr Crossley reported on the following issues relating to his portfolio:

- The new mobile library is now in use. The mobile routes are currently being reviewed and details will be sent to Parish Councils for their comments by the end of the year. There are new electronic services such as audio books, electronic format books and magazines. There is also a new community library launched earlier this week in Peasedown-St-John.
- Plans are in place to provide water refill points in the larger settlements.
- Restaurants do not currently have to display their star ratings and the Council is lobbying to make it a requirement to display these to ensure that customers are aware of their food hygiene standards.
- The Council has recently prosecuted two rogue traders and Parish Councils are asked to report any rogue traders they are aware of to the Council so that appropriate action can be taken.
- Cllr Crossley has met with the Offset Earth Company in Keynsham.
- Feedback has been received regarding the colour scheme in the Keynsham Leisure Centre which has caused challenges for some people with disabilities and these issues are being investigated.
- The Council is working with the Lawn Tennis Association to upgrade tennis courts in the area.
- Residents are encouraged to take up the offer of the “Discovery Card” and Cllr Crossley is looking at ways to make it easier to sign up for the card.

(e) Cllr Neil Butters – Cabinet Member for Transport Services

Cllr Butters stated that it is important to involve Parish and Town Councils to ensure that the budget for transport services is allocated correctly. Highway safety is the main priority. Greater emphasis will also be placed on walking and cycling. There is still a lack of funding available for road repairs.

Bus services have received a number of grant subsidies including the 179 bus service. Unfortunately the cost of providing bus services continues to rise.

There will be largescale changes to rail service timetables on 15 December with 75% of timetables subject to change. Electrification work is ongoing and the Council is keen for this job to be completed.

A new fleet of 9 lorries has been purchased for winter gritting.

The Cabinet Members then responded to questions as follows:

- Cheryl Scott, Clerk to Keynsham Town Council asked a question regarding the budget settlement. Cllr Samuel explained that the Government announced its spending decisions at national level in October. This appears to be more favourable than in previous years but no confirmation has yet been received at local level. Budget events will be held throughout November and December.
- Cllr Michael Evans from Midsomer Norton Town Council asked why money had been allocated for councillor initiatives in the light of current budget

pressures. Cllr Samuel stated that the money that has recently been allocated to enable councillors to carry out local initiatives is to enable members to work together in their communities to get things done. The funding was previously held in the community empowerment fund. Each Councillor will be allocated £2k with a minimum award of £200 per initiative.

- Cllr Tony Hooper from Temple Cloud with Cameley Parish Council asked a question about the Bristol City Clean Air Zone. He stated that the restrictions would effectively cut off those residents living in the South of Bristol and also at the South West end of the M32. Cllr Dine Romero agreed to take up this concern with the Mayor of Bristol.
- Cllr Butters explained that the cost of providing bus services continues to increase each year. The WECA bus strategy will soon be available and it is hoped that this will lead to a boost in bus services.

19 UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR OF B&NES ALCA

Cllr Dawn Drury gave an update from ALCA as follows:

- Cllr Drury has just attended the NALC annual conference in Bletchley. She congratulated Donna Ford from Midsomer Norton Town Council who has just been presented with the Clerk of the Year award.
- NALC representatives hope to work more closely with Parish and Town Councils in the future and Councils are advised to make use of the services that they provide.
- Parish Online are about to launch their new digital asset register system which should be very helpful.
- The “Good Councillors’ Guide to Transport Planning” is now available. For more information <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/1328-the-good-councillor-s-guide-to-transport-planning-published-by-nalc>
- Around 50% of Parish and Town Councils have now declared a climate emergency. The Clerk of Buckingham Town Council informed the conference that the Council has a full climate emergency plan and would be happy to share expertise.
- A number of local councils are taking on assets such as community halls, churches and pubs. The Plunkett Foundation website can offer information about this type of project.
- The cost of affiliation to NALC will be £7.20 per elector for the forthcoming financial year.
- ALCA meeting dates have now been set for the forthcoming year.
- In collaboration with the Council, ALCA are planning a Clerk’s networking event. The date of this event will be circulated shortly.

A copy of the ALCA report is attached as *Appendix 1* to these minutes.

20 PLANNING

Lisa Bartlett, Director of Development and Emma Watts, Senior Planning Officer from B&NES Council gave a presentation regarding planning issues as follows:.

- Joint Spatial Plan – The Planning Inspectorate has rejected the West of England Joint Spatial Plan and the Council now has to reconsider its policies and set out the next steps in the New Year. This includes housing allocations such as how much affordable housing is required. The Council is keen to move on with the local plan and will take on board any suggestions put forward by Town and Parish Councils.
- Green Belt Permitted Development Rights – permitted development can be carried out without planning permission and frees up people to proceed with certain types of development.
- Change of use of agricultural buildings – the building must be capable of conversion.
- Permitted development for agriculture and forestry.
- Protocols for Town and Parish Councils including the process for referrals to the Planning Committee. It is important when commenting on applications to give planning reasons as this will give more weight to a referral to Committee. It is not standard practice to hold a site visit with Town or Parish Councils as there is not capacity to do this. However, Planning Case Officers are happy to answer questions from local councils.

Officers then responded to questions as follows:

- Cheryl Scott, Clerk to Keynsham Town Council, asked about the likelihood of development in North Keynsham being included in the local plan. Lisa Bartlett explained that the Council is unable to finish its hearings due to advice from the Inspector and will now have to start again and reassess the plan. The Green Belt will be reviewed in the light of the Inspector's comments being mindful to produce a sustainable strategy for the whole of the West of England.
- Lisa Bartlett confirmed that it would be appropriate for Keynsham Town Council to invite officers to a closed meeting regarding the Neighbourhood Plan for Keynsham.
- Lisa also confirmed that some of the work carried out relating to infrastructure has translated into the Joint Transport Plan and that Transport and Highways officers are working on this. Mandy Bishop confirmed that some consultation has taken place and officers are considering evidence in the light of the Inspector's report. This will be considered at the WECA Transport Board.

- A query was raised regarding the protocols for Agricultural Need applications. Parish Councils are not formally notified about these applications but sometimes become aware of them by other means. Would the Council be prepared to review its consultation process? Emma Watts stated that there is a different process for this type of application which the Council is unable to change. Any Town or Parish Councils which have specific examples they wish to bring to the attention of B&NES Council were asked to email these to Lisa Bartlett.
- Temple Cloud with Cameley Parish Council suggested that one person could be nominated from each Parish to be the contact person. The perceived lack of communication can be frustrating for Parishes. Lisa pointed out that timeframes are very tight and that Parishes can contact the Case Officer at any stage. There is also a notification function on the website where people can register to be notified of applications in a specific area.
- Keynsham Town Council also gave details of a recent planning application where the Town Council was referred to in the application but was not made aware of this fact. Cllr Dine Romero stated that she was aware of this case and has asked Cllr Tim Ball to look into it.
- East Harptree Parish Council pointed out that it is difficult to proceed with the rural allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan when the strategic development issues are not clear. Lisa confirmed that it would be difficult to firm up Neighbourhood Plans but that the Council would facilitate those areas who wished to carry out some development in their area. There is a slight delay and the Council will not be able to consult on a formal plan at this stage.

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

21 CLEANSING

Carol Maclellan, Group Manager for Neighbourhood Environmental Services, B&NES gave a presentation regarding routine cleaning and support for community litter picking.

- 3,500 tonnes of litter is dealt with over the course of a year.
- 1,500 reports of litter have been received through the "Fix My Street" system.
- There are 1,285 litter bins throughout the B&NES area. The cost of disposal is rising.
- The cost of emptying one litter bin for a year is £700. The team tries to consolidate litter bins and remove any that are not used.
- There are 48 members of staff in the cleansing team and the service is provided at a cost of £35 per household per year.
- The basic service includes weed spraying, emptying litter bins, cleaning shopping precincts, mechanical sweeping once per month, managing the fix my street system, removing graffiti, litter and dead animals and abandoned vehicles, dealing with sharps and needles.
- A team of 13 people is based at Radstock Road where there are two main sweeper vehicles and two response vans.

- Litter picking on verges is an expensive and dangerous activity. This normally takes place around late February/early March.
- Last year 1,080 bags of rubbish were removed from verges.
- A large number of complaints about rubbish in verges are received.
- Community Litter Picks – There are a whole raft of community groups who carry out litter picks with some doing this on a regular basis. The Council provides them with litter bags and hi vis jackets.
- B&NES has recently held a “Big Community Clean Up”. Further details about community litter picks can be found using the following link
<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/streets-and-highway-maintenance/litter-street-care-and-cleaning/organising-litter-pick>

Carol Maclellan then responded to questions as follows:

- The cost of a blue bag used to store cardboard recycling is £3.50. Cardboard will still be collected even if it is not placed in a recycling bag.
- Any group carrying out a litter pick is given an information pack. People are advised not to put themselves at risk and not to pick up anything they feel is dangerous. Cllr Ron Hopkins expressed concern about items such as hidden needles which could cause harm to litter pickers.

22 COMMUNICATIONS AND WEBSITES

Jane Williams, Corporate Communications Manager B&NES gave a presentation regarding the role of the press office. This included the following:

- Details of the Corporate Communications team.
- Responsibilities of the team and their day to day work.
- Details of Council communications in numbers – such as 18,900 twitter followers, 248 mentions in the press last month and 55 media enquiries received on average each month.
- Objectives of the Communications team.
- Getting messages out.
- Media relations and the law – Council publicity is strictly controlled by a Code of Practice established under the Local Government Act 1986.
- Giving people a bigger say – “For a community to be a healthy local democracy, local understanding of the operation of the democratic process is important, and effective communication is key to developing that understanding. Local authority publicity is important to transparency and to localism, as the public need to know what their local authority is doing if they are to hold it to account.” *Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity – Explanatory Memorandum.*
- Parish and Town Councils are invited to get in touch with the Communications Team if necessary. They are also invited to subscribe to E-connect, the Council weekly newsletter. People can sign up to E-connect using the following link: <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/econnect>

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

Tim White, IT Project Manager, B&NES gave a presentation regarding the Council website. This covered the following issues:

- Changes to the Council website and reasons for the change.
- What work is being carried out.
- The benefits of the new website – the project is an enabler for wider digital transformation.
- Structure of the new website.
- The transactional nature of the new website – the top tasks will be more prominent and the most visited services will be on the home page. This will adjust dynamically according to user needs.
- Information on pages is laid out in a much more user friendly way, which helps meet new accessibility legislation.
- Word and pdf forms will be replaced with online versions using data the Council holds more effectively and redesigning key online services such as viewing/commenting on planning applications.
- There will be a new approach for policy and strategy documents.
- The way B&NES communicates about consultations will also be improved.
- There will be sites with a commercial/branding focus such as Building Control; there will be a refreshed jobs and careers site and a new Newsroom site.
- The B&NES Newsroom page can be accessed using the following link <https://newsroom.bathnes.gov.uk/news>
- New web content will be released as it becomes available.

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

Dawn Drury, Chair of ALCA, gave a presentation regarding preparations for the Website Accessibility Regulations. This covered the following issues:

- Compliance with the regulations will become mandatory for all Town, Parish and Community Councils on 23 September 2020 and for mobile applications by 23 June 2021.
- This will mean changes in the way information is published online as well as in the way web pages are written and also documents such as minutes and agendas.
- This is important to improve accessibility of websites and mobile apps to ensure that they can be used by as many people as possible.
- There is provision allowing continued use of non-compliant aspects of a website where compliance is a disproportionate burden.
- Lack of time or knowledge or not giving the matter priority is no excuse for not making websites accessible.
- Accessibility includes website content and design, type of font, ensuring that all documents are in the correct format and colour of print used in the website design.
- Details of “dos” and “don’ts” for users who are deaf or hard of hearing, have dyslexia or have low vision were displayed.
- The aspects of websites that can be checked now are:
 - Is your website correctly formatted?
 - Are you using descriptive links?
 - Are you saving your files in accessible PDF/A format?

- Is your website written in simple language?
- Details of Compton Dando Parish Council’s experience of making a website accessible were outlined.

A copy of the presentation slides are attached as *Appendix 5* to these minutes.

23 TERMS OF REFERENCE - PARISH LIAISON MEETING

The Parish Liaison Meeting was asked to note the proposed amendments to its terms of reference. Feedback can be given following the meeting to B&NES ALCA or to the Council's Communities Team by email:
Connecting_communities@bathnes.gov.uk

A copy of the previous terms of reference is attached as *Appendix 6* to these minutes.

24 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that future meetings will be held on the following dates:

- Tuesday 31 March 2020
- Thursday 16 July 2020
- Thursday 22 October 2020

Time: 6.30pm
 Venue: Community Space, Keynsham

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services