

PARISH LIAISON
Terms of Reference
Ratified in May 2020

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Parish Liaison is a partnership meeting between Bath & North East Somerset Council and the parishes within its district to facilitate the way in which they work together to serve the people of Bath and North East Somerset.
- 1.2 The Parish Charter is the framework within which the Parish Liaison meetings operate and support the implementation of the Charter's key principles of:
- Respecting and valuing each other
 - Strengthening relationships
 - Providing practical support
 - Making the best of our skills and resources
- 1.3 The Parish Liaison meeting does not have any decision making powers but can advise and make representations to Bath & North East Somerset Council.

2. Membership

- 2.1 Membership of the Parish Liaison meeting is limited to elected representatives of Bath & North East Somerset Council and representatives of the parishes within the district.
- 2.2 Bath & North East Somerset Council will appoint representatives to the Parish Liaison meetings in such numbers as it decides.
- 2.3 The parishes will each be entitled to send their nominated representative (usually the Chair of the Council) and their Clerk to the meetings. Additional parish representatives may attend subject to notification to Democratic Services prior to the meeting date and the subsequent approval of the Chair of the meeting.
- 2.4 The Avon Local Councils Association for Bath and North East Somerset will be entitled to send representation to the meetings in their own right.
- 2.5 Officers of Bath & North East Somerset Council will attend meetings as necessary to advise and assist discussion.

3. Meetings

- 3.1 There will normally be three meetings per year, held in open session.
- 3.2 Meetings will usually be held in the evening for no longer than three hours.
- 3.3 There is an option for one of these meetings to be 'conference style' for networking and to provide training; updates; briefings and presentations on good practice from parishes. Where appropriate these will also be provided at other meetings in the cycle.

- 3.4 The meetings will be chaired by an agreed, elected representative of Bath & North East Somerset Council. The meeting Chair shall act independently and work on behalf of the Parish Liaison meeting for the wider benefit.
- 3.5 The Parish Liaison meeting is not a statutory meeting of the Council.
- 3.6 The general public may attend Parish Liaison meetings as observers but have no automatic right to speak or make statements. The Chair may exercise his/her discretion if a member of the public has given notice prior to the meeting date that they wish to raise an item of general interest and relevance to the membership.
- 3.7 Agendas and papers for meetings will be circulated a minimum of seven calendar days before a meeting. A record of each meeting will be taken.

4. Conduct at Meetings

- 4.1 The Parish Liaison meeting recognises that the Council and parishes have a common purpose to promote the wellbeing of Bath and North East Somerset, and serve the same residents. While the meeting relies on open discussions there is a need to respect and value each other's views and opinions.
- 4.2 Attendees will:
- engage positively in discussions
 - work together on finding solutions
 - sharing good practice
 - help strengthen relationships
- 4.3 All those attending Parish Liaison meetings shall be accorded the same degree of respect, dignity and consideration by all other attendees, irrespective of people's protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and with regard to equalities legislation.

5. Agenda Setting

- 5.1 Parish Liaison will convene a sub-group for the purpose of setting the agendas for Parish Liaison as well as monitoring the Parish Charter. The sub-group will consist of representatives from the Council, parishes and Avon Local Councils Association for Bath and North East Somerset
- 5.2 Agenda items of relevance for discussion at Parish Liaison meetings will be those:
- That are strategic or legislative issues
 - That have direct impact on all, or a significant number of parishes
 - That support an effective working partnership between tiers of local government
 - That relate to the Parish Charter
 - Where a collective view from parishes would be helpful

5.3 Items that are not relevant for Parish Liaison will be those:

- That relate to a single, or small number of parishes, other than important items raised by a single parish or a small number of parishes that are agreed by the Parish Liaison agenda setting group will be included on the agenda.
- For which other, effective channels of communication exist
- That are day to day operational issues
- That need to be addressed immediately

5.4 The agenda items will take account of other local Forums' interests in discussions on topics and will avoid duplication where possible. Further information on protocols can be found in the Parish Toolkit.

5.5 The infrequency of Parish Liaison meetings means that it is not a practical forum through which to engage in routine enquiries and those that require immediate action.

6. Review

6.1 The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually and any agreed changes will be ratified at the Annual General Meetings of Bath & North East Somerset Council and Avon Local Councils' Association for Bath and North East Somerset, usually held in May.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this Terms of Reference, the term 'parishes' relates to Town, Parish and Village Councils and Parish Meetings.