

PARISH LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Thursday, 22nd October, 2020, 6.30 pm

Councillors: Councillor Andrew Furse (Chair), Dawn Drury, Kathryn Manchee, Janette Stephenson, Kathy Thomas, Councillor Dine Romero (Cabinet Member), Councillor Rob Appleyard (Cabinet Member), Councillor Tim Ball (Cabinet Member), Councillor Neil Butters (Cabinet Member), Councillor Kevin Guy (Cabinet Member), Councillor Richard Samuel (Cabinet Member), Councillor Sarah Warren (Cabinet Member), Councillor David Wood (Cabinet Member) and Councillor Joanna Wright (Cabinet Member), Councillor Sally Davis, Councillor Hal MacFie, Councillor Eleanor Jackson, Councillor Vic Pritchard and Councillor Andy Wait

Parish Representatives: Dawn Drury (Chair of ALCA) and representatives of Bathampton PC, Camerton PC, Claverton PC, Compton Dando PC, Dunkerton and Tunley PC, Englishcombe PC, Farrington Gurney PC, Freshford PC, High Littleton PC, Keynsham TC, Peasedown St John PC, Priston PC, Publow with Pensford PC, Radstock TC, Stanton Drew PC, Stowey Sutton PC, Timsbury PC, Wellow PC and Westfield PC

Also in attendance: David Trethewey (Director of Partnership and Corporate Services), Richard Daone (Deputy Head of Planning Policy), Simon de Beer (Head of Planning), Dave Dixon (Community Engagement Manager), Sara Dixon (Locality Manager), Mark Hayward (Community Engagement Officer), Marie Todd (Democratic Services Officer, Alison Wells (Community Engagement Officer) and Jane Wildblood (Corporate and Community Sustainability Manager)

11 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Will Godfrey – B&NES Chief Executive
Cllr Duncan Hounsell – B&NES Council
Cllr Lisa O'Brien – B&NES Council
Lottie Smith-Collins – Clerk to Saltford Parish Council
Charlcombe Parish Council
Shoscombe Parish Council

13 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

14 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

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

(a) Cllr Dine Romero – Council Leader

Cllr Romero stated that she receives regular updates on the spread of Coronavirus. The B&NES area is currently in Tier 3 which is the lowest risk category. However, there is no room for complacency, and everyone has a part to play in reducing the spread of the virus.

Cllr Romero recently met with Government Ministers to discuss the virus. She also attends WECA meetings to discuss economic recovery plans. Initiatives to open up the high street such as “Love our High Street” have been discussed at these meetings. Green industry should be a core driver in the recovery plan. Cllr Romero also meets with the Police to discuss issues relating to the outbreak.

Cllr Romero has chaired a number of webinars regarding topics such as neighbourhoods and the Black Lives Matter movement which included contributions from local young people. The webinars are all available to view on the Council YouTube channel. She has also been involved in the presentation of community awards.

(b) Cllr Richard Samuel – Cabinet Member for Resources

Cllr Samuel gave an update regarding the medium-term financial strategy. He informed the meeting that Council income has plummeted due to the Covid-19 outbreak and that this will lead to pressure on next year’s budget. The business rate retention scheme is due to end shortly.

Cllr Samuel gave a presentation covering the following issues:

- Five-year budget profile.
- Covid-19 grant assumptions.
- Council Tax – a decision is awaited regarding Council Tax increases and the social care precept.
- Provisional settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- Budget planning assumptions.
- New 2021/22 budget pressures – including commercial estate - £5m, parking - £4m and heritage services - £5.96m
- Strategic financial planning themes – Short, medium and long term.
- Financial planning assumptions.
- Key dates for the budget timetable.

Cllr Samuel explained that the parking budget is now beginning to recover as people are now switching from public transport to private vehicles. Work is ongoing regarding the property estate and the way that social care is delivered. Savings have been made due to staff working from home and it is considered that £9m of savings are achievable. The figures are likely to change when the budget is considered by the Council in February.

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

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

Cllr Appleyard stated that great work is being carried out by the Council's public health team both on Covid related matters and other areas of work, such as suicide prevention and food poverty. A food pantry is being set up in the area which will enable people to pay a small subscription to gain access to greater value food. The community hub continues to operate and provides a route for people to access other services if required.

It is important to consider whether meeting up with other people is really necessary in the current climate to prevent the spread of the virus. The Council has agreed a local outbreak management plan. A recent outbreak occurred in Midsummer Norton and this was dealt with swiftly and effectively.

(d) Cllr Dave Wood – Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services

Cllr Wood gave an update regarding green waste collections.

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impacts of staff self-isolating or shielding combined with operational changes put in place to support social distancing, led to a reduction in service levels across the Council, including waste services. Whilst the majority of services resumed quickly, some (which included residents reporting and the ability to return for missed collections) remained suspended for longer periods. They have now all resumed. Crews worked exceptionally hard during lockdown as quantities of garden waste collected increased dramatically. The Council apologises to those residents who have experienced missed collections and thanks them for their patience and understanding. The vast majority of residents were really understanding of the pressure that reduced numbers of key frontline workers were under and expressed their appreciation to the team for the way in which they were able to continue prioritising the refuse collection service.

When roadworks are taking place the waste services operations team will work with the contractor to establish access on collection days, or make alternative arrangements and return the next day if collections cannot be carried out at the scheduled time. Unfortunately, with the roadworks in Stockwood Vale collections have continued to be missed and it is recognised that residents have not experienced the correct level of service. The Waste Operations Manager has worked to resolve these issues and to ensure that residents are now receiving a regular collection, he has been in direct contact with a resident regarding the difficulties experienced. The Council would like

to apologise for the inconvenience that the residents have experienced, and that the situation was not resolved sooner.

(e) Cllr Joanna Wright – Cabinet Member for Transport Services

Cllr Wright gave an update including the following issues:

- The Council has been working hard to implement a number of traffic schemes including the provision of safe routes to schools, a zebra crossing at Paulton and a pavement to connect High Littleton and Hallatrow.
- Air pollution is also being tackled, the air quality in Keynsham has improved and an action plan is now in place.
- Work is also taking place on the liveable neighbourhoods policy.
- Three new electric vehicle charging points have been provided – 1 at Keynsham, one at Radstock and one at Midsummer Norton.
- Work has been carried out in Keynsham High Street to enable social distancing due to the pandemic, although it is acknowledged that some further changes may be required.
- The e-scooter trial will start in Bath next week and it is hoped that this can be rolled out to the market towns in due course.
- Cllr Wright sits on the WECA Transport Board and she thanked Cllr Hal MacFie for the work he has carried out on urban and rural transport connectivity. It is also important to tackle the climate emergency.

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

Cllr Butters explained that plans to re-open high streets is ongoing. A business case is being prepared regarding the opening of Saltford railway station. There will be some upheaval at Bristol Temple Meads station at the East junction due to work for Metro West at the end of next year. Rail electrification is back on the agenda for this area and a Heathrow Western link is also being considered.

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

Cllr Guy reported that 14 schools in B&NES have experienced outbreaks of Covid-19. 21 children and staff bubbles have been affected by these outbreaks. He has visited schools to ensure that they are prepared and is pleased with the arrangements that schools have made to become Covid-secure, such as identifying clear entrances and exits to buildings.

It is important to encourage children to walk and cycle to school at this time. During lockdown over 500 free music lessons have been provided.

Questions

Cabinet Members then responded to questions as follows:

- Cllr Samuel stated that Town and Parish Councils should continue to precept and prepare their budgets as usual. Some Parish Councils were concerned

that funding for services such as grass cutting would be reduced, and they would then have to take on this responsibility. Cllr Samuel hoped that this would not be the case but stated that the situation would be clearer in December when the budget consultation process is underway. It was noted that there will be a series of budget webinars during the consultation period.

- Cllr Samuel confirmed that the Government have not reimbursed the Council for the full amount of Council Tax revenue that has been lost due to Covid-19.
- Cllr Samuel confirmed that work is still on-going to identify areas for budget savings. The Council must produce a balanced budget and so some reductions will have to be made.
- Cllr Wright agreed to respond directly to Cheryl Scott, Clerk to Keynsham Town Council regarding the assessment of the effectiveness of the work carried out to Keynsham High Street.
- Cllr Butters stated that he is not currently aware of the timeframe for the rail electrification work.

16 UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR OF B&NES ALCA

Dawn Drury, Chair of ALCA, reported on the following issues:

- Most Parish and Town Councils are now holding virtual meetings.
- Parish and Town Councils have responded, both jointly and individually, to the recent consultation on the proposed changes to the planning process.
- A meeting regarding play areas has recently taken place between B&NES Council and Parish Councils which was very helpful.
- Some Councils have moved away from SSE and a new contract is being arranged.
- The ALCA budget was presented at the recent AGM. A 30% increase in membership fees was proposed with a minimum fee of £50. The current lack of resources has prompted this proposal as ALCA was reliant on training income to remain viable. ALCA also needs paid finance and administrative support. 42 Councils voted in favour of the fee increase, 8 voted against and there was 1 abstention.

17 RENEWAL VISION AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Cllr Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services, in response to a question, explained that there would be no full-scale park and ride service to the East of Bath. Instead a “pocket park and ride” is proposed, which will include a faster bus service. This project is currently being scoped. The clean air zone has now been postponed until 15 March 2021 at the request of central government. Private cars will not be charged to enter the zone. Some support will be available to enable people to upgrade their vehicles. Bath will be the first charging area in the country outside of London. The green renewal vision for the wider community has been the main focus of Cllr Warren’s portfolio.

Jane Wildblood, Corporate and Community Sustainability Manager, gave an update on the renewal vision and climate emergency community engagement. This covered the following issues:

- Corporate Strategy – impact of Covid, ecological emergency declaration and new renewal programme.
- Climate action update.
- Community-led climate change actions survey – 80 local organisations responded.
- Action taken by Parish Councils on climate emergency.
- B&NES renewable energy investment study.
- “Green recovery” study.
- Renewal vision work and engagement.

A great deal of work is underway in the community. A virtual Parish Council Action Planning workshop will take place on 26 November. The workshop will be run by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE). Details of how to get involved are available on the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/parish-council-climate-emergency-workshop-tickets-125035182597>

There are a number of webinars available on the Council YouTube channel regarding the renewal vision and climate emergency and more will be taking place in the future.

The launch of the shared vision will take place in the first quarter of 2021.

Cllr Vic Pritchard expressed some concern about the emphasis on home working as this can lead to isolation and subsequent mental health issues. It was also noted that home working can have a detrimental effect on local high streets.

Jane Wildblood explained that working from home can be effective and the trend is towards more home working. However, there is also work underway to develop more co-working hubs with the aim of ensuring that nobody has more than a 20-minute commute.

Cheryl Scott, Clerk to Keynsham Town Council asked if any further action is being taken regarding the proposed Bristol Airport expansion.

Cllr Sarah Warren stated that she is working with the Airport Alliance. The Rule 6 parties have a leading role in the appeal and are putting together a case against expansion. B&NES Council has been advised to submit a written statement.

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

18 PLANNING

Cllr Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Economic Development informed the meeting that the Local Plan needed an urgent update.

Simon de Beer, Head of Planning, and Richard Daone, Deputy Head of Planning Policy, gave a presentation regarding the update to the Local Plan. The presentation covered the following issues:

- Local Plan partial update – following the withdrawal of the Joint Strategic Plan it is now necessary to update the Local Plan. The main drivers are:
 - Need to update key policies.
 - Replenishment of the housing land supply.
 - Provision of a firm policy basis of sites allocations to secure investment in sustainable transport.

- Scope of the update:
 - Climate Emergency Policies
 - Transport
 - Students related development
 - Housing supply and housing type
 - Nature Emergency
 - General policies
 - Review of allocated sites
 - Key supplementary planning documents

In response to a question from Keynsham Town Council it was confirmed that the work to update its policies could either progress alongside the update to the Local Plan or wait until the new Local Plan has been finalised.

Due to time constraints no discussion took place on planning reforms or the WECA Sustainable Development Strategy. However, the presentation slides for this item include information on these topics.

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

19 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Wednesday 24 March 2021
 Wednesday 14 July 2021
 Wednesday 13 October 2021

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services