

PARISH LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 24th March, 2021, 6.30 pm

Councillors: Councillor Andrew Furse (Chair), Councillor Dine Romero (Council Leader), Councillor Rob Appleyard (Cabinet Member), Councillor Tim Ball (Cabinet Member), Councillor Neil Butters (Cabinet Member), Councillor Paul Crossley (Cabinet Member), Councillor Sarah Warren (Cabinet Member), Councillor David Wood (Cabinet Member) and Councillor Joanna Wright (Cabinet Member), Councillor Sally Davis, Councillor Duncan Hounsell, Councillor Eleanor Jackson, Councillor Lisa O'Brien, Councillor Vic Pritchard, Councillor Alastair Singleton and Councillor Andy Wait

Parish Representatives: Cllr Dawn Drury (Chair of ALCA), Kathryn Manchee (ALCA), Kathy Thomas (ALCA) and representatives of Bathampton PC, Camerton PC, Chew Magna PC, Chew Stoke PC, Clutton PC, Combe Hay PC, Compton Dando PC, Compton Martin PC, Dunkerton and Tunley PC, East Harptree PC, Englishcombe PC, Farmborough PC, Hinton Charterhouse PC, Keynsham TC, Monkton Combe PC, Peasedown St John PC, Priston PC, Publow with Pensford PC, Saltford PC, Shoscombe PC, South Stoke PC, Stanton Drew PC, Wellow PC, Westfield PC and Whitchurch VC

Also in attendance: Will Godfrey (Chief Executive), Mandy Bishop (Chief Operating Officer), Simon de Beer (Head of Planning), Dave Dixon (Community Engagement Manager), Sara Dixon (Locality Manager), Aurora Loi (Electoral Services Manager), Gary Peacock (Deputy Group Manager), Marie Todd (Democratic Services Officer) and Alison Wells (Community Engagement Officer)

20 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Kevin Guy
Cllr Richard Samuel
Charlcombe Parish Council
Shoscombe Parish Council

22 URGENT BUSINESS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

24 UPDATE FROM THE LEADER, CABINET MEMBERS OF BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL AND SENIOR OFFICERS

(a) Cllr Dine Romero – Council Leader

Covid 19 Update - The Covid-19 infection rate in the B&NES area has now reduced to 20 per 100,000. The vaccination programme is going very well and most people in the high-risk category groups have now been vaccinated. This area has not experienced much vaccine-hesitancy. Testing centres have also been established across the district.

To keep up to date with the latest, local news on Covid; vaccinations and other important information, people can sign up to receive the Council's e-newsletter and encourage others, with access to the internet, to do the same – the link is here:

<https://us4.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=d4b66021dfe971c98d4145331&id=fb2e3530f2>

The Council will take any action necessary to address any hesitancy in taking the second dose of the vaccine as it is important that people have both doses.

Settled Status for EU Nationals - Parish Councils were asked to remind any EU nationals in their areas to ensure that they apply for settled status before the deadline date of 30 June 2021. Further details can be found on the Government website using the following link <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

Virtual Meetings – B&NES Council is disappointed that the Government has not yet taken action to continue the ability to hold virtual meetings, despite widespread lobbying from across the country. The Council will be considering a motion at its meeting on 25 March to reiterate the cross-party support for this. The Council would like to retain the option to hold virtual meetings where appropriate, but officers are working on contingency plans to enable face-to-face meetings to take place.

Death of a Senior National Figure - The Council has been advised by the Government and Lord Lieutenant's office that many aspects of the protocol will be suspended whilst we deal with the national pandemic. Details of the current protocol are attached as *Appendix 1 to these minutes*.

Community Contribution Fund – The Community Contribution Fund is a pilot scheme that offers residents the chance to pay into a good causes fund to help local charity, community and voluntary groups. This fund is not intended to replace the Ward Councillor Empowerment Fund. Provision was made in the Council's budget for the continuation of the Ward Councillor empowerment fund which provides £1,000 per Councillor for 2021/22. As before, ward councillors in parished areas will be encouraged to work closely with parishes on identifying projects that would benefit from this support.

A letter has been sent to residents with their council tax bill, inviting them to make a voluntary contribution to the fund. There is also a page on the

council's website about the fund, with a link to enable contributions to be made online.

Any contribution will be separate from residents' Council Tax, and it is possible to contribute more than once. The minimum is £5 and there is no maximum.

The scheme will be administered by the council, but funds generated will not be used to supplement council services. Every penny will be used to fund local projects.

As this is a pilot and there are many unknowns, including how much funding might be generated, this is being kept as simple as possible. It means that residents contributing will not be able to request that their money is spent on a specific project or in a particular geographic area. To date there has been a very positive response and, as of last Friday 19 March, £12,807 had been generated.

The Council hopes to be able to open the fund to applications in the Autumn. Any charity, voluntary or community organisation that supports residents of Bath and North East Somerset will be able to apply but priority will be given to projects that benefit the whole district. At the end of the first year, the Council will consult with residents and organisations on whether to continue the scheme in the future.

The Leader agreed to find out whether there will be a system in place to monitor the amount of money raised.

(b) CLlr Sarah Warren – Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services

CLlr Warren gave an update regarding a number of initiatives that the Council has put in place to tackle the climate emergency as part of its day to day business including:

- Liveable Neighbourhoods
- Clean Air Zone
- Green Affordable Warmth Grant
- Council Care Home Energy Upgrade
- Community Empowerment Fund
- Community Solar Project for medium to large roofs
- Great British Spring Clean – 28 May to 13 June
- List of Parishes who have declared a Climate Emergency

Further details can be found in the briefing note attached as *Appendix 2 to these minutes*.

(c) Aurora Loi – Electoral Services Manager

Aurora Loi, Electoral Services Manager, gave an update regarding the forthcoming elections on Thursday 6 May.

- Elections will take place to appoint a Police and Crime Commissioner (postponed from last year) and the WECA Mayor.
- There will also be local referendums in the Freshford and Limpley Stoke area and Stanton Drew.
- The Notice of Election has been published and the poll will run, as usual, from 7am to 10pm. There will be no change to the voting process.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic additional measures will be put in place to ensure the safety of all those involved in the election process.
- Government guidance has advised that schools should not be used as polling stations to ensure that pupils can attend school on election day. This means that some polling stations will be in different locations this year. The Council is working with public health, emergency planning and health and safety officers.
- Poll cards have been sent out including information explaining the measures to be taken at polling stations to keep everyone safe. This includes the use of hand sanitiser, face-coverings and social distancing. Additional roles will be required, there will be marshals to control numbers admitted to the polling stations and safety officers to sanitise polling booths and other equipment. People will be asked to bring their own pens with them if possible.
- A risk assessment will be carried out at each polling station and, if necessary, this will include a site visit by officers.
- People are also being advised of alternative ways that they can vote if they do not wish to attend a polling station, such as postal or proxy voting. New legislation will allow an emergency proxy if required due to the need to self-isolate.
- There is a public engagement strategy in place for the elections.
- The count will take place at the Bath University Sports Hall. The verification of ballot papers for the Police and Crime Commissioner and for the WECA election will take place on Thursday 6 May from 10pm. The count will then take place on Friday 7 May. The WECA count will take place on Saturday 8 May and the local referendum counts will take place on Sunday 9 May.
- As expected, there has been an increased take-up of postal votes.

25 UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR OF B&NES AVON LOCAL COUNCILS ASSOCIATION (ALCA)

The Chair of ALCA, Dawn Drury, reported on the following matters:

Fix My Street/Routine Queries

At the last B&NES ALCA meeting, members raised several issues of concern. In respect of Fix My Street, the messaging is not always correct for example the platform reporting that work had been signed off as being complete without being checked. This seemed to mainly relate to highways works.

The responses are the responsibility of, and dependent on, various teams updating their own systems. Any street works feedback is linked to Highways. The Fix My

Street technical team can look into issues such as auto-generation of a status update.

Parishes should notify either Council Connect or the Community Engagement Team if they find messaging on individual reports that is incorrect so that the relevant team can be contacted. Parishes should also contact the B&NES Community Engagement Team or Council Connect with day-to-day issues so that they can be dealt with quickly.

The contact details for these teams are:

Council Connect:

Email: Council_Connect@bathnes.gov.uk

Tel: 01225 394041

Community Engagement Team:

Email: Connectingcommunities@bathnes.gov.uk

Tel: 01225 396975

Diversion Routes

It is important that road closure notices include details of the specific community name as several roads in the area have the same names and this can be confusing.

Post Office Closures

Unfortunately, B&NES Council has limited influence over the closure of local post offices as these are private ventures.

Street Lighting

Incorrect information in respect to street light numbering on the Parish Online system was identified and highlighted by Peasedown St. John Parish Council. Any similar issues in the area can be reported to street_lighting@bathnes.gov.uk who will then liaise with the GIS team. There have also been some problems with new LED streetlights, as one batch has a higher failure rate than usual. Stephen Burrell in the street lighting team is happy to assist parishes in making the appropriate contacts if required.

Lockdown Issues

Unfortunately, lockdown and the pandemic has created problems for many Parishes with people driving to rural locations and villages to walk, which in turn was resulting in bad parking. Saltford Parish Council had been particularly affected by this and reported their Clerk reported that their local PCSOs had put up posters in their riverside areas stating, 'Do you need to be here?' and had undertaken some regular patrols to remind walkers of the guidance rules, so if a Parish is suffering from this problem it may be worth contacting your local beat officer or PCSOs for assistance.

Members stressed the importance of following the country code and raised concern at the amount of littering and, in particular, the problems caused by bags of dog waste being left on the ground or hanging from trees.

The Cabinet Members, Cllrs Joanna Wright and Neil Butters, agreed to look into the issues raised.

Miscellaneous Issues

Other issues raised by ALCA were:

- A request for advice on purdah.
- The position regarding virtual meetings after 7 May. The regional Committee and NALC are still advising that both the Annual Assembly and the Annual Meeting of Parish Councils are held before 7 May virtually.
- Adoption of the LGA Code of Conduct.
- A desire to share information and establish links regarding climate emergency matters.

Presentation by Geoff Davis, Clerk to South Stoke Parish Council

Geoff Davis presented a report regarding the street lighting contract for Parish Councils:

- A change in the contracting arrangements for street lighting left Parishes with no street lighting maintenance from April 2020.
- Volker Highways, the new B&NES contractor have provided labour and material rates for reactive maintenance and Parish Councils have been raising purchase orders to obtain maintenance.
- Volker Highways have provided a tender officer for planned maintenance on the same terms as those used for B&NES Council. These have been accepted by the Parishes and are being used to procure planned maintenance for 2021/22.
- Making an agreement with 20 separate parishes is likely to be problematic for Volker, and a single over-arching agreement would be preferred.
- The way forward may be for the current arrangements to be added to the B&NES Council contract with Volker Highways so that there is a clear framework for Parishes to raise purchase orders for their maintenance needs. This would also provide helpful support for parishes that do not have the experience and expertise to plan and arrange such orders.

Gary Peacock, Deputy Group Manager from the Highways Team agreed to look into this proposal and the Cabinet Members Cllrs Joanna Wright and Neil Butters agreed to pick up the relevant details.

26 UPDATE ON WECA SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, B&NES LOCAL PLAN AND TRANSPORT DELIVERY PLAN

Cllr Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Economic Development explained that work is currently being carried out on:

- A refresh of the Local Plan
- WECA Spatial Development Strategy
- B&NES Local Plan

The consultation process has been more difficult this year due to the Covid pandemic.

Simon de Beer, Head of Planning gave a presentation regarding the WECA Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) and B&NES Local Plan. This covered the following issues:

Spatial Development Strategy

- The WECA Spatial Development Strategy is a high-level plan. Sites identified give an indication of where growth should take place.
- The scope of the Spatial Development Strategy.
- The timetable for the Strategy – including informal engagement, preparation of the Strategy and publication of a draft plan for public consultation.
- New strategic evidence.
- Local Housing Needs Assessment – new standard methodology.
- SDS Engagement – views on priorities.
- Call for sites – land that could be available for development from landowners.

B&NES Local Plan Partial Update

- Rationale for the partial update – including some urgent issues that need to be addressed within B&NES.
- Options consultation – around 2,390 comments have been received.
- Key issues for Parishes.
- Next steps.
- Overall timetable.

It was noted that there will be further engagement with Town and Parish Councils and there will be an opportunity to comment on the draft plan.

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

Transport Delivery Plan

Gary Peacock, Deputy Group Manager, Highways and Transport, gave a presentation regarding the Transport Delivery Plan and request for highway schemes. This covered the following issues:

- Partnership working with WECA-LTA.
- Bus Strategy and proposed improvements.
- Improvements to bus services are proposed for the A4, A367 and A37 to provide better links between communities.
- Request for highways schemes – there is a high demand. Schemes are assessed and prioritised with the highest priority schemes being added to the capital programme.
- There are 1,200kms of highway in the district and 16,000 streetlights.

Cllr Neil Butters, Cabinet Member for Transport Services stated that he hoped to work with Parishes regarding contentious issues such as road humps and speed signs.

Cllr Joanna Wright highlighted a number of projects that are currently taking place:

- Funding has been awarded for the construction of a recreational trail around a significant part of the lake, but funding conditions need to be satisfied before work can commence. It is hoped that this will be soon.
- The e-scooter trial is currently ongoing, and people can now lease an e-scooter for a longer period of time.
- 20mph zones.
- Provision of more electric car charging points.
- Liveable neighbourhoods scheme. There are two further deadlines to make suggestions for this scheme in May and August. If Parishes have any ideas they would like to raise they should approach their local ward councillor.

Details of Transport schemes approved by the Council in February 2021 can be found using the following link:

<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s64631/08z%20Annex%205%20iii%20-%20Transport%20Improvement%20Programme%202021-22.pdf>

The Government’s “Bus Back Better” strategy sets out the long-term plans for bus services in England.

It was noted that Cleveland Bridge in Bath will be closed in mid-May for about 12 weeks to enable repairs to be carried out. Mitigation measures will be put in place across the whole area.

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

27 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that future meetings will be held on:

Wednesday 14 July 2021

Wednesday 13 October 2021

The meeting ended at 8.16 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services