

Parish Liaison Meeting

Parish Charter Review – briefing 23rd March 2022

Background

The principles of the Parish Charter were first adopted in 1999 and by 2006, developed into a framework to support how the Council and parishes within the district work together.

A full and collaborative review of the Charter was undertaken in 2016, involving a Working Group of parish representatives. All parishes were consulted as part of the process. The revised Parish Charter reflects the strong working relationship between the Council and parishes and recognises the financial challenges facing the public sector. It was formally adopted in 2018.

A Working Group of parish representatives continues to meet quarterly with the Council to discuss any Charter issues and to set the agendas for the Parish Liaison Meetings.

Progress

Since the adoption of the Parish Charter, we have continued to improve the way we work together and whilst we recognise that further improvements need to be made, particularly around communication and consultation, we have set new priorities as well as introducing a series of initiatives and tools to assist with our partnership working. This has included:-

- Implementation of Fix My Street, a digital tool to report issues associated with roads, pavements and parks. More information about Fix My Street [here](#).
- A parish 'Toolkit' designed to signpost parishes to essential information. The Toolkit can be found [here](#).
- Improved liaison between Council and parishes to resolve issues through a Working Group or via direct contact with the Connecting Communities Team.
- The adoption of the Community Engagement Charter in 2020, which sets out the Council's commitment to improving engagement and consultation. More information about the Charter [here](#).
- A review of the Connecting Communities Forums for Bath City, Bathavon North and Bathavon South. This resulted in the creation of a single Forum to represent the parishes of the Bathavon area and a new Forum for the Bath Area. Five area Forums have now been established for the whole district. More information about the Connecting Communities Forums [here](#).
- The declaration of Climate Emergency by the Council in 2019, with many parishes across the district also declaring this and setting new priorities.

While face to face meetings were restricted during the past two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, new digital tools created opportunities to improve communication between the Council and parishes. Parish Liaison meetings continued as well as specific discussions on key topics, a recent example Jubilee event planning, see [here](#).

Review of the Charter

A review of the Parish Charter is required every four years and is due during 2022. The revised Charter will need to reflect:

- the new priorities set by the councils in tackling topics such as the climate and nature emergency
- new opportunities and ways of working as technology continues to develop
- the need for continued improvement with communication and consultation

Recommendations and next steps

The work on the Parish Charter will take place during 2022 for its adoption in 2023. It is proposed to bring the Parish Charter in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy, due to be reviewed in 2023, so that it becomes an appendix alongside the Community Engagement Charter.

The Parish Charter Working Group will focus on:

- a survey of all parishes to seek views about how effective the Charter has been since its implementation in 2018 and seek up to date information on resources, priorities and ways of working.
- consideration of a number of key aspects of the Charter, particularly consultation and communication which parishes have already highlighted as needing improvement.
- ensuring the Core Principles of the Charter align with the priorities of both the Council and parishes.

The Parish Charter Working group is currently made up of the following representatives:

- Chair of ALCA BANES - currently Cllr Kathy Thomas who is also a Councillor with Peasedown St John Parish Council.
- Vice Chair of ALCA BANES – currently Cllr Dawn Drury who is also Chair of Compton Dando Parish Council and Clerk to Keynsham Town Council
- Cllr Jannette Stephenson – Chair of Pensford Parish Council.
- Katherine Manchee - Clerk to Camerton Parish Council and Dunkerton & Tunley Parish Council.
- Sara Dixon, Locality Manager, Bath & North East Somerset Council.
- Alison Wells, Community Engagement Officer, Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Request: A request for additional parish representation to sit on the Working Group to assist with the Charter Review. If you are interested or need further information, please email: Alison Wells, Alison_Wells@bathnes.gov.uk

**Dave Dixon, Community Engagement Manager
Bath & North East Somerset Council, 16th March 2022**