

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Council
MEETING DATE:	14 May 2026
TITLE:	Revision of Parish Charter
WARD:	All Parished Wards: Bathavon North; Bathavon South; Chew Valley; Clutton and Farmborough; High Littleton; Keynsham East; Keynsham North; Keynsham South; Mendip; Midsomer Norton North; Midsomer Norton Redfield; Newbridge; Paulton; Peasedown St John; Radstock; Saltford; Timsbury; Westfield; Whitchurch
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Revised Charter Appendix 2 – Parish Information Pack	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Council's current Parish Charter was formally adopted in 2018 and has now been updated and revised in consultation with our parishes. The revised Charter is now presented to Council for its endorsement and ratification. The revised Charter has already been presented to the Bath and North East Somerset branch of the Avon Local Councils' Association (ALCA) at its AGM on 11 February 2026 and ratified by them.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Council is asked to:

2.1.1 Ratify the revised Parish Charter as detailed in Appendix 1.

2.1.2 Delegate to the lead Director authority to review and update the Parish Charter in consultation with the Cabinet Member and parish councils.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 Bath & North East Somerset Council and the Parishes in our area have built a tradition of strong joint working, leading to the creation of a Parish Charter in 2006. This provides a framework on how we work together to serve our shared residents and improve people's lives. The Parish Charter is subject to periodic review, with the last document ratified by both the Council and BANES ALCA in 2018.
- 3.2 A working group of Parish and Council representatives meets three or four times a year to set the agendas for the triannual Parish Liaison meetings and to discuss issues relating to the Charter, including any required updates and improvements to ways of working.
- 3.3 In 2022, the group agreed to undertake a light touch refresh of the Parish Charter, retaining the Values, Core Commitments and principles for devolution and to incorporate:-
- Climate and Nature Emergency and Place-based working to support understanding of local issues and the collaboration necessary to drive change and add value. This is now reflected in the revised Parish Charter (Appendix 1)
 - a practical toolkit that can be easily updated, thereby reducing the length of the Charter. The toolkit provides information on council service standards, processes and procedures. This toolkit is known as the Parish Information Pack (Appendix 2)
- 3.4 As part of this review, the group also agreed to trial a new format for the Parish Liaison meetings, introducing a World Café session to facilitate productive conversations on a range of topics. This has proved popular with both Parish and Council representatives and is now a regular feature of the meetings.
- 3.5 Parishes play a key role in providing local feedback and supporting the Council's core policy of giving people a bigger say. In some instances, they are statutory consultees. While the Parish Charter already contained commitments around consultation, the review process highlighted opportunities to improve these standards so that they are consistently applied. This included ensuring consultation takes place when appropriate, allowing sufficient time for parish responses, and directing questions to parishes collectively rather than to individuals. The commitments in the previous Parish Charter have been strengthened to reflect this feedback. Parishes have also offered support with promoting Council consultations to their residents.
- 3.6 The process of refreshing the Charter involved discussions by the Working Group at eight of its meetings. Officers from various Council departments were also invited to contribute. Updates were provided at five of the Parish Liaison meetings. Three surveys went to all fifty-one Parishes in Bath & North East Somerset – the first to ask for views on how the Charter has been working and any suggested amendments; the second on practical information (eg contact details, meeting dates, facilities managed, training needs etc). This also included questions on their top three issues (broadly Transport; Community Safety and Climate and Nature). The third survey was on the revised Charter itself, giving opportunity to make any final changes. Fifty of the fifty-one Parishes took part over the course of the surveys.

- 3.7 The feedback included acknowledgement of an improved willingness from Bath & North East Somerset Council to engage with Parishes. This, coupled with their own willingness to collaborate, provides a firm foundation on which to continue to build our partnership working to help address not only current issues but to shape our places for the future.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Building effective relationships between Bath & North East Somerset Council and our Parishes is vital for tackling a range of issues and challenges in our local communities. The Council has a number of powers including the general power of competence which supports its approach to working in partnership with Parishes.
- 4.2 Parishes are statutory consultees (eg for planning applications) and are widely consulted by Bath & North East Somerset Council on other matters. They provide a representative voice to give communities more control over and say in how local services are delivered.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The staffing and other resource requirements for undertaking this review have been managed from within existing budgets.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken, together with a survey to Parishes enabling them to provide information on the services they currently offer and any support or training needs they might have. No significant issues have been identified.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 As part of a survey to Parishes that supported the Parish Charter refresh, they were asked whether they had declared Climate Emergency. Of 49 respondents, 29 had done so. In addition, 16 Parishes had a related working group and/or action plan. 15 gave examples of climate or nature related projects with which they were involved. 15 also had Climate Emergency listed as one of the top three issues for their communities. They also highlighted that support from the Council with training, data, sources of funding and examples of good practice would be welcome.
- 8.2 The refreshed Parish Charter has also included the Climate and Nature Emergency commitments.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Parish Charter-Liaison Working Group led the surveys on the redrafting of the Charter with all parishes given the opportunity to participate. The Working Group also involves senior officers of the Council enabling them to discuss views and experiences prior to shaping the revision.
- 10.2 In addition, consultation has taken place with the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

Contact person	Alison Wells, Corporate Engagement Officer
Background papers	<p>The Terms of Reference for Parish Liaison were updated and ratified in May 2020. No amendments to these were required as part of this review.</p> <p>https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s65621/Appendix%201%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference.pdf</p>
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