

PARISH COUNCILS LIAISON GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 17th April 2013 at Retford Town Hall

Present:

Councillor F Hart (Chairman)

Councillors: H M Brand, G Freeman, M T Gray, D G Pidwell and K Sutton.

Parish Council Representatives: J Anderson, G Brown, H Burton, S Chandler, C Keyworth, D Langmead, R Smith, M Stokes and P Wilson.

Officers in attendance: S Brown, K Fitzsimmons, J Hamilton and R Schofield (– in attendance for Agenda Item No. 7(a) only).

(Meeting opened at 7.00pm.)

(The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the Fire Alarm/Evacuation Procedure.)

31. SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES FOR 15 MINUTES TO ALLOW QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

32. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillor D Challinor.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(b) Officers

There were no declarations of interest by officers.

34. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH JANUARY 2013

With regard to Minute No. 28(a) – Localism Act 2011: Code of Conduct New Arrangements, Parish Councillor G Brown read out a response by the District Council's Monitoring Officer in relation to his concerns which had been expressed at the last meeting regarding the composition of the sub-committee that will hear any complaint(s). In essence, all the new procedures are under constant review and any comments are welcomed. Any amendments to the procedures will need to be approved by full Council before they are adopted and implemented.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2013 be approved.

35. MINUTES FOR ACTION.

The Senior Manager Support Services reiterated that, with regard to Minute No. 28(a) – Localism Act 2011: Code of Conduct New Arrangements, comments are welcomed from the town/parish councils and these should be passed onto the District Council's Monitoring Officer via their Ward Member.

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action be received.

36. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

There were no Outstanding Minutes.

SECTION A - ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

None.

Other Decisions

37. ITEMS SUBMITTED BY BASSETLAW DISTRICT COUNCIL

(a) Planning Protocol

The Planning Services Manager presented a draft Planning Protocol which sets out the expectations for both the District Council, in its role as local planning authority, and the town/parish councils, in their role as statutory consultees on relevant planning matters and as elected bodies representing local communities, to ensure that, whilst agreement may not always be possible, constructive communication exists between both parties. The Protocol will be circulated for further comments/consultation before it is published on the Council's website. It will be kept under review and can be adjusted to reflect any learning points developed.

Parish representatives asked questions/raised issues on:

- The role of Building Control Officers in enforcement matters.
- The timing of town/parish council meetings in respect of the statutory determination period.

Notification to the town/parish councils when their views differ significantly from officers' recommendations was welcomed as it will give the town/parish council the opportunity to arrange a meeting with the relevant case officer to discuss their concerns.

It was noted that briefings on Planning issues may be arranged for clusters of town/parish councils in the new municipal year.

AGREED that:

1. The draft Planning Protocol be supported by the Parish Councils Liaison Group.
2. Town/parish councils send any further comments on the proposed new arrangements to R Schofield, Planning Services Manager, via email: richard.schofield@bassetlaw.gov.uk

(b) Mapping Services Agreement

K Fitzsimmons, GIS Development Officer, gave a verbal presentation on the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA), which is an agreement with Ordnance Survey to obtain data to produce information maps. Such maps are useful tools in respect of Neighbourhood Plans, assets of community value, flooding, tourism, etc., and town/parish councils are invited to sign up to the PSMA.

Signing up to the PSMA will enable the town/parish council to access professional, high quality, digital maps, and information can be shared with other PSMA members. PSMA members must only use these maps for their core business, e.g. Neighbourhood Plans and community bids. There is no cost to either join or to access the products, and the town/parish council's principal contact, i.e. chairman or clerk, can sign the PSMA. Ordnance Survey will supply data but do not supply the software to process such data; their website is very detailed and easy to navigate.

17 town/parish councils in Bassetlaw have already signed up to the PSMA, e.g. Shireoaks Parish Council, and there are over 2,500 members in the UK. Access to the PSMA membership is restricted to members only.

AGREED that:

1. The verbal presentation on the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA) be noted.
2. Any town/parish council who has questions on the PSMA should contact Kieran Fitzsimmons, GIS Development Officer, tel: 01909 533272 or email: kieran.fitzsimmons@bassetlaw.gov.uk

(c) Developing the Relationship between District and Town/Parish Councils in Bassetlaw

A joint presentation was given by Councillor H M Brand, BDC's Rural Ambassador, and Parish Councillor G Brown, Chairman of the Bassetlaw Branch of NALC, on the recommendations arising from a joint working party of representatives from Bassetlaw District Council and the Bassetlaw Branch of the Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils which examined how the relationship between the District Council and town/parish councils can be strengthened and improved.

Councillor Brand spoke about:

- BDC's commitment to rural communities and locality working.
- The Rural Conference which was held in December 2012.
- The ongoing review of the relationship between the District Council and town/parish councils.
- Matchfunding available for capital projects.
- The draft Planning Protocol.
- Bassetlaw's rural voice in the Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership to improve economic opportunities.
- The ongoing work of the Rural Relationship Group.
- The issue of Government funding which is being diverted away from rural areas.

Parish Councillor Brown spoke about Strategic, Tactical, Development and Information issues:

- The replacement of the Parish Councils Liaison Group by a twice-yearly conference.
- Additional informal meetings with BDC Officers, including the NALC Business Meeting.
- A revision of the Parish Charter.

- Joint working – he referred to the Local Government Association’s publication ‘Modelling Devolution’ which is on NALC’s website.
- The grouping or clustering of smaller parish councils to aid local delivery of services.
- The North East Bassetlaw Forum which brings together those parish councils in the north-eastern part of the District.
- ‘Quality Parishes’ taking on statutory responsibilities, e.g. deciding minor planning applications.
- Provision of a BDC contact card for town/parish clerks.
- The involvement of District Councillors at town/parish council meetings.
- The development of a Rural Action Plan.
- The ambitions of a town/parish council for its area, and the capacity of that council.
- Support for, and education of, the town/parish council clerk.
- The Rural Conferences be used to raise awareness and show examples of good practice.
- Training courses to be provided by both BDC and NALC.
- The importance of two-way communication.
- The development of BDC’s transactional website and how this can be taken advantage of, e.g. debates on line.
- All town/parish councils to have its own email address and laptop, which can be directed to/used by the clerk.
- NALC is looking to provide a dedicated laptop and associated software for about £500.

Parish representatives asked questions/raised issues on:

- Quarterly reports by District Councillors to town/parish council meetings.
- Consideration of costs associated with the proposals.
- Provision of broadband to rural areas.
- Residents should be encouraged to engage with town/parish councils.
- Precepts for town/parish councils to provide services locally in light of austerity measures.

AGREED that:

1. The report and the proposals contained therein be noted.
2. Thanks be recorded to both District Councillor H M Brand and Parish Councillor G Brown for their informative presentation, and their ongoing work on rural issues.

(d) Lobbying on Rural Matters

The Senior Manager Support Services updated the Group on areas where the District Council has, either on its own or with partners, recently lobbied on rural matters. These have included:

- Funding for rural local authorities – BDC is currently a member of the SPARSE Group within the Local Government Association which represents rural local authorities.
- BDC’s Health Panel Review of the Ambulance Service in Bassetlaw which led to the reversal of some decisions made by the East Midlands Ambulance Service, particularly in relation to the retention of the ambulance stations in Retford and Worksop.
- A rural voice in the Sheffield City Region – it is recognised that there is currently little recognition of the importance of the rural economy to the City Region.
- Welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit – applications will only be available online, for which the provision of broadband is paramount.

- Bassetlaw Rural Youth Initiative Group – in light of the annual 5% loss of the rural youth population, a project called ‘Stemming the Tide’ has been developed to provide training skills and work placements to 18-24 year olds in rural communities.
- Development of a Rural Action Plan to focus more on outcomes from the area and on specific topics identified at the Rural Conference.

It was noted that a quarterly report is presented by the Rural Ambassador to BDC’s Cabinet Meeting.

AGREED that the report be noted.

(e) First World War Commemorations

The Senior Manager Support Services advised the Group that ideas will be sought from town/parish councils for ways in which the 100th Anniversary of World War I can be commemorated in 2014 throughout Bassetlaw, as the ‘Trent to Trenches’ initiative seems to be concerned with Nottingham City only. Ideas include:

- Updating war memorials;
- Planting schemes;
- Photographic displays at libraries;
- Displays at town halls.

It was noted that Bassetlaw Museum is looking for artefacts from the Great War, both from the front line and at home, for a dedicated exhibition.

AGREED that town/parish councils discuss ways in which the 100th Anniversary of World War I can be commemorated in 2014 throughout Bassetlaw, and pass any ideas to Steve Brown, Senior Manager Support Services, via email: steve.brown@bassetlaw.gov.uk

38. ITEMS FROM PARISH COUNCILS

None.

39. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

As this was the last meeting of the Parish Councils Liaison Group in its current format, the Chairman thanked everyone concerned for their work and involvement in rural issues to date, particularly for the support of Steve Brown, Senior Manager Support Services. As there was no other business to be discussed the Chairman closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 8.15pm)