

PARISH COUNCILS LIAISON GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 10th October 2012 at Worksop Town Hall

Present:

Councillor F Hart (Chair)

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

Parish Council Representatives: G Brown, H Burton, S Chandler, B Letherland, H Holdaway, B Marchant, J Sanger, K Senior, A Stevens and M Stokes.

Officers in attendance: G Blenkinsop, S Brown, A Burton, J Hamilton and M Ladyman.

Also in attendance: Councillors J Evans and S May – Cabinet Members.

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

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

A Parish Councillor raised the issue that the Council is proposing to not send hard copies of plans to parish council clerks; however, although most town/parish council clerks have access to emails and the internet, they do not have printers which will reproduce the plans to a quality and scale which is usable. A District Councillor suggested that if a particular plan affects a parish, then the town/parish council clerk should contact the District Council for a hard copy of that plan.

RESOLVED that this issue be reported back to Planning Services.

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor J Anderson.

14. 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.

(Councillors J Evans and D G Pidwell joined the meeting at this point.)

15. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH JULY 2012

In response to a query regarding Minute No. 9(a) – The Future Agenda, in respect of CCTV, the Director of Community Services updated the Group on issues with the current system, i.e.: that the equipment does not cover the rural areas, the monitoring contract with Remploy ceases on 1st May 2013, and the control room is located in the former library building in Worksop which will shortly be handed over to the charity Aurora. A procurement exercise is being undertaken to identify a new location for the control room, a new monitoring partner and upgraded equipment. These negotiations also include a possible extension of the service to Harworth, Bircotes and Tuxford, which could be achieved through efficiency savings. Such coverage for the smaller parishes was requested; however, different solutions could be used for difficult/inaccessible areas and differing levels and types of activities, e.g. mobile cameras to catch fly-tippers.

With regard to Minute No. 9(b) – Code of Conduct, a parish representative asked if the new complaints process has been drawn up, and the Senior Manager Support Services reported that the Monitoring Officer is seeking legal advice on this issue and that the new scheme should be submitted to full Council in December 2012 for approval, after which it will be circulated to all town/parish councils.

With regard to Minute No. 10(a) – Concurrent Grants, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property advised that all parish councils will receive the concurrent grant but that it will be reduced by the same percentage as the Government funding allocation to the District Council, which is not yet known.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2012 be approved.

16. MINUTES FOR ACTION.

With reference to Minute No. 6(2) – Dog Warden Service - Enforcement, the Senior Manager Support Services advised that two fixed penalty notices have already been issued and that one member of a parish council has undertaken the training on enforcement to assist in this matter.

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action be received.

17. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

There were no Outstanding Minutes.

SECTION A - ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

None.

Other Decisions

18. ITEMS SUBMITTED BY BASSETLAW DISTRICT COUNCIL

(a) Community Right to Challenge and Community Right to Bid

The Corporate Development and Policy Manager gave a presentation which outlined the process for the Community Right to Bid and updated the Group on the process in place for the Community Right to Challenge. Handouts of the slides were tabled, together with copies of a leaflet on the Community Right to Challenge, an Expression of Interest form and frequently asked questions and answers.

The Community Right to Bid allows communities the right to nominate buildings or land for listing by the local authority as an asset of community value if they meet certain criteria. When a listed asset comes to be sold, an interim moratorium on the sale will be invoked and if requested can be extended to six months to allow local community groups time to develop a business plan and to make a bid to buy the asset if they wish to do so. Following the moratorium, the asset can be sold on the open market at the market rate. There are some assets that are excluded from listing, an appeals process at both the listing and compensation stages of the process, enforcement measures in place, and compensation available to owners of assets if the process results in a loss of income or sale of an asset.

It was noted that some parishes have already begun to identify assets of community value through the Local Development Framework process and their Parish/Neighbourhood Plans, and that much consultation has been done by the Council's Planning Services.

Issues raised included funding for the scheme and funding for parishes, both of which have no provision at this stage. Any compensation will have to be met through the New Burdens funding to local authorities or through an agreed "top up" payment that the Government have committed to pay for claims received in excess of £20k in any calendar year up to March 2015.

The Community Right to Challenge allows a community or voluntary organisation to express an interest to run a Council service or part of a Council service, whether District or County. Such an expression could trigger a procurement exercise which will be open to any organisation and/or business, and the outcome will be built into the Council's budget process.

Issues raised included the time limit for the procurement exercise.

AGREED that:

1. The presentation of the Community Right to Bid and Community Right to Challenge be received.
2. Thanks be recorded to the Corporate Development and Policy Manager for her informative presentation.

(b) Council Tax Support Scheme

The Head of Revenues and Customer Services updated the Group on developments with regard to the Council Tax Support Scheme, following the circulation of a general leaflet on this to all town/parish council clerks on 30th July 2012. A further developed consultation leaflet /booklet was sent to all benefit claiming households in Bassetlaw and to a random selection of non-claiming households during August 2012.

The preparation of the Bassetlaw scheme is as well ahead of other local authorities and, although it still retains the existing council tax benefit model based on need, income, savings, etc., only 80% of weekly liability is proposed to be rebated, which means that many households previously on full benefit will be liable for 20% of their next year's Council Tax bill. Pensioners are protected by law and cannot be worse off than they are now.

The Council has received over 400 responses to its consultation which is still running for the next three weeks, and roadshows and forums are being held throughout Bassetlaw.

The parish tax base will not be reduced so, therefore, any increase in the parish precept will be determined by the town/parish council.

AGREED that:

1. The verbal update be noted.
2. Town/parish councillors encourage their residents to respond to the consultation exercise.

(c) Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy

The Director of Community Services advised the Group of the approval by Cabinet on 4th September 2012 to the development of an Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy in relation to dog fouling, littering, fly-tipping and graffiti, and the undertaking of an consultation exercise on the draft policy, which was appended to the report.

The Authority's holistic approach includes: members of the Environmental Health Team being trained to undertake enforcement duties; a representative of Harworth Town Council also being trained on dog fouling and litter enforcement; and proposed training for members of the Environment Services Team and the Park Ranger, together with members of the Estates Management Team at A1 Housing. The Authority will also be initiating a comprehensive publicity and educational programme on environmental crime, focussing, in the short-term, on littering and dog fouling.

Issues raised included: evidence by witnesses; and court action.

AGREED that Bassetlaw's Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy and agreed actions be noted.

(d) Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan

The Senior Manager Support Services updated the Group on the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan by the District Council. This is one of the Council's key priorities within its Corporate Plan for 2012-13 as Bassetlaw is ranked 61st in England for the biggest risk of poverty and 64th for child poverty out of 326 local authorities.

The Strategy proposes a programme for tackling poverty over the next three years. The draft Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 6th June 2012 and was circulated to all town/parish councils, together with the Action Plan. Consultation was also undertaken through the Council's website and with key partners.

Town/parish councils can support the objectives by: identifying locations in their community where information can be provided; being aware of the key service providers and sources of support to help passport people; providing information of what is happening in local communities, particularly smaller areas where data often does not reflect local experiences; and circulating information in their local communities, including the 'Money Maze', copies of which were available at the meeting.

AGREED that:

1. The development of the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan be noted.
2. Town/parish councils support the objectives, including circulating copies of the 'Money Maze' booklet produced by the District Council.
3. Town/parish councils contact Steve Brown, Senior Manager Support Services, on 01909 533767 or email: Stephen.brown@bassetlaw.gov.uk for further information.

(e) Food Banks

The Cabinet Member for Revenues, Customer and Support Services gave a verbal update on the provision of food banks which has been instigated by The Crossing Church in Worksop under the umbrella charity HOPE. Distribution of food parcels is being done at The Crossing in Worksop and The Well in Retford, upon referrals through the relevant agencies.

Town/parish councils were asked to help support this initiative by identifying individuals/families at risk, advertising this assistance, and identifying ways of reaching such individuals/families.

RESOLVED that:

1. The provision of the food banks by HOPE be noted.
2. A list of referring agencies be circulated to all town/parish council clerks.
3. Town/parish councils support the food bank initiative by advertising the service, and identifying individuals/families and ways of reaching such individuals/families.
4. Town/parish councils contact Sandy Smith at HOPE, on 01909 531294, with any such referrals.
5. Thanks be recorded to Councillor S May and those involved in the provision of the food banks.

(f) Rural Conference

The Senior Manager Support Services advised the Group of proposals for a Rural Conference in Bassetlaw, which would consider a “long list” of issues as outlined in the report. All town/parish councils, together with other organisations operating in rural areas, have been contacted to identify priorities from this list or to indicate issues they feel have been omitted.

There was no consensus by the Group as to whether the conference should be held on a Saturday or a weekday.

RESOLVED that the development of a Rural Conference be noted and town/parish councils identify items for consideration and forward to Steve Brown, Senior Manager Support Services, on 01909 533767 or email: Stephen.brown@bassetlaw.gov.uk

19. ITEMS FROM PARISH COUNCILS

None.

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

(a) Nottinghamshire County Council's Broadband Survey

Copies of the County Council's Broadband Survey were available at the meeting and town/parish councils were encouraged to distribute them around their communities and encourage residents to respond.

RESOLVED that the town/parish councils distribute the Broadband Survey leaflets around their communities and encourage residents to respond.

As there was no other business to be discussed the Chairman closed the meeting.